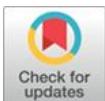


The emptying of the social in the aims of education and Social Pedagogy as a training alternative in Brazil

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Abstract

This article discusses the importance of Social Pedagogy as a critical alternative to the emptying of social purposes in Brazilian education, influenced by the neoliberal advance in recent decades. Thus, it analyzes the conceptions regarding educational purposes in our country, especially between the years 1990 and 2020. Moreover, the objective is to present Social Pedagogy as a field that opposes the emptying of the social and critical sense of education, promoting a vision of social emancipation. The methodology of this article involves a bibliographic review and theoretical analysis of the Brazilian educational scenario, based on authors such as Roberto Leher, Luiz Carlos de Freitas and José Carlos Libâneo, to treat about changes in the purposes of contemporary education, and Geraldo Caliman and Roberto da Silva, in the field of Social Pedagogy. It concludes by highlighting the theoretical dispute between neoliberal and socio-critical views, presenting Social Pedagogy as an alternative to promote a critical and emancipatory education.

Keywords

Brazilian education; social function of education; Social Pedagogy.

O esvaziamento do social nas finalidades da educação e a Pedagogia Social como alternativa de formação no Brasil

Resumo

Este artigo discute a importância da Pedagogia Social como alternativa crítica ao esvaziamento das finalidades sociais na educação brasileira, influenciada pelo avanço neoliberal nas últimas décadas. Assim, analisam-se as concepções acerca das finalidades educativas em nosso país, especialmente, entre os anos de 1990 e 2020. Para além disso, tem-se como objetivo apresentar a Pedagogia Social como campo que se contrapõe ao esvaziamento do sentido social e crítico da educação, promovendo uma visão de emancipação social. A metodologia deste artigo envolve revisão bibliográfica e análise teórica do cenário educacional brasileiro, com base em autores como Roberto Leher, Luiz Carlos de Freitas e José Carlos Libâneo, para tratar das mudanças nas finalidades da educação contemporânea, e Geraldo Caliman e Roberto da Silva, no campo da Pedagogia Social. Conclui destacando a disputa teórica entre visões neoliberais e sociocríticas, apresentando a Pedagogia Social como alternativa para promover uma educação crítica e emancipatória.

Palavras-chave

educação brasileira; função social da educação; Pedagogia Social.

El vaciamiento de lo social en los fines de la educación y la Pedagogía Social como alternativa de formación en Brasil

Resumen

Este artículo discute la importancia de la Pedagogía Social como una alternativa crítica al vaciamiento de los fines sociales en la educación brasileña, influenciada por el avance neoliberal en las últimas décadas. Así, se analizan las concepciones acerca de los fines educativos en nuestro país, especialmente entre los años 1990 y 2020. Además, el objetivo es presentar la Pedagogía Social como un campo que se contrapone al vaciamiento del sentido social y crítico de la educación, promoviendo una visión de emancipación social. La metodología de este artículo involucra una revisión bibliográfica y un análisis teórico del escenario educativo brasileño, basado en autores como Roberto Leher, Luiz Carlos de Freitas y José Carlos Libâneo, para tratar los cambios en los fines de la educación contemporánea, y Geraldo Caliman y Roberto da Silva, en el campo de la Pedagogía Social. Concluye destacando la disputa teórica entre visiones neoliberales y socio-críticas, presentando la Pedagogía Social como una alternativa para promover una educación crítica y emancipatoria.

Palabras clave

educación brasileña; función social de la educación; Pedagogía Social.

1 Introduction

Education cannot be considered a phenomenon isolated from a previously constructed historical, social and economic reality. Because of this, the act of educating should not be confused with the mere transmission of content, decontextualized and apparently without logical relations with the environment around it. In view of this, we ask ourselves: what can be done when social aspects seem to be increasingly left out of educational processes and the training of educators? This article¹ sets out to discuss, based on the Brazilian reality, the progressive emptying of the social and critical functions of education and the artificial quest to achieve individualistic, market-oriented and technicist goals.

This process can be understood in Brazil, especially since the rise of neoliberal policies in the 1990s. With the rise of this ideological project, education came to be defended more as submissive to capital and economic policy, and less as a universal right and a means of promoting social change. This market focus resulted in the marginalization of education's social functions, such as promoting social justice

¹ The article was initially produced as a final assessment proposal for the subject "Contemporary Issues in Education", valid for the doctoral course in Education - Formative processes and social inequalities at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, in semester 2024.1, and has been adapted for this magazine.

and developing critical citizens (Freitas, 2014; Leher, 2003; Libâneo; Santos; Marques, 2023). In contrast to this view, current teacher training still faces the challenge of combining technical and human skills that can enable educators to work in diverse contexts marked by plurality and social complexity. Thus, such training cannot be restricted to content-based transmissions, but must include practical, reflective and collective experiences that foster a critical understanding of the educator's role as an agent of social transformation.

Therefore, as an alternative to this advance of neoliberalism in education, we will present the field of Social Pedagogy, understanding it as a privileged place to think about the social demands existing in educational actions and, consequently, to add in a theoretical-critical way to teacher training. In this way, our objectives in this work are: to present a theoretical review that points to social and critical functions as one of the main purposes of the act of educating; to demonstrate the emptying of these functions as a result of the neoliberal advance in Brazil over the last three decades, between 1990 and 2020; and to point to the theoretical-practical field of Social Pedagogy as an alternative for solving this problem.

We are therefore taking a qualitative approach to this work, based on a bibliographical analysis, with a focus on theoretical and conceptual progress on the themes related to the aforementioned objectives. We will use Fernandes (2010), Freire (1987) and Teixeira (2009) as references to deal with the social functions of education; about the emptying of the social function in educational purposes, we will use Catini (2020), Freitas (2014), Leher (2003) and Libâneo, Santos and Marques (2023), in addition to critically analyzing, as primary sources, the Resolutions of the National Council of Education and Full Council (CNE/CP) No. 2/2015 and No. 2/2019 and their respective opinions; finally, in relation to Social Pedagogy, we will base ourselves on the notes of Caliman (2010) and Silva *et al.* (2020).

2 Disputes and progress in recognizing the "social" as an educational goal

In a classic quote, Freire (2000, p. 67) stated that: "If education alone does not transform society, neither does society change without it". However, this transformation "through education" has historically been left aside by national public policies. By way of example, we can think of the school environment, which was first destined for private



initiative and directed only at the dominant economic classes (Teixeira, 2009).

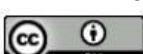
At the beginning of the 20th century, Anísio Teixeira critically pointed out that in the imperial period, the Brazilian state established that the education of the population and the creation of public schools should not be priority issues for state action. Thus, Teixeira (2009) stated that, even when the liberal state began to realize the need to expand education to larger sections of the population, it was not thought of as a right, but as a "preparation" for work, keeping academic studies for the elites.

Even so, Anísio Teixeira's criticisms were a "departure from the pattern" of his time, in which ideas about education were still exclusionary and did little to meet social demands. In addition to this, Fernandes (2010, p. 125) adds that in Brazil, at the beginning of its republican phase, "[...] the mass of citizens continued to be ignored as before, but the Republic created this obligation for the State and created for the teacher the need to be an active agent"

As a result, school "took on" a more pronounced social function and became more accessible to impoverished people, coming to be seen as an alternative for the working classes from the 1960s and 1970s onwards. As Charlot (2014) points out, it was only during this period that the historical configuration changed and school was seen as a key to economic and social development, leading countries like Brazil to make an effort to universalize primary education. Thus, social strata that previously had no access to education not only entered school, but also began to see it as an opportunity for social advancement and transformation.

However, this effort to expand access to school education was not enough to actually promote a broader social transformation. As Algebaile and Almeida (2019, p. 234) point out, school expansion, thought of from the point of view of Western modernity, does not only occur through greater population and territorial coverage of schools, but also through a growing "differentiation of school provision", which signals the close relationship between capital and education. Thus, despite greater access to school, especially in comparison with previous decades in the 20th century, problems such as high dropout rates, school delays and inequality in the quality of education offered by schools at different socio-economic levels are still common in Brazil.

It is therefore necessary for education to unveil these problems, which still stem from a social inequality structured in our history. Thus, in Freire's (1987) view, the purpose of education should go beyond the simple "transfer" of technical knowledge. The author argues



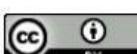
that education should be a process of critical awareness, in which educators and students engage in a problematizing dialogue about their reality. According to Freire (1987), education should enable the oppressed to recognize the causes of their oppression and to develop collective actions to overcome it. Thus, education is seen as an instrument of liberation, which promotes autonomy, criticality and social transformation.

These educational goals, aimed at social transformation, are even more urgent when dealing with a territory on the margins of capitalism, in dependent conditions, as Brazil is. However, as Algebaile and Almeida (2019) point out, anyone who thinks that this type of "Brazilian-style" school provision occurred like this, without jeopardizing our deep structural inequalities, is mistaken: such transformative education policies were "[...] unnecessary and even undesirable for the form of capital accumulation typical of dependent capitalist contexts" (Algebaile; Almeida, 2019, p. 236).

According to Fernandes (2010), we also need to reaffirm the need to include the political dimension when analyzing the aims of education. Now, if we believe, as Freire (1987) argues, that education should aim to be an instrument of liberation and that educating involves more than the transmission of knowledge, what happens "only" in educational acts does not alone explain the emptying of the social in education. If we understand that imperial Brazil and the first years of the Republic, as Teixeira (2019) points out, were characterized by a "non-interventionist" state, of "liberal omission", we understand that these problems are not due to failure, but to a real project: a non-inclusive education project that does not aim to transform the Brazilian social reality. This emptying of the social in education, which has been accentuated over the last three decades, was not a mistake, but a plan.

Thus, as we have seen so far, education in our country was constantly a "stage for disputes" throughout the 20th century, with the first wave of criticism coming from the *Scholasticist* movement at the beginning of the last century, with authors such as Fernando Azevedo, Lourenço Filho and Anísio Teixeira, who already defended the expansion of education as a right. It wasn't until the 1960s that Brazil made any greater effort to universalize primary education. One of the milestones of the first half of the century was the "Manifesto of the Pioneers of New Education", launched in 1932 in Brazil, which constituted a significant milestone in the history of Brazilian education, proposing a vision that recognized education as a vital instrument for social transformation.

From the 1960s onwards, while Brazil was at the beginning of a dictatorial political context established in 1964, after the Business-Military Coup that ruled our country until



1985, we witnessed a significant advance, in a counter-hegemonic way, of the rise of new subjects of rights (Silva, 2020) in the field of political dispute, such as rural, indigenous, black, *quilombola*, feminist, *favelados*, etc. movements, which seek to "reinvent" education

3 The emptying of the social in education since the neoliberal advance in the 1990s

With the end of the dictatorship and the promulgation of the 1988 Federal Constitution, expectations emerged in Brazil of an education that was more closely linked to society, with an emancipatory and transformative character. The new Constitution enshrined education as a right of all and a duty of the state, establishing principles of universalization, equal conditions and democratic management of public education. However, much of this political opening up of Brazil took place in a process of correlation of forces, as seen in the dispute over societal projects, when the private sector organized itself and strengthened itself to dispute (and direct) its contents to the school, via management, training, teaching materials, among others (Caetano; Peroni, 2022).

As we can infer, during the process of re-democratization in several Latin American countries, there was a significant increase in access to public education, considered a breakthrough in recent decades, but there has been a growing influence of the private

sector on public education, with the state remaining responsible for providing places, but with the pedagogical content and school management being increasingly directed by private institutions (Caetano; Peroni, 2022).

Thus, the advance of neoliberalism in the 1990s contrasted sharply with these aspirations for democracy and social justice in education. Neoliberal policies, centred on market principles and fiscal austerity, led to cuts in investment in education, privatization and the commodification of teaching, making it difficult to fully implement the constitutional promises of free, quality public education.

For Leher (2003), these neoliberal state policies are based on neoclassical assumptions from a more orthodox perspective. Thus, it is argued that the market, unlike the state, is the result of a "purification process" in search of freedom, based on the natural evolution of human relations. In the Brazilian case, these ideals were strengthened in the form of state reforms from the 1990s onwards, initially with the Collor de Mello government (1990-1992) and even more so during the two terms of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC), between 1995 and 2002. Under the Collor government, there was a significant effort to

deregulate the economy, reduce the role of the state and open up the Brazilian market to foreign trade. Measures such as the privatization of state- owned companies, financial liberalization and the flexibilization of labour relations began to be implemented.

However, it was during the FHC government that these neoliberal policies were deepened and systematized. In this sense, the state reform during his first term in office stands out in particular. Aimed at "modernizing public administration" and promoting greater economic stability, this reform covered areas such as: fiscal adjustment; structural reforms, including trade liberalization and privatizations; and administrative reform, which introduced managerial public administration to replace the traditional bureaucratic model (Bresser-Pereira, 1997).

Although these policies of the FHC government generated economic growth in certain sectors, they also contributed to increased social inequality, job insecurity and limited investment in social areas. Thus, as Leher (2003) points out, in the same way as in most peripheral countries, the reform of the Brazilian state was more rigid in its adherence to neoliberal principles than in central countries, abandoning its role as a driver of the economy, including areas such as science and technology, quality education, industrial

policy and planning. This dismantling resulted in a deepening of capitalist dependency and a worsening of social inequalities.

In the case of schools, this can be exemplified in what Freitas (2014, p. 1088) calls the "first neoliberal wave" in the 1990s, with the rise of the evaluation category - through the objectives-evaluation binomial - at the heart of the schools' pedagogical organization process. In this way, assessment came to be seen as guiding the educational process, to act as an "anchor" for the current social functions of educational spaces, with the aim of subordinating the student (Freitas, 2014).

Thus, with the centrality of school evaluation, the so-called "corporate education reformers", at the behest of neoliberal ideology, seek to impose a "brake" on progressive advances in educational actions. The starting point for this was to ensure the role of national, census-based external evaluation and to strengthen the conversion of the National Institute for Pedagogical Studies (INEP) into a national evaluation agency. Along these lines, in this first wave, we can highlight the influence of these groups in the drafting of the National Curriculum Parameters to guide a large-scale, sample-based national assessment system (Freitas, 2014).

The state has been progressively disputed by conservative social-liberal forces,



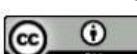
which seek, through external evaluations, to control and strengthen schools' internal evaluation processes. This struggle, waged with eagerness by these business reformers, is obviously not just about the ideological appeal of the neoliberal doctrine, but is based above all on the core of the system itself: the accumulation of capital. The fact is that, with greater control of the pedagogical and evaluative processes of the educational media, these groups can not only point the way for Brazilian education, but also provide solutions to the "problems" encountered in it. This can be exemplified by the intense sale of teaching materials, consultancies, platforms, educational projects, evaluations, etc. The calculation is simple: a demand is created; a problem is pointed out and the solution is sold

Consequently, we can't be innocent of believing that the neoliberal discourse for making such moves is simplistic, so as to open up its *modus operandi* without it appearing to be anything positive. In the neoliberal discourse, not even the "social function" of the school disappears - it just loses its meaning, as we argue here. According to the liberal thesis, it is the school's responsibility to compensate for social inequalities by guaranteeing access to knowledge, but this access only corresponds to "basic" knowledge, without being directly concerned with the other social and cultural variables that affect student performance.

As for the "decline" in the importance of social and cultural aspects in this logic of neoliberalism, we can understand that it is part of a broader context of the state's lack of responsibility and the commercialization of education. As Oliveira and Barbosa (2017) point out, neoliberalism not only reduces the role of the state, but also transfers responsibility for the social and cultural aspects inherent in education to families and the market, promoting the privatization and weakening of public education.

In the 21st century, after the beginning of this neoliberal influence on education - what Freitas (2014) calls the "second wave" - the strength of these social actors is even greater, acting directly in politics, in national educational policy bodies, ministries and the media, further expanding their sales of "educational products" through real business empires in this field.

During the first two terms of the Lula government (2003-2010), the influence of business groups in education grew significantly. The combination of policies to expand access to higher education and incentives for private participation in the education sector created an environment conducive to the growth of these companies. Large educational conglomerates such as Kroton Educacional (now Cogna Educação) and Anhanguera



Educational, for example, expanded rapidly, acquiring other institutions and/or merging. This phenomenon was facilitated by government policies such as the University for All Program (ProUni) and the Higher Education Student Financing Fund (FIES), which, although their aim was to increase access to higher education, also allowed these corporations to make huge profits and increase their influence throughout the country (Chaves, 2010).

Under the Dilma Rousseff government (2011-2016), despite significant advances in educational inclusion programs, the large educational corporations continued to expand their dominance, benefiting from student financing policies. It was even during Dilma's second term that we saw an important advance in the educational field, when the CNE published new Guidelines for Teacher Training in 2015 (Brazil, 2015).

The National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs), built on extensive dialog by the CNE, established a more integrated and articulated approach to thinking about teacher training in our country. One of the main advances was the appreciation of the student's comprehensive education, covering not only cognitive aspects, but also affective, social, cultural and ethical ones. By emphasizing the importance of an education that is contextualized and connected to the students' social reality, the guidelines sought to strengthen the dialogue between the educational field and the social context, recognizing the school as a space for building citizenship and social inclusion.

It is worth noting that these changes brought about by the aforementioned DCNs did not come in a "quiet" context. As Leher and Santos (2023) point out, extreme right-wing initiatives had already been gaining prominence in the clashes over public education since 2014. Since then, different conservative/reactive phenomena (which sometimes dialogued with each other) have been fighting over education. Thus, even the advances made by the 2015 DCNs were not long-lasting. After all the political turmoil that led to the *impeachment* of Dilma's government in 2016, Michel Temer, her vice-president, took office and began to question the 2015 Curriculum Guidelines, which, in his view, were too "theoretical" and could be abolished - which was already the intention of the influential business community in the Brazilian government.

The Temer government (2016-2018) intensified the neoliberal deepening of our country's social and economic policies, as exemplified by the implementation of Constitutional Amendment No. 95/2016 (the "Spending Ceiling Amendment"), which froze public spending for 20 years, negatively impacting investments in public education. In

addition, reforms such as that of secondary education, which made the curriculum more flexible and opened up space for outsourcing part of the educational offer, further favored the private sector.

This high school reform deserves its own attention, given its specificities. Approved as a provisional measure in 2016 and turned into a bill in 2017, this policy had broad support from institutions representing the Brazilian business community, such as "Itaú Social", linked to Itaú bank, and the *think tank* "Todos pela Educação", which brings together a conglomerate of education and social work policies, foundations and corporate social institutes (Catini, 2020). These institutions believed that the reform of secondary education would be beneficial for young Brazilians who needed to work, presenting a "modern" educational approach. What we saw, however, was an increasing emptying of school content (especially for the working classes) and a reduction in a critical approach in schools.

From 2018, with the election of Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency (2019-2022), the federal government began to act in opposition to educational councils with the participation of "civil society", through the narrative of a "cultural war", which had already been guided by Brazilian reactionaryism since the years before the election (Leher; Santos, 2023). We can categorically state that this period marked the "peak" of a series of measures and discourses that undermined the social, critical and emancipatory purposes of education, as had already been outlined years before. After the performance of Ricardo Vélez, the first Minister of Education in the Bolsonaro government, the appointment of ministers with conservative ideological profiles, such as Abraham Weintraub and Milton Ribeiro, in the following years, was accompanied by rhetoric that disqualified the Human Sciences.

Accioly, Silva and Silva (2023) outline a chronological and critical history of the Bolsonaro government's attacks on democracy. In the midst of the elucidations and criticisms, the authors expose the minutes of the hate speech aimed not only, but mainly, at teachers, LGBTQI+ people, indigenous peoples, anti-racist movements, feminists, environmentalists, trade unions, left-wing parties and defenders of liberal democracy. The authors define the main objective of the Bolsonaro government as the intention to "imprint" reactionary values through education. They point out that, under the Bolsonaro government, education is balanced on two pillars: guaranteeing a workforce to perpetuate the process of exploitation and normalizing and naturalizing the processes that subjugate workers (Accioly; Silva; Silva, 2023).

As a final example of how to deal with this phase in a categorical way, we also have



the setback represented by the publication of the new National Curriculum Guidelines (Brazil, 2019), based on CNE/CP No. 2/20190. While they were still being drawn up, there was notoriously little popular participation and even that of those responsible for education in these guidelines, unlike what happened in 2015. As a result of this hasty project, a few points stand out: the defense of competency-based learning; the linking of teaching to the National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC); and the break with continuing education and professional development for teachers.

The hallmark of the 2019 DCNs is the idea of theory being subordinate to practice, defending a more pragmatic, technicist educational action in which the teacher is merely a reproducer of the content indicated by the BNCC. As Crizel, Gonçalves and Andrade (2022) point out, the 2019 DCNs establish a model that reduces the teacher's role to that of an executor of tasks and positions students as passive receptors.

We therefore believe that these measures, which have been implemented in recent years, have contributed to the emptying of the human and social purposes of education, resulting in the elimination of a socially transformative and critical perspective in the field of education. This process has been deepening since the first neoliberal influences on Brazilian policies in the early 1990s, and is evident in movements such as the reform of secondary education and the institution of the 2019 DCNs, which consolidated an education increasingly tied to instrumental rationality and the economic dimension (Libâneo; Santos; Marques, 2023).

In view of this, we understand that the centrality of educational practices in the teacher training process should point to the need for greater appreciation of the ethical and political dimensions of the profession, valuing human universality. Teachers are not just transmitters of knowledge, but protagonists in the development of an education that is linked to the (unequal) social conditions in which we live.

Considering the previous discussions, we will present in the next topic some of the main theoretical-practical assumptions of the field of Social Pedagogy, understanding it as an alternative to solve this emptying of the social character of education

4 Social Pedagogy as an alternative for critical and transformative education

The term Social Pedagogy emerged at the end of the 19th century with the German Paul Natorp, who advocated community-based education as a way of combating the social

problems of the time. Social Pedagogy spread throughout the 20th century, especially in Europe. In Brazil, although this name was not used initially, practices related to Social Pedagogy were developed throughout the 20th century, with Paulo Freire as one of its great exponents in the construction of this field (Otto, 2011).

As an academic field, we can highlight that Social Pedagogy is beginning to be better debated in Brazil in the 21st century, with the International Congresses on Social

Pedagogy at the University of São Paulo (USP) in 2006 and 2008 as a "milestone". In the context of this work, we can agree with the view that, when we talk about "Social Pedagogy", we are referring to: (1) a field belonging to the area of Education Sciences;

(2) a field of theoretical foundations that serve as a basis for Social Education practices; and (3) a form of education that acts, in particular, on the social demands of groups in situations of vulnerability (Caliman, 2010).

Within this field, we could add that there are three domains of their own: (1) the *socio-pedagogical domain*, whose priority is the development of social skills that enable students to overcome conditions of marginalization, violence and poverty, for example;

(2) the *socio-political domain*, which aims to develop skills for participation in social, political and economic life; and (3) the *socio-cultural domain*, with a focus on the arts and cultures in their various manifestations (Silva *et al.*, 2020).

In line with the theme of this article, it should also be pointed out that these social education activities - i.e., those generally developed in non-school spaces - have also suffered in recent years from the influence of the neoliberal advance in the educational field. It's enough to remember that the promulgation of the 2019 DCNs no longer mentions the need for initial training to prepare teachers to work in non-school educational contexts, in contrast to the 2015 guidelines. Out-of-school educational institutions have also come to deal with the increasing influence of business sectors. As Catini (2020, p. 64) points out:

Since the 1990s, the sphere of educational activity has been greatly expanded through the promotion of the creation of social organizations of civil society, with which the after-school hours have been populated by socio-educational proposals from the third sector, a true parallel network of education, so that 'poor young people are increasingly subjected to the intentional action of two educational networks: school and non-school'.

As a result, we can see that the business logic that disputes the field of education takes even greater advantage of this "dichotomization" between school and non-school, capturing for its ideology the purposes of both. As an example, we can use the speech by



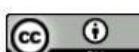
Mozart Ramos, a representative of this sector - former president of "Todos pela Educação" and the "Ayrton Senna Institute" - who flirted with the position of Minister of Education during Jair Bolsonaro's term in 2019, when he suggested a division in the education system between the formal network, presided over by the business community, aimed at those who can position themselves in the world of work, and the non-formal network, made up of social work by business philanthropy, for those who have already "given up on studying" (Catini, 2020, p. 64).

None of this corresponds to what we mean by Social Pedagogy. Such a field is not defined only by its space (whether inside or outside a classroom), or even whether its organization is state or civil, let alone whether it aims to serve those who have "given up" on studying or working. Delving a little deeper into the understanding of Social Pedagogy, especially in our dialogue about it as an alternative to the emptying of the social in contemporary Brazilian education, we can say that our theoretical foundations in this field come from two main influences.

The first of these refers to the recovery of the initial orientations of historical Social Pedagogy. Following this line, it was Paul Natorp himself who conceived the field, initially with the community as the central element of pedagogical action, as opposed to individualism (Machado, 2020; Moura, 2011). In the second half of the last century, Helga Marburguer, another German, stated that Social Pedagogy is a Science of Education "of the community" and "for the community", in line with Natorp. We believe, however, that it would be worth complementing this perspective with an epistemology that is closer to the Latin American and Brazilian reality, which is able to consider aspects of our social and historical constitution in its analysis, especially those we have experienced in recent decades.

Thus, our second influence comes from the so-called Critical Social Pedagogy, which, according to Caliman (2010), is the model closest to what has been built as a trend in our country. The basis of this critical social pedagogy is a common orientation towards practices that lead to the personal and social transformation of others in situations of oppression. In addition, this model, which has Paulo Freire as one of its main influences, requires dialogical and anti-hierarchical educational processes based on an equal encounter between subjects and a critical vision-reflection on reality (Caliman, 2010).

In this way, we can summarize that the type of Social Pedagogy we conceive, which is part of the "first wave" of this field and is truly in its most contemporary stage of development (Díaz, 2006), would have three main ideals-objectives: (1) a *critical view of*



reality; (2) participation in the community; and (3) emancipation/social transformation. In

our view, these elements are very relevant to achieving educational practices that collaborate with an education that is more socially committed.

However, how could this be applied in practice? We know that most Social Education actions are applied mainly in non-school contexts (non-formal and informal), which, although also affected by this emptying of the social in education in the face of the neoliberal advance in this field, are not the main focus of this article. We are therefore thinking of proposals based on Social Pedagogy that can also be used in schools, imagining that the epistemological values of this field are not limited to a particular space.

As a basis for these propositions, we also rely on some research that has reported on socio-educational activities that already exist in vulnerable contexts in eastern Rio de Janeiro, produced by the *Fora da Sala de Aula* Study, Research and Extension Group at Rio de Janeiro State University (FFP/UERJ), in particular: Lopes (2023), when investigating socio-pedagogical practices of combating violence aimed at children and adolescents in São Gonçalo, Rio de Janeiro (RJ); Oliveira (2023), in research on digital inclusion actions in a social project on the outskirts of Niterói-RJ; Silva *et al.* (2023), in an article on practices with the homeless, also in Niterói-RJ. Thus, as we have also developed previously (Lopes, 2024), there are at least three potential paths that the theory of Social Pedagogy can find in schools, based on its three practical domains (Silva *et al.*, 2020), serving as a "counterpoint" to teaching based on technicism.

(1) *Variation in the teaching methodologies chosen to deliver lessons, taking into account the social context.* Although there are many other ways of applying the compulsory curricular content of basic education, throughout the country, lectures and solving exercises are still the most common teaching method. With the DCNs approved in 2019, preaching increasingly content-based teacher training, subservient to the BNCC, this is even more profound.

This model is as old as its critics. Paulo Freire, for example, since his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, criticized this practice, which he called "banking education", given its tendency "[...] to deposit, in which the students are the depositories and the educator the depositor" (Freire, 1987, p. 58). What could Social Pedagogy teach us at this point? From its *socio-pedagogical domain*, guiding practices that focus more on the demands of the students, their experiences and forms of expression. In this way, instead of methodologies that prioritize only the apprehension of content, we can also start from the social



competences needed for students to overcome problems in their realities.

(2) *Problematization of curricular content as a political practice.* Even if the approach to certain content is compulsory - and even if it is done in an expository manner

- it is necessary to have a critical intent in relation to the themes addressed. In this way, dealing with content as a "political" practice means starting from the notion that educating in itself is a political act, in other words, all content has a certain bias and a certain intentionality, which can be inclusive or exclusive, problematizing or naturalizing the given reality. The content that arrives in a textbook or from an educational platform is not "neutral"; therefore, problematizing the way in which these topics are presented (and highlighting this to the students) is a necessity for a basic education inspired by a Social Pedagogy.

In the same way, we understand that such content, when seen from a social and political perspective, must dialogue with what is presented by the students' reality - and not by vertical choices on the part of the teachers. Education for social transformation and a critical sense of the world involves a political education on the part of the students, which must be built in an autonomous, dialogical, non-authoritarian and sectarian way.

(3) *Exploring cultural and artistic potential during lessons.* Cultural expressions need not only be outside the walls of the school or restricted to the private sphere of the students. Socially relevant, humanistic education must also take into account aspects of local culture in its practices. In this way, we can draw inspiration from the *sociocultural domain* of Social Pedagogy when approaching artistic manifestations on a daily basis in our teaching.

This educational intervention, however, should not be reduced to the mere use of the arts as a tool devoid of values. What we are looking for here, through the studies of Social Pedagogy, is to encourage educational practices that bring the importance of the historical and cultural dimensions of artistic expressions that make sense to the students involved in these activities. Thus, the "key" for such an activity to achieve its objective is to always start from what the student can bring. What do they hear? What affects them? That's where your practice begins, but not where it ends.

As we have pointed out, these three proposals are nothing more than practices inspired by the three fundamental lines of research in Social Pedagogy. In addition, they

aim to dialogue with the two basic elements of critical Social Pedagogy, as we presented earlier in this text: the problematizing view of reality and the objective of social transformation of that reality.



In this way, we conclude that Social Pedagogy can serve as a powerful theoretical-critical alternative for teacher training that is more engaged with social demands, by providing a direction that opposes neoliberal technicism and the fragmentation of teaching in recent decades. Through its three main axes, Social Pedagogy promotes education aimed at personal and collective transformation, engaging educators in processes of critical reflection on social reality.

5 Final considerations

As Libâneo, Santos and Marques (2023) point out, there has been a theoretical and political dispute over educational and school purposes. Thus, the field of education has generated intense conflicts over issues such as the meaning of "teaching quality", "the purpose of the school", "the role of the teacher", among other issues. Crossed by the ideological and political advance of neoliberalism since the end of the last century, two visions of the purposes and functions of education have clashed: the neoliberal and sociocritical perspectives represent two different ways of understanding the functioning of society, influencing different conceptions of human destiny and, consequently, generating divergent pedagogical visions (Libâneo; Santos; Marques, 2023).

In this article, recognizing that this clash is still going on in the field of education, we initially analyze the first conceptions in Brazil of an education with socially transformative potential, from the authors of the "New School", such as Anísio Teixeira, to the development of *Freire's* pedagogy in the second half of the 20th century. With the negative impacts of a dictatorial policy during the business-military government between 1964 and 1985, a "new hope" emerged with the reopening of democracy in our country, especially with the "citizen" Constitution of 1988.

However, with the arrival of the 1990s, the influence of neoliberalism in Brazilian politics became ever greater. As a result, public policies - and education in particular - became one of the fields of interest of this ideology, which began to dispute the conceptions and directions of education through the influence of private groups. In this way, over the last thirty years, we have seen an increasingly stronger and more experienced business class intervening in education, which is now a constant presence even in the Ministry of Education and in our legislative houses.

As a result, the rise of neoliberal conceptions in the direction of Brazilian education



has been notorious. As an alternative, we present Social Pedagogy as a potential theoretical-practical field to counteract these models, which so deplete the social and critical meanings of education. Based on its premises, Social Pedagogy offers a solid foundation for teachers to adopt educational practices that not only "transfer" content to students, but also develop social, political and cultural competencies that enable inequalities to be overcome. Thus, integrating Social Pedagogy into teacher training creates an education that is more engaged with the reality of the students and their communities, broadening the possibilities of resistance to pedagogical models that neglect the social context.

In this way, we envision Social Pedagogy as a way of doing education from a "sociocritical" perspective, for school and non-school environments, in the theoretical and practical spheres, thinking of the act of educating as a consequence of human and societal relations, aiming to respond to their demands.

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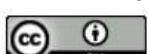
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