

Historical-cultural contributions to School Psychology in Inclusive Special Education

Contribuições histórico-culturais à Psicologia Escolar na Educação Especial Inclusiva

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ABSTRACT

The objective is to discuss the contributions of School Psychology to Special Education under the perspective of inclusive education in the light of Historical-Cultural Psychology (HCP). School Psychology is approached as an area of professional activity that applies theoretical-methodological studies and also raises them. For the purpose, conceptual aspects about school education, the development of the psyche, special education and inclusion are presented. School Psychology, based on the central thesis of HCP, the social production of psyche, and recovering the theoretical-methodological foundations of Vigotskian defectology, can effectively contribute to unveiling and confronting school complaints and the production of school failure. This production, not rarely, has been the gateway to Special Education, and in this teaching modality it can be installed under the shadow of diagnoses and reports. It is concluded that School Psychology must maintain a critical perspective, in defense of the good school, one that exercises the classic function of teaching

RESUMO

Objetiva-se discutir as contribuições da Psicologia Escolar à Educação Especial sob a perspectiva da educação inclusiva à luz da Psicologia Histórico-Cultural (PHC). Aborda-se a Psicologia Escolar como área de atuação profissional que aplica estudos teórico-metodológicos e também os suscitam. Para o propósito, são apresentados aspectos conceituais sobre a educação escolar, o desenvolvimento do psiquismo, a educação especial e a inclusão. A Psicologia Escolar ao se pautar na tese central da PHC, a produção social do psiquismo, e ao recuperar os fundamentos teórico-metodológicos da defectologia vigotskiana, pode contribuir de modo efetivo no desvelamento e no enfrentamento das queixas escolares e na produção do fracasso escolar. Esta produção, não raramente, tem sido a porta de entrada para a Educação Especial, e nessa modalidade de ensino ela pode se instalar sob a sombra dos diagnósticos e laudos. Conclui-se que à Psicologia Escolar cabe manter-se numa perspectiva crítica, em defesa da boa escola, aquela que exerce a função clássica de ensinar

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and that seeks appropriate strategies for this, since all people - with and without disabilities - can learn. This struggle implies guarantees of access to enrollment and school, permanence with effective conditions of access to scientific, artistic, philosophical, ethical and coexistence contents in society, and completion of studies with appropriation and certification.

Keywords: Historical-Cultural Psychology. Schooling. Human development.

e que busca estratégias adequadas para tanto, visto que todas as pessoas – com e sem deficiência - podem aprender. Essa luta implica garantias de acesso à matrícula e à escola, de permanência com condições efetivas de acesso aos conteúdos científicos, artísticos, filosóficos, éticos e de convivência em sociedade, e de terminalidade dos estudos com apropriação e certificação.

Palavras-chave: Psicologia Histórico-Cultural. Educação Escolar. Desenvolvimento Humano.

1 Introduction

Given the many aspects and possible approaches that can be considered, addressing school psychology requires clear boundaries, as Antunes (2008) has already pointed out. It is one of the oldest areas of training and practice in the field of psychology. In agreement with the author, this text discusses the contributions of school psychology to special education from the perspective of inclusive education in light of historical-cultural psychology. This text is the result of various scientific investigations conducted or directed by the authors, as well as their work as school psychologists. It addresses the challenges posed by basic education. These challenges involve education professionals, students, and families/communities, stimulating studies and the rise of syncretic and chaotic practices searching for answers or explanatory elements of reality. The theoretical thinking presented here is the result of this search and encourages a return to concrete thought, although this understanding is not widely accepted in the school environment. It is not uncommon to encounter teachers, educators, psychologists, and other professionals who claim that theory and practice are different and that, in practice, whatever produces results is necessary, i.e., whatever is effective.

A significant portion of professionals and scholars in school psychology have taken a stand against dichotomous and ahistorical understandings such as these. It is important to make this explicit, given the widespread rejection of theory and broad disqualification of science in Brazil. It is worth

remembering that Moraes (2001) addressed the "retreat from theory" at the beginning of this millennium when he drew attention to the moment of re-signification of everything, from theory to metanarratives. Moraes's observations are gaining momentum, especially in Brazil under the current federal government's policies, particularly those related to education. Unfortunately, this retreat can also be observed in schools themselves since they do not always fulfill their traditional role. What is that "function"? Historical-Critical Pedagogy, which converges with Historical-Cultural Psychology in adopting the same philosophical and methodological matrix of historical-dialectical materialism, provides the answer: the classic function of schools is the transmission and assimilation of systematized knowledge. This is the goal to be achieved. It is the natural source for developing the methods and organizational forms of all school activities, i.e., the curriculum. Here, we can recover the comprehensive concept of the curriculum as the organization of core activities distributed throughout the school day. Therefore, a curriculum is a functioning school, or a school performing its proper function. (Saviani, 2011, p. 17).

In light of the above, it is important to reiterate that the theory has been disqualified because the school serves many other purposes besides teaching and studying. The school is a space where one learns to think about reality and oneself. It is a place where consciousness develops beyond empirical immediacy and where the psyche develops.

This issue is exacerbated by the increasing adoption of virtual relationships between people, as well as between people and objects, things, and nature. Remote teaching is becoming an increasingly "plausible" proposal for all grades and ages. This is very concerning because, in addition to what has already been mentioned (Saviani & Galvão, 2020), there is a worry that this makes it easier for content to be copied and pasted without proper understanding. It is therefore essential to highlight the classic function of school, lest School Psychology lose its "classic function." What would that "function" be?

School psychology should intervene with students, teachers, administrators, families, guardians, and the external community so that everyone who passes through school is transformed by what it offers and takes from it, as Vygotsky and Luria (1996) suggest. To this end, school psychology must identify the factors that contribute to effective teaching, which fosters learning and development, as Vigotskii (2010) discussed in relation to learning and intellectual development during the school years.

In Brazil, the 'classic function' of school psychology is discussed in various publications, including the *Federal Council of Psychology's Technical References for Psychologists Working in Basic Education (2019)*. This publication presents various actions and strategies for the work of these professionals and highlights education as a fundamental right. Education is recognized as an area of dispute in the *References* section, which is understandable given the budget allocated to it and its impact on ideas and social practices. This highlights the need for psychology to engage with education and collaborate with professionals from related fields to advocate for public policies that ensure the fulfillment of this right. This struggle is intensifying, contributing to the exhaustion and illness of those involved as schools and teachers are increasingly disqualified (FACCI; ESPER, 2021). There is an increased demand for scientific production, and attacks on this production and the dissemination of this knowledge are becoming more commonplace due to precarious working conditions or explicit denial. Although it may not be obvious, accessibility to and appropriation of this scientific production by the working class, especially the poorest, is being denied, as opportunities for contact with and mastery of this knowledge are increasingly restricted.

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is recognized as a target of dispute in the References section, which is understandable given the budget allocated to it and its impact on ideas and social practices. This explains the need for psychology to focus on education and collaborate with professionals from related fields to advocate for public policies that ensure this right is fulfilled. This struggle is intensifying, contributing to the exhaustion and illness of those involved as schools and teachers are increasingly disqualified (FACCI; ESPER, 2021). There is an increased demand for scientific production and attacks on this production and the dissemination of this knowledge through precarious conditions or explicit denial. Though it may not be apparent, there is an ongoing denial of accessibility to and appropriation of this scientific production by the working class, particularly the poorest, whose opportunities to engage with and master this knowledge are increasingly limited.

Given the recognition of the role of School Psychology in shaping the normality of people's lives with and without disabilities or special educational needs (SEN), it must therefore be uncompromising in its defense of the right to quality basic education for all. The commitment must continue not only to guarantee life, for which so much was fought in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but also to develop people of all social classes, races, ethnicities, creeds, and so on, to the levels already achieved by humankind. Taking a critical perspective, this position does not attribute the reasons for remaining on the margins of the development process to increasingly larger segments of the population. It questions the meritocratic and ableist discourse that is strengthened by the retreat of theoretical thinking.

Professionals in this field stand out because they recognize the transience or historicity of the phenomena they are called upon to explain and intervene in. Asserting the right to life and development requires understanding the origins and processes that create problems establishing causal relationships that may be difficult for schools, families, and societies to understand because they require a theoretical framework. This knowledge

allows us to look beyond the surface of school complaints and problems, which are often explained by tacit knowledge. This knowledge is so naturalized that it engenders explanations and interventions that are not only mistaken, but also dangerous because of what they may provoke.

2 From a critical perspective

A few decades ago, it became possible to identify a body of academic and scientific knowledge that takes school psychology as its object of analysis. This body of knowledge forms a theoretical and methodological framework that supports the field³ of school psychology. However, it is essential to move beyond analyses that focus on individuals or specific groups or that address biological and clinical problems that are, in fact, structural, social, and historical in nature. One example is Patto's (1983, 1987, 1990) theories on the causes of school failure, which questioned the high failure rates in early grades. Patto discusses whether school failure is due to intellectual disability, cultural differences, or inconsistent literacy instruction, revealing weaknesses in the country's educational systems. These questions would be inexplicable using the usual parameters, which lead to individualization and medicalization. Along these critical lines, Souza (1996) theorizes about school complaints and psychologist training, and Machado (1996) discusses psychological assessment.

These theories paved the way for a critical stance in school psychology. Rather than merely adjusting individuals to conceptions of normality, they sought to question established practices in this field at a pivotal moment in the development of a democratic society in Brazil. These theories point to the ethical and political nature of this field of practice and the theoretical developments that could guide it.

³ The journal *Psicologia Escolar e Educacional* (School and Educational Psychology) regularly publishes studies on this subject, covering a range of specific issues, as can be seen at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/pee/>.

Studies from the 1980s and 1990s contributed to consolidating a critical perspective and formed groups in Brazil that adopted Historical-Cultural Psychology as a theoretical framework for their work (Asbahr, Souza, & Barroco, 2021). Following the end of the military dictatorship, the drafting and implementation of the Brazilian Constitution, and the Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education (Lei de Diretrizes e Base da Educação Nacional - LDBEN 9.394/1996) (Brazil, 1988; 1996), psychology sought spaces in which to confront all forms of oppression and discrimination against people. For this purpose, it defined research objects and methodologies. Its insertion into education as a professional field and not merely as a discipline that forms the basis of educational psychology bears these marks.

With the LDBEN, the question of School Psychology's contribution to Special Education has been on the agenda for discussion. Special Education spans the levels of Basic Education (Early Childhood Education, Elementary School, Middle School, and High School) and Higher Education (Undergraduate and Graduate) as well as other types of education.

Twenty-five years after the enactment of the LDBEN and the approval of various laws and documents regulating special education from an inclusive perspective, including Law 13.925/2019 (Brazil, 2019), which allows psychology and social work professionals to join multidisciplinary teams of education professionals in public school systems, the debate on these contributions has intensified to ensure high-quality public education. In this regard, it is crucial for school and educational psychologists to identify and analyze the structural contradictions of contemporary society, educational policies, and existing institutional tensions. These factors contribute to school-related issues and must be considered to avoid addressing students in isolation from their context.

School psychology contributes to this effort by addressing issues such as school dropout rates, violence in schools, teacher and student illness, racism against Black and indigenous people, and discrimination based on

gender, sexual orientation, poverty, and belief. These issues arise amid difficulties related to teaching and learning; the inadequate theoretical and methodological training of teachers and other professionals; the lack of adequate conditions for educational work; the difficulty of safely and dignifiedly getting to and staying in school; the insufficient number of professionals; and the low and outdated salaries of teachers.

All of this becomes even more worrying given the exceptional circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the absence of a national policy that values life, health, and education to tackle it. In this sense, when we consider these issues affecting the target audience of special education, which requires multiple adjustments/adaptations for teaching and effective learning, the concern increases. Discussing the contributions of School Psychology to Special and Inclusive Education requires us to think about its responsibilities and to consider Inclusive Special Education and the school that is being advocated for.

3 School Psychology: a science-driven professional field

As Schlindwein (2010) points out, the link between psychology and education has been the subject of interest in various academic and scientific studies. By identifying the contextual and historical demands that led to the development of the field of Educational Psychology and School Psychology, which involves scientific knowledge about teaching, learning, and human development, we can recognize the role of education in shaping individuals.

According to Antunes (2008, p. 470),

Educational Psychology can be considered a sub-area [sic] of psychology, which presupposes the latter as an area of knowledge. An area of knowledge is understood as a systematic and organized corpus of knowledge produced according to defined procedures, referring to certain phenomena or sets of phenomena that constitute reality, based on specific ontological, epistemological, methodological, and ethical concepts.

Antunes (2008, p. 470) distinguishes it from School Psychology, which is characterized by its professional scope and concerns

[...] It is a specific field of action that focuses on the process of schooling and the relationships established in schools. Its actions are based on knowledge produced by educational psychology, other areas of psychology, and other fields of study. Therefore, it should be emphasized that, while educational and school psychology are intrinsically related, they are not identical and cannot be reduced to one another; each retains its relative autonomy.

Both can encompass "a diversity of concepts, approaches, and theoretical systems that comprise knowledge, particularly in the field of human sciences, of which psychology is a part" (Antunes, 2008, p. 470). Educational psychology is part of the fundamentals of education curriculum, which trains teachers and educators.

Thus, the content and methods of this discipline are of interest when seeking a critical perspective in schools. Since the early days of psychology as a science and profession⁴, psychologists have largely been linked to special education through psychometric practices focusing on evolutionary-maturational aspects of human development — a link that remains today.

However, this approach is limited by idealistic and positivist psychological theories of human development and limits our understanding of students who do not keep up with the pace of the class or their peers of similar ages. The practice of comparison is based on the concept of normality, generally guided by the prevalence of behaviors considered desirable or acceptable for certain social groups and life stages. With the support of these theories, it is quite common not to consider the various factors affecting students' school lives or to acknowledge their existence. Consequently, school and extracurricular measures or programs addressing their needs and demands often go unrepresented.

⁴ Law No. 4,119, dated August 27, 1962, provides for training courses in psychology and regulates the profession of psychologist.

In part, it is simpler and more convenient for psychologists, teachers, and educators to find justifications or answers for their students' learning difficulties and academic failure in the students' bodies, behavior, and family relationships (through biologization and moral bias, respectively). This practice of individualizing structural problems in the subject, their family, or their socioeconomic and/or ethnic-racial groups discards mediation, thought, and subsequent systematic and consistent contestation. Ultimately, it becomes naturalized. Taking a contrary position is laborious. It demands attentive, responsible, and purposeful estrangement and the acceptance of repeated denial of analyses and consequent redirections in school routines and life in general.

School psychology work must therefore be based on science, which is defined here as a set of systematized knowledge that can be proven and goes beyond the appearances of phenomena or objects to reveal their relationships, which are not immediately or obviously articulated. Science must reveal its origins, constitutive processes, movements, and contradictions. Scientific knowledge must be transformed into school knowledge. Explaining why this does not occur or why this knowledge does not engage students must be the focus of school psychology. As Saviani (2011, p. 201) writes, "The role of the school is not to show the visible face of the moon—that is, to reiterate the everyday—but to show its hidden face—that is, to reveal the essential aspects of social relations hidden beneath the phenomena immediately apparent to our perception."

Similarly, Luria (1996) wrote, "V. I. Lenin emphasized that the object of knowledge, and consequently the object of science, is not things themselves, but rather the relationships between them" (p. 11). According to Rubinshtein (1961, p. 13, our translation), *psychology as a science is "the science of psychic phenomena, that is, of the brain functions that reflect objective reality."* Rubinshtein (1961, p. 13, emphasis in original, our translation)⁵ explains that:

⁵ "Los fenómenos psíquicos, sensaciones y percepciones, representaciones y pensamientos, sentimientos y deseos, necesidades y intereses, inclinaciones y capacidades, cualidades volitivas y rasgos de carácter, nos son tan familiares que a simple vista parece que los conocemos bien. Sin embargo, la concepción científica y verdadera de estos fenómenos

Psychic phenomena, sensations and perceptions, representations and thoughts, feelings and desires, needs and interests, inclinations and abilities, volitional qualities, and character traits are so familiar to us that at first glance it seems that we know them well. However, the scientific and true conception of these phenomena is one of the great problems of science. Analyze that

The main object of psychology is the study of the laws governing psychic functions and their development, that is, to understand how the reflex image of the objective world is formed and perfected in the human brain, how the brain develops its activity in accordance with it, and how the psychic traits of personality are formed. (RUBINSHTEIN, 1961, p. 13, emphasis in the original, our translation)⁶

When discussing psychic functions, the author does not propose an immersion in the brain. Rather, he believes that "the psyche or human consciousness reflects objective reality. *The study of psychological laws means establishing the dependence of psychic phenomena on the objective conditions of human life and activity*" (Rubinshtein, 1961, p. 24, emphasis in original, our translation).

This human activity allows humans to live and reproduce in accordance with temporal, geographical, cultural, and socioeconomic spaces. It may be linked to work, the productive process, schooling, and so on. Understanding that this activity guarantees life in its biological and generic human aspects is of the utmost importance. It opens up a range of possibilities for theorizing and intervention in school psychology in favor of developing all subjects involved. This is why we must uncompromisingly defend good schooling for all, since knowledge is transmitted to new generations there, equipping them to have an increasingly indirect and complex relationship with their peers and the world, mediated by thought.

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⁶ “El objeto principal de la Psicología es el estudio de las leyes que rigen las funciones psíquicas y su desarrollo, o sea, conocer cómo se forma y perfecciona la imagen reflexa del mundo objetivo en el cerebro del hombre, cómo éste desarrolla su actividad de acuerdo con ella y cómo se forman los rasgos psíquicos de la personalidad.”

4 School Psychology and the Struggle for good schools

These theoretical aspects allow School Psychology to recognize that the inclusive perspective of Special Education, which has been strongly advocated by scholars, teachers, administrators, and other education professionals since the Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994), is not limited to enrolling the intended audience of Special Education (people with disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, and giftedness/high abilities) in regular schools. Rather, it concerns education that addresses all kinds of inequalities and distances imposed by the organization of social life under capitalism, whose central logic lies in producing difference through the freedom to accumulate material and nonmaterial wealth produced socially. The aforementioned declaration was fundamental for education and society to review discriminatory practices that promote inequalities and prejudices. Almost three decades after its drafting, it is necessary to assess the achievements obtained.

Barroco (2018) argues that, in the 1990s, the proposal of an inclusive education system expressed the contradictions of that time. The end of real communism in Germany and the Soviet Union called into question the possibility of a more egalitarian society. In that context, capitalist society was tasked with addressing the growing contradictions. Although the Declaration does not address the roots of inequality, it draws attention to alternative ways of thinking about education and life itself, recognizing differences as part of human existence.

Inspired by the Declaration, among other documents such as the Jomtiem Declaration (UNESCO, 1990), much has been achieved in Brazil in relation to the enrollment of the target audience for Special Education. In 2020, there were 47.3 million enrollments in Basic Education, of which 1.3 million were students with disabilities, global developmental disorders (including people with ASD), and/or high abilities/giftedness in regular classes included in or in exclusive special classes (INEP, 2020).

However, there is still much to be done given the setbacks education has suffered, notably Decree No. 10,502 of September 30, 2020⁷, which established the National Policy for Special Education.

Equitable and Inclusive with Lifelong Learning." This decree was signed by President Jair Bolsonaro and revoked by Dias Toffoli, a minister of the Federal Supreme Court. Toffoli revoked the decree because it "weakens the imperative of including students with disabilities, global developmental disorders, and high abilities or giftedness in the regular school system."

Thus, when considering the idea of inclusive education, which aims to broaden access to knowledge, the process of objectification is compromised without it. This dual process of appropriation and objectification allows students to become unique individuals.

According to Leontiev (1978), throughout history, knowledge acquired during the development of human faculties and properties has accumulated and been fixed not by hereditary morphological particularities, but by social laws transmitted from generation to generation. Through work, humans have ensured their existence by altering nature and themselves. He emphasizes that there is a

[...] The process of incarnation and objectification in the products of human activities and intellectual forces and faculties manifests as the history of humanity's material and intellectual culture. This history expresses the achievements of humanity's developmental abilities in an external, objective form. (Leontiev, 1978, p. 177).

Man's creations reflect his development. When these creations are shared with new generations, the new generations acquire the set of faculties contained within them. Leontiev (1978, p. 178) explains this concept.

⁷ Available at <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/diversidade/toffoli-revoga-decreto-de-bolsonaro-sobre-politica-de-educacao-especial/>. Accessed on Nov. 3, 2021.

Throughout their ontogenetic development, humans form specific relationships with the world around them—a world comprised of objects and phenomena created by previous generations. The nature of these objects and phenomena determines this specificity. However, it is also influenced by the circumstances under which these relationships are formed.

It also clarifies that

The real, immediate world of humans, which determines their lives more than anything else, is a world created and transformed by human activity. However, this world is not immediately given to individuals as a world of social objects—objects that embody human abilities formed in the course of socio-historical practice. As such, this world presents itself to each individual as a problem to be solved (LEONTIEV, 1978, p. 178). (Leontiev, 1978, p. 178).

According to Leontiev (1978, p. 180), the result of the assimilation or appropriation process is "the reproduction by the individual of historically formed human abilities and functions," or "it is the process by which humans achieve in their development what animals achieve through heredity: the embodiment of the species' development in the individual."

Leontiev (1978, p. 181) further explains that

The psychological neoformations formed in humans during this process are the result of hereditary and innate mechanisms and processes, which are merely necessary internal conditions that make their emergence possible. They do not determine their composition or specific quality.

From this perspective, appropriating an object means more than describing its characteristics and properties; it also means incorporating it as an instrument for physical or mental operations in a way that serves one's purposes. Thus, appropriating historically constructed culture and transforming it into school knowledge is fundamental to developing students with and without disabilities or special educational needs (SEN), internalizing social experience, and forming genericity.

Objectification, in turn, refers to the materialization of human physical and mental activities in what is created. In other words, objectification occurs when a person's physical and/or mental activity is transferred and fixed in the process and product. In this sense, one could say that human activity is transferred to the product of the activity and is embodied and objectified in it.

Schools must promote this dialectic between appropriation and objectification. To this end, students must appropriate an object or phenomenon and master the corresponding activity embodied in it. When students appropriate a material or symbolic instrument, motor and mental actions and operations essential for its use or handling are formed. The instrument then becomes internalized and serves to mediate their physical or mental activity.

Through the dual processes of appropriation and objectification, students develop human characteristics as they adopt the results of social history and create new objectifications. This establishes an infinite movement with their peers and the world, allowing them to become more human. A good school enhances this dual process to overcome impediments and barriers between students and human creations. In other words, an inclusive school strives to ensure that everyone can access the material and nonmaterial riches humanity has created. In an inclusive school, the teacher is not excluded and does not feel alienated from his craft or the tools and knowledge of teaching.

However, school psychologists need to be aware that this dual process is in the spotlight and will certainly have harsh consequences for a large portion of the population that depends on schools to perform their classic function so they can develop. Failing to address the issue of inadequate teaching quickly and comprehensively will have disastrous consequences for many Brazilian children. This is important because

Like all sciences, psychology aims to improve and transform life. It has an immediate application in education. By studying the laws of psychic phenomena, psychology discovers means and methods for developing human psychological functions and

personality traits. Therefore, psychology's primary practical application is in education, teaching the younger generations. (Rubinshtein, 1961, p. 26, our translation)⁸.

To this end, it requires exercising one's ability to grasp phenomena in terms of their causes, development, and consequences.

5 School Psychology and Very Special Education

Rubinshtein's stance on psychology as a science and its purpose in improving life, along with Vygotsky's (1997) theory on the foundations of a new defectology, helps us think about school psychology and special education from an inclusive perspective.

The first point to highlight is **the concept of non-fatality**. In other words, Vygotsky writes that disability is not necessarily a misfortune, but rather, it becomes one in the face of socio-historical conditions. Conversely, disability can be a driving force for development. After all, as W. Stern (1923, p. 145) wrote, "'What does not kill me makes me stronger,' implying that strength arises from weakness" (VYGOTSKY, 1997, p. 41, our translation⁹). This concept reflects the thesis of the social formation of the psyche, which implies building the cultural edifice on biological equipment complicated by disability, with school education playing a fundamental role in this construction. According to Vygotsky (1997), the more that the antisocial nature of special schools is overcome, the less people with disabilities will be isolated and segregated. The sooner they are included in the everyday lives of people without disabilities, the more their development will be favored, and the more cultural constructions will be realized. He writes that

⁸ Como toda ciência, a psicologia serve para transformar e melhorar a vida. A psicologia tem uma aplicação imediata na educação. Ao estudar as leis dos fenômenos psíquicos descobre os meios e métodos para desenvolver as funções psíquicas do homem e os rasgos de sua personalidade. De aqui que a primeira e principal aplicação prática da psicologia seja em educação e ensino das jovens gerações. (RUBINSHTEIN, 1961, p. 26).

⁹ Aquello que no mata, me hace más fuerte', implicando que la fuerza surge de la debilidad, las aptitudes de las deficiencias' (W Stern, 1923, pag. 145)

[...] as a principle, the combined system of special and mainstream education proposed by Scherbina should be created. To overcome the antisocial nature of special schools, it is necessary to carry out a scientifically based experiment in shared teaching and education between blind and sighted people, an experiment that has a giant future. *The scope of development here follows a dialectical course: first, the thesis of common education for abnormal and normal children; then, the antithesis, that is, special education. The task of our time is to create the synthesis, that is, special education, bringing together in a higher unity the valid elements of the thesis and antithesis.* (VYGOTSKI, 1997, p. 85, our translation, emphasis added)¹⁰

School psychology faces the challenge of contributing to the synthesis Vygotsky pointed out in a 1924 text about blind people. This synthesis applies to the target audience of special education as a whole.

How can this diverse audience be guided toward learning and, consequently, the development of their psyche? When addressing this issue, school psychology should focus not only on establishing the social skills necessary for social interaction but also on developing higher psychological functions at increasingly complex levels to which these skills must be linked. The guiding principle of its work is moving beyond the purposes of training and conditioning to the development of these functions, which are guided by consciousness and volition. In addition to specific cases of disabilities or special educational needs (SEN), attention should be paid to the particularities of different ages and periods, significant changes in psychic activity at different stages of life, and the multiple determinants involved (Barroco & Leonardo, 2020). Although phylogenetic laws are not repeated at the ontogenetic level, identifying the genesis and development of basic and higher psychological functions allows us to recognize their historicity

¹⁰ “[...] como principio, debe ser creado el sistema combinado de educación especial y com ún que propone Scherbina. A fin de vencer la antisociabilidad de la escuela especial, es preciso realizar un experimento científicamente fundamentado de enseñanza y educación compartida entre ciegos y videntes, experiencia que tiene un inmenso futuro. El ámbito del desarrollo tiene aquí un curso dialectico: primero, la tesis de la instrucción común de niños anormales y normales; después, la antítesis, es decir, la instrucción especial. La tarea de nuestra época es crear la síntesis, es decir, la instrucción especial, reuniendo en una unidad superior los elementos validos de la tesis y la antítesis.”

and links to life's production and reproduction and psyche development. This enables school psychology to investigate and intervene in the primary activities that guide students' daily lives and development, such as playing and studying (Leontiev, 2010).

These guidelines for the practice of school psychology allow us to expose the genetic superiority of one race or group over another and all eugenic and/or hygienist speculation forged in capitalist society. Despite touting democratic principles, capitalist society promotes the exclusion of those who deviate from prevalent or hegemonic norms, which can seduce education professionals, including psychologists, students, their families, and society in general. Creating alternative paths requires investments of different kinds in societies prepared for specific forms of life reproduction, which rely on sight, hearing, verbal and written language, psychomotor skills, and understanding relationships between people and the world beyond practical intellect.

As Vygotsky (1997) wrote at the beginning of the 20th century, everything is prepared for the "normal" person. Since then, much has changed, including public policies aimed at Special Education and the creation of prostheses, orthoses, procedures, processes, and applications. These changes allow us to recognize that normality encompasses disability, difference, and diversity. However, it is abnormal that these creations are inaccessible to those who need them, as clearly explained in Brazil's Statute of Persons with Disabilities (Law No. 13,146, July 6, 2015).

6 School Psychology and the Gateway to Special Education

Based on the epistemological and methodological principles of Historical-Cultural Psychology, it can be said that, a century after the initial studies of L. S. Vygotsky (1896-1934) that gave rise to this school of psychology, the central thesis of the social formation of the psyche has been widely publicized. However, it is still in its infancy in the field of education in general and in special education specifically.

Despite several publications in recent decades by Vygotsky, his collaborators, and contemporary followers exposing how this thesis can be proven in different subareas of psychology and education, the concept of the ideal student still permeates educational work. This can lead to educational practices that do little to promote development. This ideal is so prevalent that it is common to believe that people with Down syndrome are always kind and friendly, that people with autism are not affectionate, and that restless people have disorders.

A lack of theoretical mastery of teaching, instruction, learning, and development contributes to the hypothesis of intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, or "dis" conditions (dyslalia, dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia) when schools report on students with learning difficulties. Under this hypothesis, it becomes natural to evaluate students with learning difficulties with formal tests to produce diagnoses and reports. This has even led to a common expression in schools: the student who has been "*lauded*."

Formal assessment is not unnecessary; on the contrary, it is a prerequisite for students to participate in Special Education programs and services from an inclusion perspective. However, its purpose should be to highlight the fruits and buds of development, as well as the crises and metamorphoses underway (Vygotsky & Luria, 1996). After all, teaching students with and without disabilities should take place in the zone of proximal development, bringing potential to the surface and forming layers of it (Vygotsky, 1996, 1997, 2000).

School psychology's role in special education begins with questions: Why doesn't the student learn like the others? Why doesn't he or she master school knowledge like the others? These questions lead to investigations and the development of strategies to explain the genesis and process of this problem. This requires attention to the development of higher psychological functions as well as the personality traits and environment that favor or hinder them.

The resulting data and analyses lead to training and/or support for school professionals and/or interventions with the student. These interventions can generate relevant results and be generalized to other students in the class or with similar issues.

However, the process of formally evaluating and monitoring students who are the subject of school complaints using protocols to gather information and produce data on intellectual, emotional, and social areas can be poorly coordinated. This frequently occurs when there is no theory supporting scientific thinking in professional practice. Theoretical thinking enables us to uphold the indivisibility of the cognitive and affective aspects of human beings and students. It also highlights the fundamental role of school education in developing their psyche and personality. Furthermore, an unclear or biased understanding of the school complaint may develop when socioeconomic conditions or the impacts of the student's social class are not effectively considered. For example, it may be reiterated that students from a given school are weak, come from dysfunctional and uninterested families, and have insurmountable social difficulties. These types of perceptions tend to pathologize historical and cultural factors, such as the absence of teaching, studying, and consequently, learning the curriculum content.

Unfortunately, in everyday schoolwork, it can be overlooked that what humanity produces should become curriculum content after a logical and gradual selection process with educational purposes in mind. The appropriation of these productions takes place amid intertwined relationships established between students, schools, families, and society (FACCI; TADA, 2012; ROSSATO; LEONARDO, 2012). When these appropriations do not occur as expected, in accordance with LDBEN recommendations, public education policies, or educational systems, for various reasons, it creates fertile ground for labels that perpetuate social stigma and negatively impact schooling.

According to Vygotskian theory, this failure in schooling perpetuates the dominant ideology of the inferiority of those who lack the conditions to enjoy what

humanity has produced. Everyday life already excludes many students from knowing, enjoying, and appropriating what humanity has produced in various areas of knowledge. Thus, when they enter school, an intense and continuous effort must begin to recognize their life struggles, identify conveyed meanings, and formulate senses. Ultimately, this effort recognizes students as capable learners and teachers as capable educators.

All the aforementioned conditions and approaches ultimately reaffirm Vygotsky's (1997) assertion that the limitations of learning, acquiring school content, and mastering and using signs and psychological instruments to mediate the relationship between students with disabilities or special educational needs (SEN) and the world are primarily imposed by social relations rather than the biological aspects specific to their condition.

Thus, it is necessary for the school psychologist to assess students with disabilities beyond their appearance and immediate complaint. The psychologist should use current societal organization and the student's specific life circumstances as parameters of analysis. The psychologist should consider how much the student is excluded, how, and in what ways. The psychologist should also consider the student's role in societal organization, their awareness of that role, and their ability to remain in or leave it. It should be noted that school psychology does not use psychotherapy; rather, it seeks to raise awareness among its clients. Students attending historically exclusionary and prejudiced schools, the result of a capitalist society that perpetuates social inequalities, often have no awareness of this fact, accepting responsibilities that do not belong to them and their primary group.

Therefore, the psychology proposed by Vygotsky in the 1920s inspires the path to be followed by school psychologists in the 2020s. Vygotsky's psychology was based on historical-dialectical materialism as a philosophical and methodological foundation for understanding the constitution and development of the human psyche.

Although Vygotsky was not an inclusive author, he laid the foundation for the work of psychologists and educators from an inclusive perspective, as outlined previously. By arguing that people who are blind, deaf, or deaf-blind should live alongside those who are not, he brings the concept of normality into debate and highlights the social character of the formation of what is properly human.

Based on his writings, we can promote the inclusion of students with disabilities. This requires mastering what has already been created and appropriating scientific knowledge and its meanings, as well as provoking the formation of new meanings. This position differs greatly from what was advocated at that time and what he opposed: recognizing the educability of people with disabilities but with a strong tendency toward training and normalization.

In light of this, it's important to note that school psychology is on the verge of entering special education from an inclusive perspective. It must welcome, qualify, and respond to school complaints institutionally and individually. It must also participate in interdisciplinary work that values educational work based on science and the defense of human rights.

Final considerations

Historical-cultural psychology brings renewal to special education by allowing for the development of subjects who may initially appear far removed from generic human development. In *Obras Escogidas Tomo V* (1997), Vygotsky's writings on the theoretical and methodological foundations for a new defectology reveal his unwavering commitment to the humanization of all individuals. His ideas inspire today's professionals by postulating that everyone can learn if the right conditions are in place. This implies the need for extensive study to establish a solid theoretical foundation. In this collection of texts, the author discusses the coexistence of people with and without

disabilities—or defects, as they were called at the time—and the various incongruities to be overcome in theory, intervention, and social coexistence.

Despite the temporal distance and significant economic, cultural, and political differences between Russia in the 1920s and 1930s and Brazil in the 2020s, Vygotsky's writings emphasize the importance of considering educational objectives. These goals must contemplate the integral, non-alienated development of individuals, leading them to know and govern themselves and seek another society—which is essential to school psychology!

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