

Theory of objectification and democratic management: contributions to training

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the contributions of the Theory of Objectification for the formation of school managers in the perspective of democratic management, and with a historical-cultural basis. It is a qualitative research, involving exploratory and descriptive aspects, with a bibliographic investigation method, as it is based on pertinent references to the education of school managers and on theoretical elements arising from the Theory of Objectification. The reading of analysis and evaluation of the information took place in a critical or reflective way, with theoretical support based on the studies of Radford (2011, 2015, 2020a, 2020b), Lück (2009), Lück et al (2010), Bizol and Dutra (2018). It is evident from the deepening of the framework of bibliographical research, that the Theory of Objectivity enhances the educational process of school managers, enabling the dialectical creation of critical, reflective and ethical individuals, considering new structures of action and thought, in the face of a series of aspects related to culture and social practices.

Keywords: Objectification Theory. Training. School Managers.

Teoria da objetivação e a gestão democrática: contribuições para a formação

Resumo

Esta pesquisa almeja analisar os contributos da Teoria da Objetivação para a formação de gestores escolares na perspectiva da gestão democrática, e com base histórico-cultural. É uma pesquisa de ordem qualitativa, envolvendo aspectos exploratórios e descritivos, com método de investigação bibliográfica, pois se fundamenta em referências pertinentes à formação de gestores escolares e nos elementos teóricos oriundos da Teoria da Objetivação. A leitura de análise e avaliação das informações aconteceu de forma crítica ou reflexiva, com aporte teórico fundamentado nos estudos de Radford (2011, 2015, 2020a, 2020b), Lück (2009), Lück et al (2010), Bizol e Dutra (2018). Evidencia-se, diante do aprofundamento no arcabouço da investigação bibliográfica, que a Teoria da Objetivação potencializa o processo formativo de gestores escolares, possibilitando a criação dialética de indivíduos críticos, reflexivos e éticos, considerando novas estruturas de ação e pensamento, frente a uma série de aspectos relativos à cultura e às práticas sociais.

Palavras-chave: Teoria da Objetivação. Formação. Gestores Escolares.

1 Introduction

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It is known that the school environment has undergone several transformations in recent decades, either by changes in legislation and educational policies, such as the implementation of the New High School and the Common National Curriculum Base (BNCC), or by the profile of students of the alpha generation. This range of changes reveals the dynamics and challenges that are intrinsic to the school context, being relevant to reflect on the continuing education of school managers [For explanatory purposes, we call in this research the terminology "school manager" for all members who make up the management team of the educational unit] and teachers, due to the fact that most of the academic degrees of these professionals were grounded in the particularities of generations X, Y or Z.

In this vein, in search of an alternative to the contemporary utilitarian currents of teaching and learning in education, the initial outlines of the Objectivation Theory (TO) emerged. This occurred in the mid-1990s, amid a movement of scholars seeking to understand the role of history, culture, and society in the consolidation of learning by students (RADFORD, 2014).

The so-called Theory of Knowledge Objectification, or Theory of Objectification, is a sociocultural learning theory devised by educator and researcher Luis Radford (Professor at the École des sciences de l'éducation de l'Université Laurentienne, located in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada), based on the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory of Russian psychology of Vygotsky and Leontiev, the dialectical materialism of Hegel and Marx, and the concept of education of Paulo Freire (RADFORD, 2021).

Permeated by a philosophical dimension, the Objectivation Theory goes beyond discussions pertaining to the teaching and learning process, but it also corroborates issues related to the formative processes of teaching, as we can see in the research of Camilotti and Gobara (2018, 2021), Matos (2020), Praça and Radford (2021).

Thus, the following research problem was formulated: what are the contributions of Objectification Theory to the continuing education of school managers? The research

problem in question aims to analyze the contributions of the Objectivation Theory for the continuing education of school managers, by means of a critical and reflective interpretation of the theoretical assumptions of the Objectivation Theory in consonance with the principles of school management, as well as of the conceptual elements pertinent to training, during the bibliographical survey of works on TO and the training of school managers.

In view of the several challenges present in the school environment, either pedagogical or administrative, it is perceptible the relevance of the managerial conduct that school managers constantly assume in their functions. In this aspect, the continuing education of school managers favors the strengthening of their performance before the various problems of the school environment.

As Lück (2009) ratifies, the basic training of school managers is focused on a specific area of action, being generic and conceptual. Therefore, the continuing education of school managers from the perspective of the Objectivation Theory enables the reflection of new possibilities of action and thinking, because the TO understands education as a political, social, historical and cultural project (RADFORD, 2020a).

Thus, the TO turns to the constitution of reflexive and ethical individuals, so necessary to school managers as a result of the numerous reforms that Brazilian education has undergone over the decades. In this condition, the social transformation of the school manager arises mainly to meet the objectives of the 21st century education, which advocates the valorization of the students' protagonism, life project, and integral formation. In this aspect, managing the internal pedagogical policies of the educational unit requires from the school manager a sensibility that transcends the praxis.

In view of this, the research is organized in seven sections, the first of which is composed of the introduction, then the theoretical foundation of the subject is explained in sections two and three, the methodology is presented in section four, the analysis and results are presented in section five, the final considerations of the investigation are presented in section six, and the work is concluded with the references section.

2 The Objectification Theory

Objectivation Theory is a contemporary educational theory, which arises through reflections on the influences that history and culture have on the teaching and learning of mathematics, on the way of thinking of mankind. It is a theory that has gained a lot of visibility in the world context and several researchers have studied and developed innovative investigations in the field of OT.

The epistemological and ontological bases of TO depart from Platonism, realism, and rationalism. Moreover, the terminology of some didactic concepts is different from that used in learning theories inspired by the Enlightenment tradition, because Objectivation Theory diverges from pedagogical currents that focus on learning as a construction of individuality.

The following section will address the main concepts used in Objectivation Theory, as well as their definitions in a contextualized way.

2.1 Definitions of the main concepts of the Objectivation Theory

This section of the research will present concisely and clearly some concepts of the Objectification Theory and its definitions, which will be detailed in an integrative and relational way throughout the text, since the exposure of the main concepts will be performed chained, understanding that some underlie the understanding of others. Furthermore, the exposition will be based on the bibliographic production of Radford (2011, 2014, 2015, 2020a, 2020b, 2021, 2022).

Among the various terms and expressions that are used by TO, this research will make considerations about: knowledge, activity, knowledge, processes of objectification, learning, processes of subjectivation, joint labor, commitment, care and responsibility with others, community ethics, and transformative social project.

Humanity is constituted by its historicity and by the traditions and beliefs of societies. In this way, when we are born there is already knowledge, which is considered

by TO as a general entity that differs from the culture of one people to another and undergoes changes over time, because knowledge is materialized in the lives of subjects in a concrete way, that is, it is a cultural and historically constituted system of thought and action (RADFORD, 2020b).

Over the decades and centuries, knowledge as a dynamic entity undergoes transformations, from which various historical and cultural practices are performed in a totally different way or with changes. In this context, we have activity, which for TO is a dynamic system aimed at satisfying human needs in which "[...] individuals activate knowledge and set it in motion, thus making certain types of action and reflection concrete" (RADFORD, 2021, p. 66). In this condition, the materialization or actualization of knowledge in a perceptible, sensible, concrete form is referred to in TO as knowledge (RADFORD, 2021).

The movement of the dialectics of knowing and knowledge, through activity, constitute the processes of objectification, which arise when individuals become aware of social and collective processes, perceiving something culturally significant (RADFORD, 2020b). Thus, learning, for the Objectivation Theory, is defined as the result of objectification processes and subjectivation processes, because for the theory learning is not only knowing, but becoming, or rather, it considers the emotional as a key element for learning and transformation of the subject into a social being (RADFORD, 2020b, 2021).

Then, for the processes of objectification and subjectification to emerge, joint labor is necessary, which refers to the development of collective needs, being described as a social mode of joint organization in which individuals produce their survival strategies (RADFORD, 2011). By the way, it is important to emphasize that commitment, care and responsibility with others should be part of joint labor.

Commitment in TO manifests when teachers and students are in search of solving a common problem, then join forces, work side by side toward the solution. Radford (2022, p. 15) further states that "[...] commitment is both the promise and the realization that we will do everything possible to work side by side with others as we work together. Moreover, care and responsibility emerge respectively in this relationship

through sensitive recognition of the needs of others (RADFORD, 2020b) and in living and acting relationships with and for others (RADFORD, 2022).

In TO, this form of interaction/relationship with the other is understood as ethics. A community ethic that is focused "[...] on responsibility, commitment to others, and care for others. Commitment to others requires the effort to engage in joint labor and to be able to distinguish between what is understood and what is not" (RADFORD, 2020b, p. 38).

Objectification Theory seeks to undertake a transformative social project aimed at "[...] creating the conditions for the emergence of a new form of social, reflexive, ethical consciousness, aimed at the creation of a just, socially and culturally inclusive and dignified society" (RADFORD, 2020a, p. 34). Therefore, TO conceives education as the means to transform individuals into reflective and ethical beings, capable of solving the various problems arising from social contexts.

3 Elucidations on school management training

Education in Brazil is anchored by legislations that suggest premises for the administration and management of public institutions, based on democratic and participatory management. In this panorama, legal norms are instilled with the purposes of training school managers and teachers that are established in the Law of Directives and Bases (Law No. 9.394/1996) and in the National Education Plans (PNE) (Law No. 10.172/2001 and Law No. 13.005/2014).

The laws mention the objectives of training as entities that will add fruitful performances in the career. However, it is worth noting that according to the research of some authors who investigate theoretical elements of the training of teachers and school managers, initial training aims to prepare the teacher for the effective practice of teaching in line with the theoretical contributions studied during graduation. In the case of the initial training of school managers, they usually have a degree in Pedagogy, a degree in which

most curricula do not subsidize the performance in the management of education and of the school unit (MELO et al, 2020).

Complementarily, it is emphasized that continuing education "is seen as an epistemological path to fill in the gaps left by initial training" (MATOS, 2020, p. 31). Thus, in view of the understanding of the differences between initial and continuing education, it is necessary to understand the principles of continuing education. Also based on the considerations of Matos' studies (2020), it is evident that teacher education from the perspective of continuing education is an inconclusive process, of continuity and not of complementarity, since continuing education is the amplification of knowledge and not the filling of gaps.

The scenario that education experienced as a result of a global pandemic crisis made us realize the indispensability of training school managers. In this context, the relevance of continuing education is enlightening, since "in continuing education, new knowledge arises all the time and, in order to achieve the changes demanded by society, innovations in educational practices are required" (MATOS, 2020, p. 32).

Similarly, Tardif (2012) also refers to the teaching knowledge inseparable from the individual, since the professional trajectory is intertwined with the personal one and it is built and rebuilt in accordance with the current needs. In view of this, the exercise of teaching requires a dialogical, reflective, and emancipating continuous formative process (FREIRE, 2007), which recognizes the acceptance of cultural identity, due to the various ethnicities that form the basis of our population, legitimating the universality, diversity, and uniqueness of students (MENDES; SILVA, 2017).

Under these conditions, it is necessary to think about the continuing education of school managers, so as to enable the constitution of reflective and ethical subjects who position themselves critically in cultural and historical practices (RADFORD, 2021), that is, providing the confluence for the assimilation of social phenomena of reality, citizenship, and cooperating for the transformations of historical and cultural elements.

Therefore, the school manager must assume the protagonism in his or her formative process, being aware that his or her cultural and historical context is

indispensable. Still, it should emphasize for ethical precepts (RIBEIRO, SÍVERES, and BRITO, 2019) and for conducting a participatory management in the various segments that form the school structure, with the appreciation of democracy and mechanisms that enable an autonomous school, strengthening the collective and shared work (LÜCK et al, 2010; BIZOL and DUTRA, 2018).

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The ethical dimension of training is an essential pillar for school management, because according to Freire (1996) it is impossible to train human beings without ethics. School managers, facing their actions, should conduct didactic actions in social quality, with respect for the different ethnic groups and their cultures (LÜCK, 2009; LÜCK et al, 2010). In this way, school managers need to appreciate the effectiveness of an educational system that is not immersed in the purposes of capitalism, but "[...] that education is effectively focused on forming critical citizens, able to free themselves as subjects, and that can build their own history" (BIZOL and DUTRA, 2018, p. 6).

In addition, Lück (2009) who portrays the dimensions of school management, lists some competencies of school managers, namely: i) ensure the functioning of the educational unit as a social organization, praising mainly respect; ii) implementation of actions that value the development of autonomous, critical and participatory students; iii) management guided by inclusive principles, equity and respect for diversity; iv) mobilizers of interactive and integrative guidelines by all segments of the school.

In line with the competencies mentioned above, it is understood that the training of school managers needs to be focused on the human dimension, because the school space is permeated by a heterogeneity of conditions that come from society. It is notorious the need to implement co-responsibility, critical and reflective dialogical relations, openness to the various conceptions and transformations that the world routinely experiences, sensitivity to social events, and ethical capacity.

4 Methodology

In this qualitative research, exploratory aspects and a methodological approach of bibliographical research were used, due to the fact that it is based on theoretical references from the field of school management training and the Objectivation Theory.

Focusing on the qualitative and bibliographic research methods, an analytical reading was undertaken, compiling and ficing critically or reflexively the references, since this type of research is consolidated by deepening the literature in several databases (BIZOL; DUTRA, 2018).

Thus, a search was initially conducted in the CAPES Periodical Portal, Google Scholar and Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations on the subjects pertinent to the work. Following the collection of books, articles, dissertations, and theses, the materials were read and classified.

In possession of the fichamentos performed, the triangulation of theory (FLICK, 2009) was employed for the analysis of the data collected, performing the combination of different theoretical perspectives on the training of managers with aspects relevant to the Objectivation Theory, finding the convergent and divergent hypotheses through the conceptions of the referential.

5 The continuing education of school managers and the concepts of TO

This section aims to integrate the conceptual elements of the Objectivation Theory with the intentions proposed for the training of school managers, by presenting the basic definitions of some concepts used in TO and contextualizing them with the formative optics of school management.

Table 1 - Dialectics Between To And School Management Training

TO Concept	Contextualization with the training of school managers
Objectification Processes	Objectification processes are those processes of perceiving something culturally significant, in which individuals meet with culturally and historically constituted thought systems (RADFORD, 2020b). School managers are historical and cultural individuals in search of awareness of social and collective processes, who need to value an autonomous and democratic school, strengthening the development of shared work (LÜCK

	et al, 2010; BIZOL and DUTRA, 2018).
Subjectivation Processes	The processes of subjectivation are those related to the emotional, affective dimension, which is related to becoming, that is, it considers the emotional as a fundamental element for learning and transformation of the subject into a social being (RADFORD, 2020b). At school, school managers are faced with pluralities of the life projects of students, teachers, employees, and family members. In view of this, managers need to be sensitive and act with respect, welcoming the particularities of each subject belonging to the school environment.
Joint labor	Joint work emerges aiming at overcoming collective needs, being described as a social mode of joint organization in which individuals produce their survival strategies (RADFORD, 2011). In view of the literature pertinent to the training of school managers, the relevance of a shared, participatory and democratic management is expressed (LÜCK, 2009). In this sense, the collective work between managers, teachers, servers, students and families should emerge in the promotion of the constitution of a quality school.
Commitment, care and responsibility with others	The management of all pedagogical and administrative actions in the school environment has a direct impact on the school community, that is, on human beings. In this view, school managers need to cherish the principles of commitment, care, and responsibility with others, being sensitive to the needs of others, ensuring the development of a management guided by inclusive principles, equity, and respect for diversity (LÜCK, 2009).
Community ethics	Community ethics is understood as a form of otherness and its action is characterized by responsibility, commitment, and care for other human beings (RADFORD, 2020b). Consequently, school managers need to develop the feeling of empathy towards the various causes of their work environment, which are commonly full of social problems.
Social Transformation Project	The transformative social project, from the perspective of the Objectivation Theory, aims to consolidate scenarios for the birth of a new form of "[...] social, reflective, and ethical consciousness, aimed at the creation of a fair, socially and culturally inclusive and worthy society" (RADFORD, 2020a, p.34). In this vein, the training of school managers should be based on a political and social project, in which actions aimed at the constitution of autonomous, critical, and participatory students are prized (LÜCK, 2009). A school management that advocates an education focused on freedom and that gives each individual of society the opportunity to build his or her own history (BIZOL and DUTRA, 2018).

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In a general and analytical way, table 1, presented above, reveals some concepts present in the Objectivation Theory that can be associated with the dimension of initial, continued and ongoing training of school managers. It is noticeable, throughout the reflections, that the collective human dimension is quite present as to its relevance to the development of a social project in the field of education. It is also worth mentioning the

various points of convergence of the theoretical foundation pertinent to the area of management training and the conceptual basis of the Objectivation Theory.

6 Final considerations

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The investigation reveals the possibilities of integration of the Objectivation Theory before the conceptual systematization of elements of school management training. Although a small section of OT was explicitly mentioned in the research, it is perceptible the range of analogies of conceptions that complement each other with the area of teacher education, in this case, focused on school managers.

It is evident, before the deepening in the framework of the bibliographic research, that the Objectivation Theory enhances the formative process of school managers, enabling the dialectical creation of critical, reflective and ethical individuals, considering new structures of action and thought, in face of a series of aspects related to culture and social practices (RADFORD, 2015).

Thus, the trivial concepts of this sociocultural theory, such as objectification processes, subjectification processes, joint work, commitment, care and responsibility with others, community ethics and transformative social project are significant for the planning of the formative process of school managers.

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