

State of praxis in articles on education: an essay on idealism

ARTICLE

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Abstract

This is a study produced from the analysis of the conclusions present in academic papers that were used in the curricular component "Youth, Work and School", available in the course of Professional Master's in Professional and Technological Education (ProfEPT) in order to validate them (or not) in the light of the dialectical praxis in Marx. This is an investigation identified as exploratory and descriptive research, produced by means of bibliographic research, following a qualitative and dialectical approach. By means of argumentative review, we analyzed six works that presented proposals for intervention in their conclusions. The analysis is systematized, presenting a critical analysis of the data, gauging the absence of concrete proposals for intervention in the light of the materialist-dialectical praxis in the investigated academic works.

Keywords: Materialist-dialectic praxis. Academic Works. Youth, Work and School.

Estado da práxis em artigos sobre educação: ensaio sobre o idealismo

Resumo

Trata-se de um estudo produzido a partir da análise das conclusões presentes em trabalhos acadêmicos que foram utilizados no componente curricular "Juventude, Trabalho e Escola", disponibilizado no curso de Mestrado Profissional em Educação Profissional e Tecnológica (ProfEPT) com a finalidade de validá-las (ou não) à luz da práxis dialética em Marx. Constitui-se de uma investigação identificada como pesquisa exploratória e descritiva, produzida por meio de pesquisa bibliográfica, seguindo uma abordagem qualitativa e dialética. Por meio de revisão argumentativa, analisamos seis trabalhos que apresentaram propostas de intervenção em suas conclusões. Encontra-se sistematizado, apresentando uma análise crítica dos dados, auferindo a ausência de proposições concretas de intervenção à luz da práxis materialista-dialética nos trabalhos acadêmicos investigados.

Palavras-chave: Práxis materialista-dialética. Trabalhos acadêmicos. Juventude, trabalho e escola.

1 Introduction

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This paper contains impressions that were obtained by the authors in the development of the curricular component "Youth, Work and School", which was taught in the second semester of 2020, in the Professional Master's course in Professional and Technological Education that belongs to the Graduate Program in Professional and Technological Education (ProfEPT). The purpose of this curricular component was to introduce students to the "State of the Art" on the subject, i.e. knowledge relevant to achieving the educational product, which is part of the course completion work, seen as the final objective of this course.

This is a problematization of the propositions arising from the final considerations and conclusions of a selection of six articles or papers that are part of the aforementioned curricular component. The aim is to critically address potential formulations as practical actions for education, the object of study of these analyzed works. The predominantly general and abstract form of the academic articles aimed at the field of education results in an intangible overview that is difficult to materialize, in terms of constructing the means to intervene in reality, in the light of the materialist and dialectical precepts that invoke praxis as a method.

With this in mind, the aim of this essay is to investigate these proposals from the conclusions and final considerations of this set of six selected texts in order to validate them in the light of Marx's dialectical praxis. In presenting praxis as a tool of dialectics, Marx states: "All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries, which lead theory to mysticism, find their rational solution in human praxis and in the act of understanding this praxis" (Marx, 2007, p. 29). From this statement, it is clear that practical action is the manifestation par excellence of praxis, as a means of understanding the object under investigation through an internal relationship that becomes clear as one intervenes in the reality to be understood.

In the academic tradition of the human sciences, there is a tendency, rooted in the Western rational-analytical tradition of positivism, to place praxis and its

understanding in an external relationship of reciprocal conditioning and determination. This turns praxis into "photographs" of an environment made up of a set of human relationships, which are investigated in a detached way, inappropriate for intervention. "And so, from the outset, praxis is no longer conceived as socially assigned praxis as an action to be carried out by us" (Schmied-Kowarzik, 2019, p. 183).

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In light of these theoretical assumptions, this study examines proposals for interventions in the articles or works indicated in the aforementioned curricular component. Thus, this work aims to analyze and list the intervention proposals from the compulsory reading articles indicated, constituting a critical reading of the state of knowledge in conclusions and final considerations present in the academic works listed in order to validate them in the light of Marx's dialectical praxis. The work is organized into four sections: the first presents the methodological path followed in the investigation; the second offers a brief theoretical foundation; the third presents the results and discussions; and finally, the final considerations of this study are discussed.

2 Methodology

Considering its objective, this study identifies itself as exploratory and descriptive research. As Vergara (2000) points out, descriptive research exposes the characteristics of a given population or phenomenon, establishes correlations between variables and defines their nature. The study was produced following the premises of the qualitative research approach, which in the field of education is justified by the dialectical nature of the school space. We followed the advice of Triviños (2009), who highlights the qualitative approach as a way of searching for meanings in the data, based on the perception of the phenomenon within its context. This approach seeks to capture not only the appearance of the phenomenon but also its essence, to explain its origins, relationships and changes, as well as to intuit the consequences. "In the essence of this antagonistic movement, this approach imprints a rigorous interpretative and reflexive

analysis of action, always committed to the study of values, meanings, beliefs and routines present in the field under investigation" (Borba, 2001, p. 41).

We also used a literature review based on the references of Mendes, Silveira and Galvão (2008), through the constitution of analyses based on stages similar to the development of conventional research, in order to obtain a better understanding of the subject, based on previous studies. According to Mendes, Silveira and Galvão (2008, p. 759), "This method aims to gather and systematize research results on a specific theme or question in a systematic and orderly manner, contributing to a deeper understanding of the subject under investigation".

From the academic papers presented in the "Youth, work and school" curricular component, we selected those that presented proposals for intervention based on the research carried out in their final considerations and conclusions. Given this criterion, of the fourteen papers available, six were selected, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Academic works involved in this study

Nº	Author(s)	Title	Journal	Objective
1	DAYRELL, Juarez	Young people as social subjects	Revista Brasileira de Educação	To discuss how young people from the lower classes, based on their daily lives, construct certain ways of being young.
2	PERALVA, Angelina	Young people as cultural models	Revista Brasileira de Educação	Analyze the socially normed historical models of youth in order to identify the current model of contemporary youth.
3	OLIVEIRA, Júlia Ribeiro; SILVA, Lúcia Isabel C.; RODRIGUES, Solange S.	Access, identity and belonging: relations between youth and culture	Rede de Universidade s EM diálogo	Analyze the relationship between young metropolitans and cultural and leisure activities.
4	MARTINS, Carlos Henrique dos Santos; CARRANO, Paulo Cesar Rodrigues	The school in the face of youth cultures: recognizing in order to dialogue	Revista do Centro de Educação	To present and discuss contemporary social and cultural processes that produce so-called youth cultures and to draw attention to the need for schools to recognize these processes.

5	ALVES, Maria Zenaide; DAYRELL, Juarez	Being someone in life: a study on rural youth and life projects.	Educação e Pesquisa	To problematize the category "life projects", taking as an empirical reference a group of subjects from a municipality in Minas Gerais and reflecting on the importance of this category for contemporary discussions about youth.
6	LARANJEIRA, Denise Helena Pereira; IRIART, Mirela Figueiredo Santos; RODRIGUES, Milena Santos	Problematizing youth transitions out of secondary school	Educação & Realidade	To discuss the relationship between youth sociability and social insertion strategies in a society whose traditional institutions, especially the school and the family, experience limits in offering anchors for youth transitions.

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2021)

After selecting the papers, the process of reading and interpreting the conclusions and final considerations presented was carried out. From this task, significant excerpts were identified to determine the state of knowledge announced as the premise of this work. In addition, the contributions of other authors who study and research the universe of youth, work and school were considered. We then proceeded to critically analyze the available data, as can be seen below.

3 Results and Discussion

Traditionally, in academic articles, intervention proposals are written at the end of the text, usually in the final chapters of final considerations and/or conclusions. In the specific case of this essay, the process of investigating the set of intervention proposals from the articles analyzed was based on extracting the direct quotes from these final chapters, followed by comments that set out the analysis of the content presented.

a) Text analysis 1

To begin this critical examination, we take Juarez Dayrell's work entitled "Young people as social subjects", highlighting the excerpt:

In the context in which they live, any institution on its own - be it school, work or those linked to culture - can do little if it is not accompanied by a broader support network, with public policies that guarantee spaces and times for young people to be able to really place themselves as subjects and citizens, with the right to live their youth to the full (Dayrell, 2003, p. 51).

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The final comment in the concluding remarks of this work prescribes the application of public policies as a formula for resolving the problem investigated, without at least mentioning a concrete property of what is proposed by "public policies", or even a hypothetical example.

b) Text analysis 2

Next, we present a fragment of the final considerations of Angelina Peralva's work entitled "Young people as cultural models":

It seems that the new meaning of youth studies emerges from this set of transformations. While adults are still living under the impact of a model of society that is breaking down, young people are already living in a radically new world, whose categories of intelligibility they are helping to construct. Questioning these categories allows not only a better understanding of the universe of references of a particular age group, but also of the new society transformed by the change (Peralva, 1997, p. 23).

In the final considerations of the text highlighted above, the author did not formulate a proposal for concrete action, limiting herself to the abstract prescription of "questioning". In short, the conclusions drawn from the elucidations presented in the article propose actions that only contribute to the general questioning of the categories of intelligibility of young people. It is a work that is restricted to the theoretical aspect from start to finish, without presenting proposals for practical intervention.

c) Text analysis 3

Continuing, below we highlight an excerpt from the work by Júlia Ribeiro Oliveira, Lúcia Isabel C. Silva and Solange S. Rodrigues, called "Access, identity and belonging: relations between youth and culture":

These difficulties are reinforced by the lack of national and local cultural policies that value the cultural expression of young people. In addition, the cultural foundations of youth education need to be revived, incorporating new languages into the pedagogical process. And finally, it is necessary to recognize and value these activities and spaces as markers of youth's own creation, as instruments for deconstructing prejudices - since they reaffirm differences, rather than denying them -, enabling the reconstruction of senses and meanings about the world (Oliveira; Silva; Rodrigues, 2006, p. 65).

Based on the lack of public policies, we see that the authors are proposing the rescue of cultural bases by incorporating new languages into the pedagogical process. From the context presented, it is believed that there is a need for a set of state actions which, however, does not express what concrete result is expected to be achieved, since the presentation is not based on objective assumptions that are defined in the slightest, which makes it impossible, *ab initio*, to take any concrete action.

d) Text analysis 4

In the fourth work analyzed, "The school in the face of youth cultures: recognizing in order to dialogue", by Carlos Henrique dos Santos Martins and Paulo Cesar Rodrigues Carrano, we used the following excerpts:

It is therefore necessary to take into account different ways of offering young people the possibility of sharing contexts that dialog with their expectations and interests. [...] The school institution and its teachers can open up fields of understanding by adopting investigation and listening as tools for understanding the identities and behaviours of their young pupils [...] [...] (teachers) can also contribute to transforming the school into a space-time in which young people recognize as their own [...] [...] building pedagogical projects and cultural processes that bring teachers and pupils together. By developing common languages, the school can regain its prestige among young people, as well as the pleasure they get from being in a place they can call their own, to the extent that they are recognized as subjects who produce culture (Martins; Carrano, 2011 p. 53).0

In the conclusions presented in the aforementioned work, the authors invested a greater amount of effort, compared to the other works, in describing, in greater detail, the suggestions for intervention as a means of achieving the proposed objectives, based on

the theoretical background covered in the text. However, this greater scope did not necessarily result in a more in-depth detailing of a potential action resulting from the digression.

The authors recommend "taking into account different ways of offering possibilities for sharing contexts", which sounds like pure and simple abstraction. Next, they recommend that the school institution, represented by teachers, institute research (investigations) as tools for understanding students' identities and behaviors. A tautological recommendation, after all, this was the means by which the article was produced.

Furthermore, the authors demand that teachers contribute to transforming the school into "space-time". In fact, this determination reaches the point of inconceivability, since it attributes to the school institution a level of abstraction that transcends its own concrete materiality. Next, they point to the need for pedagogical projects and cultural processes (without defining what is meant by this expression at any point in the text) that bring teachers and students closer together. These propositions envisage the development of common languages, in other words, while maintaining consistency, the authors point to the expected result as being a strictly abstract product, which could not be otherwise since the prescriptions are absolutely vague.

e) Text analysis 5

In the fifth paper analyzed, "Being someone in life: a study of rural youth and life projects", by Maria Zenaide Alves and Juarez Dayrell, we pointed out:

This is what the young people from SGP said when they talked about their life projects. And their statements reinforce the need for schools, especially secondary schools, to be attentive to this fundamental dimension of human beings, especially young people, and to act as a support, thus contributing to the human formation of the new generations and to the construction of the life projects of the young people who are there (Alves; Dayrell, 2015, p. 389).

In this brief recommendation, the authors have limited themselves to pointing out that the school should act as a "support", because in this way it will help to achieve the objectives it has set itself. Unlike the other works analyzed, this conclusion stuck to a general guideline, which, in a way, achieves a higher level of concreteness than the others.

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f) Text analysis 6

Finally, we would like to highlight the work "Problematizing youth transitions out of secondary school" by Denise Helena Pereira Laranjeira, Mirela Figueiredo Santos Iriart and Milena Santos Rodrigues:

[...] more dialogic educational practices should be instituted, guaranteeing real access to universal and local knowledge, positioning them as active participants in the construction of culture, with the potential to act in the present and with a view to thinking about and planning the future, as subjects with trajectories (Pais, 2006). But for this to happen, public schools would have to overcome their state of orphanhood - as one of the young women put it - and really become a priority in public policy [...]. We need to listen to and learn from young people how to build tactics and weaves to face the present in its obstacles, especially for the working classes, in order to maximize and amplify opportunities with a view to future projects to be woven with short-term arrangements and, to a large extent, creative bets. To be attentive to youth cultures, as a re-active way of establishing more liberating expressions of existence, on the margins of hegemonic culture, as - drawing on Pais (2005) - "territory of criticism of established powers". It is up to the subjects of rights themselves in the city and countryside, managers, educators and government officials from the various spheres - federal, state and municipal - to confront this critically and constructively, resulting in the implementation of pedagogical and political practices that go beyond promises, with a view to guaranteeing social rights, including educational rights, which are already constitutionally guaranteed (Laranjeira; Iriart; Rodrigues, 2016, p. 129-130).

Of the works analyzed, the aforementioned is - by far - the one that stands out the most for the number of moral and/or emotional Trigger Words used with the aim of invoking and reinforcing in the reader the political positions implicit in the text (Leong *et al.*, 2020). These words are not intended to objectively punctuate a concrete proposal, but rather to arouse emotions and feelings that encompass a whole subconscious cultural complex of the collective psyche. This aims to arouse a sweeping "us versus them"

dynamic, as a consequence of the manipulation of stereotypical feelings and beliefs through systematic repetition (Singer, 2009).

The authors propose "dialogical educational practices" as a way of achieving a list of benefits that exceed the limits of the axiom itself, since - by definition - every Marxist educational practice must necessarily be dialogical. *In limine*, this assumes a redundant character by self-referencing itself as a proposal. The sentence "Construction of tactics and weaves" is the pinnacle of abstract idealism permeated with wishful thinking. "Weaves" is a term from the world of music that describes the set of different notes played by an instrument in a piece of music. It's believed that the authors used the phoneme of the word's radical to relate it to the term "fabric" used later on.

Wishful thinking is an idiom that describes the general tendency to see the world according to one's desires, without having to take into account the contingencies and restrictions imposed by reality (Gouws, 2013). This involves adopting conclusions that correspond to their desires and avoiding those that contradict their motivations (Sigal, 2000). It is the result of a biased evaluation of the evidence investigated, aimed at a specific conclusion, especially when implicit political convictions are at odds with the results obtained in the investigation (Lord; Ross; Lepper, 1979 *apud* Bastardi; Uhlmann; Ross, 2011). The use of allegorical terms in a denotative sense in ambiguous contexts is also a characteristic of this phenomenon, which usually uses everyday words in a figurative sense (Gouws, 2013).

Also, according to the authors cited above, "It is up to the subjects themselves [...] and [...] managers, [...] to critically and constructively confront these issues, resulting in the implementation of pedagogical and political practices that go beyond promises" (Laranjeira; Iriart; Rodrigues, 2016, p. 129). The proposed action is strictly rhetorical/moral. The authors commit an ontological-idealistic inversion, inverting the equation of the materialist dialectic of which they assume themselves to be conscious agents. "Overcome their state of orphanhood, become a priority in public policies" (Laranjeira; Iriart; Rodrigues, 2016, p. 129). Another Trigger Word that is not verified in the empirical reality, see the political and ideological hegemony that dominates university

chairs with the primacy of Marxism as a theoretical basis (see ProfEPT), which obligatorily binds the student to the conceptual basis of the course, Marxist dialectical-historical materialism.

In addition to this, a study carried out by the Politize Institute (2019), which combines data from the Budget Consultancy of the Chamber of Deputies, the OECD and Folha de São Paulo, shows that in 2016, the year this article was published, education had an investment equal to 5.2% of GDP, which is the same as the average for members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which is generally made up of developed countries.

Thus, investment levels were on an unprecedented upward trend: between 2004 and 2014, federal government spending on education increased by 130% in real terms. Brazil was the third country to invest the most in education in recent years, out of a group of 38 countries. In all, 16.1% of public investment was directed towards education, higher than the average of 11.3% of the organization's members.

4 Conclusions

The purpose of this work was to analyze the conclusions and final considerations in academic papers that were included in the "Youth, Work and School" curricular component of a Master's degree course. This analysis revealed a systematic lack of concrete proposals for intervention in the light of materialist-dialectical praxis.

In order to carry out this assessment, we started from the assumption that Marx's dialectical method seeks a rational procedure that "unveils" reality, which is opaque because, even if it is real, it is false. Its "object" of investigation is only "found" through historical mediation, through the concepts that the research subject brings with him. Therefore, the Marxist scientific method seeks to move away from immediacy towards a mediated understanding of reality, seeking an apprehension of the "real" that goes from the simple to the complex, from the part to the whole, from the singular to the universal, from the abstract to the concrete and from the appearance to the essence of things.

In this analysis, we can see the reliability of Marx's analysis of the tendency that intellectuals share to immerse themselves in an ethereal idealism, which instead of describing reality, projects an alternative reality that doesn't match the concreteness of the human relations they are supposed to investigate and intervene in.

In his critique of idealists, Marx uses academics (teachers) as an example of alienation. According to Marx (2011), the reality in which man is inserted predicts the conditions in which cognition is structured to understand and transform the world with which it interacts. It is in this sense that the tendency to "theorize" praxis tends to become hegemonic in academia, since intellectuals are products of their circumstances:

On the other hand, in a school teacher or a writer who has never left Berlin, whose activity is limited on the one hand to a thankless job and on the other to the pleasures of his thought, whose universe stretches from Moabit to Kopenicke and ends at the door of Ham Sorgo, as if a wall were closing it in, whose relations with this world are reduced to a minimum by his miserable material situation, it is undoubtedly inevitable that in an individual of this kind who feels the need to think, his thought takes on a form as abstract as himself and his own existence, and it is inevitable that, faced with such a helpless individual, thought moves as an ankylosed form, as a force whose exercise offers the individual the possibility of escaping, for a moment, from this "bad world" that is his, the possibility of a momentary pleasure. It is more than obvious that a school teacher's thought can only reflect this empirical fact in the manner of teachers, making it the object of various elucidations (Marx; Engels, 2004, p. 37-38).

In view of these considerations and as a conclusion to this essay, we rely on the writings of Vazquez (1977) in his work "Philosophy of Praxis", a definitive manual of praxis as a tool for understanding and transforming the world. It is clear that practical activity (or practicalism) alone is not praxis, after all, "Theoretical activity provides indispensable knowledge for transforming reality, or it outlines goals that ideally anticipate its transformation, but in either case, it remains intact to reality" (Vazquez, 1977, p. 203). However, there is no point in this theoretical framework if these postulates do not have a minimum of concreteness that enables social agents to assimilate the theoretical assumptions developed, as this "[...] is indispensable for developing real and effective

actions" (1977, p. 207). In short, either academia goes down to concrete reality, or concrete reality goes up to academia. And it will be in a revolutionary way.

This highlights the social and academic importance of researching and studying the issue in question in order to understand it in greater depth and, based on this, to highlight interpretations of proposals arising from the conclusions and final considerations in publications that deal with aspects related to the interests or needs of young people. This will provide the necessary awareness for them to build their life projects and place themselves in society as critical, autonomous social subjects capable of contributing to the transformation of existing realities.

Finally, we can see that other challenges and perspectives loom over the reflections on academic productions involving the context of the youth universe. As this is an unfinished analysis, we suggest other theoretical and empirical searches for aspects that problematize articles and works used in the continuing training of education professionals who work in the context of young people, with the intention of critically addressing potential formulations as practical actions in education, the object of study of these analyzed works.

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