

HOW IS THE TEACHING ACTIVITY CONSTITUTED? AN ANALYSIS BY HISTORICAL-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The Activity Theory developed by Russian thinker Alexis Leontiev offers subsidies to understand human constitution from social relations and knowledge appropriation. In this way, the development of the teacher's actions in teaching should be the activity. Thus, we aim to investigate teachers' performance in the Basic Education to gather elements about the constitution of teaching activity in the labor society. For this, three teachers from public Basic Education contributed to the research: semi-structured interviews were conducted and the work routines were accompanied in the involved schools. In the results, we find that there are possibilities for teaching actions to be activity, even in the face of the alienating and fragmented conditions that the teacher's experiences in this scenario. Also, as considerations, we reiterate the defense for public policies that guarantee concrete conditions for teaching action so that it can fulfill its role with the transformation and emancipation of the subjects by education.

Keywords: work; historical-cultural psychology; teacher

¿Cómo se constituye la actividad docente? Un análisis por la Psicología Histórico-Cultural

RESUMEN

La Teoría de la Actividad desarrollada por el pensador ruso Alexis Leontiev ofrece ayuda para comprender la constitución humana a partir de las relaciones sociales y apropiación del conocimiento. En ese camino, el desarrollo de las acciones del profesor en la enseñanza debe constituirse en actividad. Así, objetivamos investigar docentes en ejercicio en la Enseñanza Básica para reunir elementos sobre la constitución de la actividad docente en la sociedad del trabajo. Para eso, tres profesoras de la Enseñanza Básica pública contribuyeron a la investigación: se realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas y acompañadas las rutinas de labor en las escuelas abarcadas. En los resultados, comprendemos que hay posibilidades de las acciones de enseñanza se constituyeren en actividad, incluso delante de las condiciones alienantes y fragmentadas que el profesorado vivencia en ese escenario. Aún, como consideraciones, hacemos hincapié en la defensa por políticas públicas que garanticen condiciones concretas a la actuación docente para que pueda cumplir su papel junto a la transformación y emancipación de los sujetos por la Educación.

Palabras clave: trabajo, psicología histórico-cultural, profesor

Como se constitui a atividade docente? Uma análise pela Psicologia Histórico-Cultural

RESUMO

A Teoria da Atividade desenvolvida pelo pensador russo Alexis Leontiev oferece subsídios para compreender a constituição humana a partir das relações sociais e apropriação do conhecimento. Nesse caminho, o desenvolvimento das ações do professor no ensino deve constituir-se em atividade. Assim, objetivamos investigar docentes em exercício na Educação Básica para reunir elementos sobre a constituição da atividade docente na sociedade do trabalho. Para isso, três professoras do Ensino Básico público contribuíram com a pesquisa: foram realizadas entrevistas semiestructuradas e acompanhadas as rotinas de trabalho nas escolas envolvidas. Nos resultados, compreendemos que há possibilidades das ações de ensino se constituírem em atividade, mesmo diante das condições alienantes e fragmentadas que o professorado vivencia nesse cenário. Ainda, como considerações, reiteramos a defesa por políticas públicas que garantam condições concretas para a atuação docente para que possa cumprir seu papel junto à transformação e emancipação dos sujeitos pela Educação.

Palavras-chave: trabalho, psicologia histórico-cultural, professor

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INTRODUCTION

This article seeks to expand the analyzes carried out in a doctoral research in Psychology in the line Human Development and Educational Processes in which we focused on the study of the constitution of the teaching activity inserted in the capitalist mode of production¹. As a theoretical-methodological foundation, we used the Historical-Cultural Psychology, elaborated by the Soviets Lev S. Vigotski (1896 - 1934) together with Alexis Leontiev (1903-1979) and Alexander Luria (1902-1977), which comprehend the human formation guided by culture and social relations. With this, we start, in particular, from the Activity Theory elaborated by Leontiev (1975/1978, 1975/2021) to think about the establishment of teaching actions by the teacher, with a focus on work as a category of society organization in which we live.

This concern is evident as a result of the alienating conditions present in capitalist society, which often do not allow actions carried out by subjects to produce personal meaning, nor to constitute an activity. The teacher, in view of this scenario, inserts himself in Education as a professional who, intentionally, must prepare his teaching actions so that his students can access and appropriate the knowledge historically accumulated. These, many times, end up being offered and worked in an unequal way to the social layers - with intense precariousness to minorities of rights - due to the classes segregation, restricting the possibility of human development to all the subjects. We agree with Saviani (2011) that “educational work is the act of producing, directly and intentionally, in each unique individual, the humanity that is historically and collectively produced by the group of men” (p. 13), and we must ensure that Education allows the appropriation of knowledge, enabling the processes of humanization for all subjects.

Education, according to Vygotsky (1934/2001), allows the internalization of socially produced signs, constituting the way of thinking and being of each person, necessarily starting from the social plane. In this way, it is essential to support the teacher’s work as a humanizer, who organizes his actions with a view to human development, allowing his students personal senses to appropriate knowledge, transforming dialectically the reality. It is precisely in the dimension of personal meaning, defined by Leontiev (1975/1978) in his theory, that we defend teaching actions, surpassing only the dimension of work inserted in class society, but aiming for the teaching activity to be established in activity, in developmental teaching.

In this way, the study through the personal senses from the perspective of Historical-Cultural Psychology is present in several areas in Psychology and Education

- and we highlight the growing interest in such concepts to base both research and practices in this dialogue, as revealed Toassa and Smolka (2020). We are interested in the basis of such concepts to investigate the personal meanings attributed by teachers working in Basic Education to gather elements about the constitution of teaching activity in the work society. As a result, we will present the analyzes inspired by the historical-dialectical materialist method and the understanding of subjects based on Historical-Cultural Psychology. To this end, three Brazilian Public Basic Education teachers were the protagonists of our study and shared with us their trajectories, actions and conceptions in the ways of teaching.

Work: from collectivity to the fragmentation of consciousness

The Historical-Cultural Psychology expands its gaze to the constitution of the psyche, considering historical, political and social determinants in the formation of individuality, as we are not born human, but become humanized in the process of appropriating knowledge. The formation of conscience, in this direction, must be thought from the social point of view, since the biological framework that composes us must be overcome by the appropriation of the historical and social development that will be objectified in the subjects, offering specifically human contours for each one (Leontiev, 1975/2021).

From this base, it is essential to appropriate human historicity in an intentionally guided process, as highlighted by Asbahr and Mendonça (2022). The psyche transformation follows along with the relation of each one in their social, historical, political and cultural context. In the man’s dialectic relation, we actually have an activity specifically of our species: the work. It is through it that humanity organizes itself to satisfy its needs. For Tonet (2013), work not only allows the transformation of nature into material goods, but constitutes its subjective reality in men. By transforming concrete reality, the subject is also transformed: “the world is not constituted only by work, but also by many other dimensions. All of them, however, although they have their own specificity and autonomy – relative – have their roots in work” (Tonet, 2013, p. 22). Thus, when carrying out work, each human carries with him the collectivity of human history, as the way of organizing survival is constituted and reproduced. From this perspective, complement Souza, Ferola and Coelho (2019) that work “constitutes an elementary formation of human life, and results from the interaction of biological, psychological and social dimensions” (p. 388). According to Marx (1867/2013), work would be an activity with an essentially social character, since men, when working to produce different materials, act in a certain way with each other and for others. It must be borne in mind that human history is the history of the development of society and of productive activity established. What was previously a joint effort, under

¹ Pessoa, C. T. (2018). *“Being a teacher”: a study of personal sense about a teaching activity of Historic-Cultural Psychology*. Thesis (PhD). Doctoral thesis. Graduate Program in Psychology, State University of Maringá, Maringá, PR.

capitalism occurs in a fragmented way, devoid of meaning and losing totality for those who execute it. For Marx (1867/2013), this mode of production of material life affects men's consciousness, being a product of it and, in a way, will continue to reproduce it.

The work under these conditions no longer constitutes a transforming activity of the psyche, but an alienating element in the constitution of human beings. As Martins and Eidt (2010) assert, work in this scenario is just a form of survival, distancing man from the totality that involves his work actions, causing "physical and mental emptying" (p. 677). Thus, man works to survive, distancing himself from a life aimed at producing transformations in reality with a view to improving the human species.

Pessoa and Leonardo (2021) point out that the scenario of teaching work is permeated by contradictions because it is inserted in a society divided into social classes and the logic that imposes itself on their work is a result of this production system. In this same perspective, Duarte (2004) draws attention to the fact that we use the word "work" to designate employment, the profession that the person has, and no longer to resort to the transformation of nature by man in search of the satisfaction of his needs. In this way, we can affirm that human formation ends up hostage to the organization of society, and in this sense Vigotski (1930) writes: "As a result of the advance of capitalism, the development of material production simultaneously brought with it the progressive division of labor and the growing distorted development of human potential" (p. 5). Faced with this organization, the choice or occupation of certain positions does not occur by the subject's free will, but arising from the class relations and segregations present in society.

In this area, when we think about the teacher's activity and the sale of their workforce, we must consider their professional constitution, involving initial and continuing education and dialogue with professional practice permeated by alienating aspects that are constituents of capitalist society. Lima (2011) presents this discussion and analyzes that the conditions present in the teaching work accentuate the split and alienation of the professional personality formation, interfering in the teaching carried out. Pessoa and Cotrin (2022), in this same direction, emphasize teacher training based on the need to constitute a theoretical-methodological framework that underpins the teacher's work, aiming for evidence of overcoming alienation through Education.

Therefore, we can think that school education should be assured access to cultural goods produced throughout humanity and that the teacher not only perform diffuse actions, but those that promote human development. However, we know that it is not only up to the teacher to take responsibility for the educational process, aiming for better working conditions so that social situations of human development are favored.

Thus, in order to think about the constitution of the teaching activity, we have to bear in mind all these factors so as not to restrict our gaze to blaming the teacher or the particularity of his workplace. The teaching activity must be understood immersed in historical, political, social determinants, participating in a social reality and producing it at the same time. With that said, we have the teacher selling his workforce and carrying out teaching actions that are or are not in activity. When they become an activity and allow the promotion of a personal sense, we manage to make learning a promoter of human development: we are interested in understanding how this activity is formed based on the scenario of Brazilian public education. For this, we will discuss these concepts below in order to know the research carried out and reported in this article with a view to expand the discussions in this scenario.

Teaching activity and personal meaning

The Activity Theory elaborated by Leontiev (1975/1978, 1975/2021) establishes that we do not have a single activity that all human beings will go through in their development. The actions performed will have their roots in the belonging social organization, based on historical, social and political determinants of each context. In this way, we can only analyze the paths for the constitution of each person's personality from the activity developed in their reality, which, according to the Activity Theory, will be the possible way to know and appropriate human productions.

However, it is not any action taken in reality that causes development, and we have what Leontiev (1975/2021) calls the main activity: it is the one that leads to the most effective and significant changes to the psychic processes of human constitution and will have greater prominence in particular moment in the subject's life, promoting development. It should be noted that it is not the one that is done for the longest time, but the one that has the greatest relevance to the psychic course in that period. For school-age students, for example, studying is the activity that will provide greater appropriations and advances to their psyche. The student's study actions should provide him with a sense of learning and, consequently, provide human development.

According to Leontiev (1975/2021), the activity will always be generated by a reason, being the set of actions that will provide its realization. However, the author points out that, with the technical division of labor, man is only partially faced with the results of his actions, which, by themselves, do not satisfy his needs, and the activity empties itself of meaning. One works to get a salary, not to get food (necessity), for example. Given this scenario, we see the challenge of establishing the teaching activity with a motive beyond just getting a salary, but aiming at human development based on teaching actions. As advocated by Longarezi and Franco

(2013) and also Pessoa (2018), it is necessary that the reason for the teacher to be in teaching and perform his actions is related to the development of his activity, which will allow students to construct meanings to knowledge through the teaching process and learning.

In Leontiev's work (1975/2021) we see the translation of personal meaning more linked to the singular dimension that the subject experiences in his trajectory from the appropriate meanings. In a recent study, Toassa (2020) points out that the Vygotskian concept of meaning refers far beyond the individual plane of the subjects, but rather related to the way in which the dialectical relation between individual and society is constituted. In the work carried out here, we understand the constitution of the meaning arising from the activity in an understanding based on singularity, but always socially and historically constituted. Thus, we consider that it is through the meanings that can be intentionally provoked to students that it is possible to create gaps for an Education in a non-alienated way. Faced with these contradictions, the teacher must seek to develop his activity both to meet his survival needs, to the personal reason that leads him to be a teacher, and to be part of a process greater than his actions, that of building a school education that promote meaning – contradictorily challenging given the teaching working conditions.

In the process of scrapping and fragmenting work, Marx (1867/2013) reveals that human doing is transformed into merchandise and the value that is established on this product is not related to the effort expended, but to the social value attributed to the function carried out. The worker, in this case the teacher, ends up with his hours reduced to the sale of the workforce for a salary reward, in limiting conditions for the execution of his activity.

This concern in studying the dimension of work in the teaching activity is necessary, since the public school is governed by the interests of maintaining social classes and the teaching activity is built in these in-betweens. Saviani (2008) argues well that we must fight for the interests of workers, so that their children can have access to quality education, and it is necessary to ensure that there is a democratization of education. With this, he elaborates: the more access and permanence in school one has, the greater the chances for classes in the minority of rights to overcome the conditions experienced. As we have already seen in Pessoa and Leonardo (2020), "investigating the personal meaning attributed to the teaching activity endorses the studies to seek to overcome an education built based only on the immediate demands of everyday life, turning to the transformation of reality and limiting conditions for teacher development" (p. 2). Thus, we have that every educational process is also a political process, and we are clear that it is necessary to defend access to quality education for all.

METHOD

The research² reported here is characterized by a study carried out in the field supported by Leontiev's Theory of Activity, with emphasis on the teaching activity, analyzing the dimension of work present in the teacher's daily life. We conducted semi-structured interviews and followed up on the school routines of three teachers who work in different public elementary schools in a city in Minas Gerais, as we will explain below.

These participants were chosen specifically because we know them from continuing education offered in the area of Psychology and Education and because they share a very close context of work, with at least one work shift in a public teaching position in schools that offer Basic Education in the city in question. We understand that inviting them would offer us clues that their performances could become an activity, provoking human development, as they shared in different ways some examples of teaching actions that could be promoters of personal meaning. Therefore, we aim to know and study the development of their actions from the perspective of Historical-Cultural Psychology.

After conducting the due ethical procedures involving research with human beings, we conducted semi-structured interviews individually with each one of them, at times and places chosen by them. We did not list in advance how many interviews would be necessary, but we carried them out until they contemplated the previously prepared script – which ranged from one to three interviews. The script had the following guidelines: a) professional choice and initial training, b) development of the teaching activity, c) the role of the teacher and d) meanings and senses produced about the teaching activity. These axes allowed the conversation to move between aspects that ranged from initial training, continuing education, professional work, to the unique dimension of each one's experience in the educational area.

Through the semi-structured interview, we start from the definition of Minayo (2007) in which it allows "to build pertinent information for a research object, and approach by the interviewer, of equally pertinent themes" (p. 64). That is, we interviewed with a view to apprehend the contradictions present in each singularity, constituting an investigation of the phenomenon with common guidelines for the three interviewees. Still, according to Cabo et al. (2015), research in Psychology and Education has characteristics from which the reference is based to look at reality and argue that research in these fields should focus on the appropriation of the object to be studied, understanding it in its determinants and aimed at social transformation.

With such guidelines, when we go to the field

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considering the uniqueness of each context, we emphasize that, because there are three professors working in different but public institutions, keeping the due proportions, the schools shared practically the same infrastructure and working conditions. Thus, in addition to the interviews, we also monitored a few days of the teachers' work routine in order to deepen the analyzes regarding how the meanings elaboration about the activity occurs, and also how the dimension of work is present in the work. development of teaching actions.

The interviews were transcribed and the notes taken during the observations were gathered so that, afterwards, we could carry out an exhaustive reading of the materials in order to build a corpus of analysis that gathered in related themes, so that we could deepen the looks regarding the categories that we study qualitatively. Next, we share part of the results and analyzes of the research through excerpts from the interviews and discussing from the theoretical framework proposed here.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We will briefly present the characterization of the teachers to continue with the data discussion. We chose three fictitious names to designate them, but with a certain affection in choosing them: Alice, Clara and Maria. They worked in different schools and, at the time, the three held at least one position in the Municipal Education Network in Minas Gerais.

Alice, in the educational area for eight years, worked in the morning in the public network and in the afternoon shift at a private educational institution. Graduated in Pedagogy, she said that she felt more "freedom" to work in the public school with Early Childhood Education, but that in the private school in Elementary School she felt that they are more rigid and strictly followed the didactic material. She also said that, although there was such rigidity, there was a guarantee that the syllabus would be worked on, as the parents paid the monthly fee. During our monitoring of the work routines in these two spaces, we realized that the schools had a high number of teacher/student ratios and the organization of teaching was based on the routine fulfillment of the school, to which the teacher should adjust and develop their skills actions: in public education, the routine of care and in private, compliance with the didactic material. Alice also shared that, even when looking for a performance in the classroom that places the student as the protagonist and that Education should form citizens for society, she often saw herself as a content executor and that regardless of the students' time: "the class goes on".

Teacher Clara, on the other hand, studied Teaching at High School, graduated in Biology and after years of teaching, she studied Pedagogy. Her initial training trajectory, even already working as a teacher, did not correspond with her initial intentions: she did not want

to be a teacher. However, she reveals that, over time, she got closer and closer to Education until she felt the need to graduate as a pedagogue. At the time of the research, she was working in Elementary Education in a public school. In general, she considered herself a teacher who was not very flexible and who often focused more on the content when developing her actions in the classroom. However, she reports that she had been noticing her performance being transformed by the extracurricular projects she was developing with the students.

Finally, we present Maria: in Education for 25 years, she has already worked in Early Childhood Education, Elementary School and at the time of the research she was the Pedagogical Coordinator of Early Childhood Education at a school in the Municipal Network. This school was reported by her as a "good school" and "competitive", as there was always more demand for vacancies than what was offered, and it was also characterized by being an institution located close to the Municipal Teacher Training Center, with a proximity to professionals who worked in the network. The school structure, as much as it looked like the other municipal ones, was quite spacious and had a patio, a play area and an extensive lawn with a well-renovated finish. Maria had already crossed her trajectory with ours on a few occasions prior to the continuing education that we offered during a master's research carried out - which was where we chose her - as she has always sought partnerships with the Psychology and Pedagogy course at the University of the city, interested in continue their studies and establish exchanges that could benefit the Municipal Network.

In this sense, without the intention of exhausting the information about the teachers and their trajectories, we portray here a north to read some excerpts from the interviews and consider the analyzes pertinent to the categories of work, teaching activity and personal meaning. We are interested in the common denominator in which the professors tell us how they organized their teaching actions, how theoretical and experiential formations were present in their daily work and also the meanings produced about it. At this point, we will focus on aspects that involve analyzes regarding the dimension of work and how the teaching activity is constituted based on their trajectories and actions.

We started the analyzes with Clara: graduation and teaching degree in Biology and the performance in the area of teaching traversed by several contradictory paths. She reports her entry into the Education area being run over by paths that were initially not of her interest, and states that she regrets not having invested in the Chemistry area, which she really liked: "*It wasn't what I wanted, I said no. I was going to teach, I was going to drop it, I don't want to*". However, she tells us that, because she had the opportunity to teach and stay in the city where she wanted to live, she decided to become a

teacher, receive her salary, and the years went by.

The **motives** explained by Clara that initially led her to teaching did not correspond to the purpose of the teaching activity, as they were only a means of having a job that would allow her to live in a certain city. However, she reveals to us that when she decided that she would really be a teacher, she says that she would be “*a teacher with soul*”. With that, she reports that she realized the need to study and return to a more in-depth qualification in the Education area, even though she had been working for a long time. This change in the way Clara looks at her work, which initially changes from being a teacher for salary to later dedicating herself to teaching in full, may give us indications that her **actions** could be established as an **activity**, with meanings produced, and not just a job.

We resume Leontiev (1975/2021) by saying that motives can change according to the conditions that the subject experiences, and, in this case, we can think that the extracurricular projects in which Clara participated at school could offer subsidies so that her motive of being in Education would change, and invest in their teacher training. From a motive-stimulus, her motive becomes a motive that forms meaning, because if Clara changes the “*why*” she is a teacher, the need that motivates her in conducting the teaching activity can be focused on Education, teaching, and not just obtaining the salary. Still, when seeking to study Pedagogy, the appropriation of concepts related to the area of teaching, in particular, also expanded its reference with regard to its own professional training - which is in line with the defense that teaching is not only done in the classroom practice, but with the need for theoretical and methodological appropriation for this. In her words: “*This issue of being the very mediator of knowledge [...]. This I learned in Pedagogy... And this reflection... What I am doing, what I want... What I expect from my student...*”.

We saw in this way that graduation training in Pedagogy allowed other looks at the way Clara considered her performance, the relationship with her students, the development of her teaching actions and, what was previously seen as a job, it was managed to be considered as a job, a function, a profession.

As we followed Alice’s daily life, we realized that the teaching activity more reproduces the logic present in school institutions than allows thinking about an Education that transforms the subject and enables emancipation through access and discussion about school knowledge. We deduced that, even though she reported recovering the authors of their graduation and other theorists to support their practice, the activities to which we had access did not reveal that it was possible to organize teaching based on their references, their meanings about the content to be worked on, as it carried out what was already planned.

Understanding the contradictions present in the

constitution of the phenomena, we ask ourselves if the inseparability between theory and practice has become evident, both in initial and continuing teacher training, and in the public policies elaboration that establish the teaching conditions in the Education scenario. These determinants affect the construction of meaning in the teaching activity and that, even if the reasons coincide with the purpose of Education, without appropriate training and proper working conditions, a gap is created in the realization of the Education purpose.

In the Alice’s case, even with her reason for being in the field of Education to seek to approach the formation of subjects through knowledge and to aim to reconcile theoretical perspectives that she believed to be interesting for her work, she saw herself with her “*hands tied*” in the face of the rhythms that the public and private school printed on their job. She revealed that she was there in addition to the salary, but at the end of the day she perceived herself to be replaceable by someone else, as she carried out her function almost mechanically. In the same way, Clara revealed to us that it was necessary to seek professional training in the area in which she was already active by her own means, only being possible to reflect, think and appropriate knowledge specific to the Education area outside the school context.

According to Leontiev (1975/1978), the Education must offer meaning to the student so that he understands the reason for his studies, relating them to his life. With this, we infer that it is necessary that the knowledge makes sense to the teacher, so that they can promote meaning to the students. In addition, we saw from the data with these two teachers that it is not enough just to have the will or to know the importance of an appropriate formation for the development of a teaching activity, but concrete working conditions are necessary so that meaning can be produced from the knowledge.

Schools in which the classrooms are full of students and the teacher performs his work of transmitting content exist and continue to function. However, we reflect on the logic in which the pace and meaning of the teaching activity are imprinted: those who organize and develop teaching actions are often hostage to the organization of the school, even in cases in which they seek actions that break with the mercantile logic within of school contexts. However, we set ourselves the challenge of analyzing the gaps that exist so that the teaching activity is constituted in such a way as to relate the contents that will be appropriated by the students with their reality, producing meaning for both the teacher and the student - which often implies against the imposed conditions.

Let us return to Leontiev’s defense (1975/1978) that knowledge in school education should provide the student with meaning, so that he can transform the relation between the learner and the reality in

which he participates. We ask ourselves: is it possible to prepare an activity that promotes meaning for the student in such a short time and with limiting working conditions? Classrooms with around 40 students lined up who barely hear the teacher at the front of the room give us clues that little investment is made in the human development of subjects and it is closer to the need to meet goals and pass the year. However, we are clear that the more awareness one has of the reasons attributed to the teaching activity, that is, the reasons for being in this activity, the more humanizing actions will be possible within the educational scenario, even in adverse working conditions.

A report about the attempt to constitute a school context in which the teaching demands can be discussed in order to allow the teaching actions to be shared, thought and built collectively is shared by Maria, in her role as coordinator in a public school: *“While each area coordinator prepared a monthly meeting, I prepared the four, I did a general one and the specific ones, because it seems that I saw that only the general one was not enough”*.

In addition to the monthly meetings offered by the coordinators, Maria tells us that, on her own initiative, she prepared weekly meetings, as there was not enough time in just one meeting to work on the needs of the teaching routine. There is evidence of a teaching activity within their respective schools occurring in an “individualized” way, that is, how each coordinator or supervisor understands, in their own way, how they should conduct the collective spaces of constitution of the teaching corpus. Do we, in fact, have a collective that acts with the same educational purpose or do we have professionals who perform actions disconnected from the realities of co-workers?

The work dimension can be experienced by teachers in different ways, depending on how spaces for exchange and sharing among professional colleagues are organized. The perspective of teaching actions being configured as an activity with personal meanings close to the purpose of Education is more likely to occur if thought of in an articulated way and surpassing just the daily work. However, work still assumes different characteristics when it comes to public and private initiative. Alice tells us that she perceives differences in how she manages to prepare her work in public and private school, and in the first one it is possible to work with more flexibility in the content elaboration. In the private sector, the material is already fully ready:

I work in the public network and I work in the private network. In public schools I work with project pedagogy, I develop projects. [...] In the private network, I have that material that comes with pedagogical guidance. So I just apply. (Excerpt from Alice interview).

The role that the teacher occupies in the two institutions of school education makes us think about the purpose of Education and how the educational process is conducted. When we followed Alice’s school routine, we saw that, even though she was stiff with regard to the planning of her activity in the private school, we realized that in this institution, it was guaranteed and even demanded that the contents be worked on in the different years of teaching. She goes so far as to report the difference in her own way of conducting the teaching activity based on the school position in working with school contents, and says that she “asked” much more from private school students, as this was required of her. We can infer that the private school seeks to ensure access and appropriation of content by students, as it is required of teachers that knowledge is learned. Regardless of how the teacher believes he should conduct the teaching activity, the content must be worked on and required for, as parents paid to receive this product. The teacher, in this sense, performs the work of executing actions, delivering the expected “product”.

This relationship between the teaching and learning process built with Education as a product that must be achieved, subjects the teacher to a position of mere executor of activities and tasks already prepared by a third party. We noticed in this institution the prioritization of content, whether learned or memorized, not giving gaps for conducting the teaching activity to work about differences and singularities present in the process of appropriation of knowledge by students. However, at the end of the day, the content was worked on and demanded from the students. In the public school, we noticed other nuances present in the way the teaching activity takes place. Even with the freedom to choose and prepare the material, the study activity took a back seat, as the school routine trampled over the progress of activities. The teacher tells us that the pedagogical activities were often interrupted by the care routine, such as bathing and lunch, and she noticed the lack of continuity in the contents that needed to be worked on.

Here we launch analyzes on Education and the conditions offered to teaching work and teaching organization directly related to a project of society. The way in which the school space is thought, arranged and organized reveals who and what is the priority of the whole process. In the reports and observations from these two institutions, it was not possible to perceive in any of them the student as the main actor in the process. Even though the teaching year was aimed at the student, the priority was either following the content to be worked on – private school – or following the school routine precisely – public school.

From Historical-Cultural Psychology, we understand that reality is made up of contradictory phenomena,

and we perceive these aspects in the construction of Alice's performance, for example. Even emphasizing the importance of how the teaching activity should be conducted, she reveals that she cannot do it, either due to structural determinants or even due to the way in which the school education where she operates is organized. Asbahr and Mendonça (2022) point out the need to establish, by the teacher, the study activity together with the students, focusing on the way they understand reality, on the constitution of their superior psychic functions and on the formation of their conscience.

Saviani (2008) takes a position regarding Education and the ways of organizing teaching, stating that school content must be appropriate for the humanization of subjects to occur and it must be the school's objective to systematize and work on these contents. When we find a space in which knowledge is not the priority of the educational process, we have fertile ground for an Education that does not allow for the emancipation of subjects. Thus, the school ends up leaving its primary function, which is the presentation and appropriation of scientific content, in the background.

In order to better understand how this occurs, we turn to Leontiev (1975/2021) when exposing that in the organizational format of capitalist society, the worker loses the connection of the actions that make up his activity, with work having dehumanizing and alienating characteristics. In this case, we see the fragmentation of work both for the teacher and for the student who participates in this process, since the actions themselves are not coordinated for a joint purpose, but to correspond to the immediate needs present in the everyday scenario: whether it be for the acquisition of content in the private school, whether for basic child care in the public school.

Thus, we can say that the way in which the school institution is organized and the present working conditions do not allow activities to be coordinated and directed towards a collective purpose, but only apart from it. Even successful practices are developed in isolation from other professionals within the teaching organization. We have the alienation present in work relations directly interfering in the process of humanization and formation of conscience of the subjects, because the students who participate there also share this way of living in capitalist society. Such analyzes can start from the elaborations that Vygotsky elaborates when explaining the human constitution and the conditions given for it to occur necessarily inserted in a specific social, cultural, political and economic context – marked by the capitalist mode of production as pointed out by Checchia et al. (2022).

With that, the challenge of creating conditions for the teaching actions to be constituted in activity, promoting development and not just considering this profession

as executor of isolated actions and aimed at a product. The dimension of work will be present in the teacher's daily life, but we must seek conditions so that he is not the protagonist, but who offers ways to transform and contribute to the constitution of the psyche of the subjects through Education in an emancipatory way.

CONSIDERATIONS

In the research carried out and here in parts shared, we launched our efforts in the construction of elements that make it possible to study how the teaching activity is constituted. We have seen, according to Historical-Cultural Psychology, the constitution of the psyche being composed of social, political, cultural and economic aspects, and the role of Education in guaranteeing the appropriation of historically elaborated objectivations. In this regard, teaching actions should focus on the constitution of the student's study activity, and, consequently, it should be organized into activity for the teacher, promoting human development. However, we have seen that, due to alienating work conditions and other determinants, the reasons that lead teachers to develop their practice are close to the personal and immediate needs of their daily lives, and while recognizing and highlighting the importance of Education promoting human formation, they do not find possible ways of a transforming relationship in school contexts.

As we aim in the present study to investigate teachers working in Basic Education to gather elements about the constitution of the teaching activity in the work society, we infer that there are possibilities for the teaching actions to be constituted in activity, but we are aware of the alienating and fragmented conditions that the teaching profession experience in this scenario. Thus, we understand that, even in the face of adverse working conditions, the more the reason for the teacher to be in the area carrying out teaching actions is closer to the purpose of emancipation through Education, the more gaps will be possible for human development to occur through learning. We defend that the teacher's teaching actions can constitute an activity and the interviewed teachers contribute to understanding some challenges and characteristics that need to be considered in the daily life of Brazilian schools.

That is why we have Leontiev's Theory (1975/1978, 1975/2021) pointing out that it is necessary to turn to Education and in it the teacher to offer meaning to the contents worked, taking care of the formation of the subject as a whole, with the student knowing why studies and relating them to their reality. Overcoming just the particular dimension of carrying out teaching actions is necessary and urgent when we think about teaching. Thus, it is through school education that subjects will have more and more chances to advance in their development and transform their realities. The knowledge must not only be appropriated, but elaborated by the students, relating it to previous

knowledge that each one already has, expanding the cultural repertoire of each subject.

With that, it is necessary to defend appropriate conditions of teaching work in this society, and also to guarantee that the school is a space of human development with the establishment of the teaching activity that promotes personal meanings to the teacher. Through this and other researches in the interface between Psychology and Education, it will be possible to constitute elements for overcoming the fragmented and alienated reality and, we understand that Education is an important way for this to happen.

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