

School complaints: analyzes from Historical-Cultural Psychology

As queixas escolares: análises a partir da Psicologia Histórico-Cultural

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ABSTRACT

When we turn to the school and the relationships established in it, we find school complaints, in which our students are commonly placed at the center of problems and their solutions, in order to isolate them from the entire overwhelming contingent of losses that the very history of the precariousness of the education system has produced. Based on this finding, this theoretical text seeks to conduct a discussion and reflection on school complaints, bringing Historical-Cultural Psychology and its assumptions as a counterpoint to the medicalizing scenario and the hegemonic view of the schooling process and that which turns into a school complaint. We found that the history of struggles involved, mainly from the 1980s onwards, has not yet been

RESUMO

Ao nos voltarmos para a escola e as relações estabelecidas na mesma, encontramos as queixas escolares, em que comumente nossos alunos e alunas são colocados ao centro dos problemas e de suas soluções, de forma a isolá-los de todo o contingente avassalador de prejuízos que a própria história de precarização do sistema de ensino tem produzido. A partir dessa constatação, busca-se com esse texto de cunho teórico, realizar uma discussão e reflexão sobre as queixas escolares, trazendo a Psicologia Histórico-Cultural e seus pressupostos como contraposição ao cenário medicalizante e a visão hegemônica acerca do processo de escolarização e daquilo que se transforma em queixa escolar. Constatamos que a história de lutas implicadas principalmente a partir

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consolidated in fact, in the different realities of teaching, in order to break with the process of individualization, pathologization, and leverage the course of resolutions in the political sphere, social, that lead to the organization of a teaching that is systematized and intentional, with a developmental purpose. Thus, we defend an analysis and intervention of pedagogy and school and educational psychology, with technical-scientific knowledge that sustain an empowering action, which contributes to developing the human characteristics historically formed in children.

Keywords: School complaint. Historical-Cultural Psychology. Learning and Development.

da década de 1980, ainda não se consolidou de fato, nas diferentes realidades do ensino, de modo a romper com o processo de individualização, de patologização, e alavancar o curso de resoluções no âmbito político, social, que conduzam a organização de um ensino que seja sistematizado e intencional, com finalidade desenvolvimentista. Destarte, defendemos uma análise e intervenção da pedagogia e da psicologia escolar e educacional, com conhecimentos técnicos-científicos que sustentem uma atuação potencializadora, que contribua para desenvolver na criança as características humanas formadas historicamente.

Palavras chaves: Queixa escolar. Psicologia Histórico-Cultural. Aprendizagem e Desenvolvimento.

1 Introduction

In our professional experience as internship advisors for fifth-year psychology students at a public university in Paraná, we have repeatedly encountered what are often referred to as "school complaints," which are directly intertwined with problems in the educational process. We commonly receive complaints from schools that students are not advancing in their learning, have some kind of disorder, cannot pay attention in class, are hyperactive or aggressive, do not behave according to the expected standards for their age and grade, have difficulty socializing, and do not respect teachers or classmates. We can therefore observe the breadth of complaints that materialize in the context of school education. Tada, Costa, and Silva (2020) share this experience, noting that they also receive many students with school-related issues in their curricular internships. According to them, there has been a significant increase in referrals of students between the ages of four and six who have difficulty with the schooling process.

Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that problems in school environments, such as school complaints, are characterized by a long-standing

process, given that they have accompanied the history of schooling. Leonardo, Silva, and Leal (2020) argue that most schools have failed to transmit appropriate scientific content. According to them, this has been going on for a long time. They base this claim on information from the Educational Statistics Service of the General Secretariat of Education, which indicates that there have been records of children with learning difficulties since 1936, with 53.52% of students failing the first year during this period.

As professionals in school and educational psychology, we are concerned not only with the high rate of school complaints in our area but also with how these complaints are understood and analyzed by schools and various fields of knowledge, such as pedagogy, speech therapy, and medicine. These fields often take a reductionist, organicist perspective focused on the individual.

Despite strong criticism from authors such as Patto (2015), Meira (2011), and Souza (2010), among others, we must unfortunately acknowledge that the dominant conception of school complaints remains prevalent. This conception reveals an individualizing model of understanding the difficulties that arise from the schooling process. Generally, these difficulties are attributed to students and their families. This is exacerbated by the excessive number of diagnoses resulting from referrals to health professionals, which often leads to medication prescriptions to address these issues.

Firbida, Facci, and Oliveira (2021) point out that blaming children for failing in school has led to pathologizing students. This is evident in the growing number of diagnoses and subsequent prescriptions of drug treatments for these students. According to the authors, we have seen the transformation of difficulties arising in the schooling process into diseases, diverting the course of their resolution from the political, social, and pedagogical spheres to the individual level—students and their families.

In light of the above, we plan to critically discuss and reflect on school complaints, using Historical-Cultural Psychology and its assumptions as a counterpoint to the medicalized view of the schooling process and the notion of

what constitutes a school complaint. This theory was developed by L. S. Vigotsky⁴ (1896-1934), A. N. Leontiev (1903-1977), and A. R. Luria (1902-1979). It "stems from an understanding of humans as social, historical, and cultural beings endowed with a psyche constituted in their relationships with social reality" (Leonardo, Silva, & Leal, 2021, p. 21).

Thus, it considers the development of the individual within their material conditions and full complexity based on methodological principles and epistemological foundations derived from historical-dialectical materialism, as defended by Marx (1818-1883).

Considering this, topic two will address the relationship between psychology and school complaints by discussing how this science has understood the constitution of this phenomenon. Then, in Topic Three, we will discuss learning and development in historical-cultural psychology and how school complaints are understood from this theoretical perspective. Finally, we will offer some concluding remarks on the analyses presented in this article.

2 Psychology and the phenomenon of school complaints

Psychology, as a science that emerged at the end of the 19th century, has had a strong influence on various fields of human life and knowledge, especially in relation to education, based on its knowledge of development and learning. In this sense, it has exerted and continues to exert a great deal of influence on pedagogical practices, dictating paths that often run counter to the potential for development when it classifies and diagnoses students who do not meet expectations in terms of learning outcomes within schools (PATTO, 1987, 2015).

By developing the concepts of individual aptitudes and intelligence quotients (considered immutable and innate), psychology created tests and consolidated its role in identifying characteristics in individuals, such as

⁴ In our readings, we noticed that Vigotsky is spelled in different ways. Therefore, we will adopt this spelling, except in cases of reference and citation.

aptitudes, abilities, and intelligence. From these characteristics, psychology could offer explanations for the differences individuals presented in their conduct and success or failure. The socioeconomic position of individuals was understood as a result of their capacities, abilities, aptitudes, and/or intelligence. Those unable to achieve dignified survival conditions and who evidenced inequality among people in society were considered incapable of social progress, an individual issue (PATTO, 1987; 2015). Consequently, social problems arising from the capitalist organization of life, based on exploitation and the private appropriation of material and cultural goods, were explained individually, reducing pressure on the state and living conditions, which were considered the result of each individual's potential.

As indicated by Patto (1987, 2015), Souza, and Machado (2010), these explanations provide fertile ground for psychology's work in education. With the creation of tests and the adoption of a clinical approach to individuals, psychology entered the school setting with the aim of determining class formations, referring students to programs more "suitable" to their abilities, and referring them to other professionals to address their difficulties. A process began that is still developing today to solve school problems related to learning and development. This process excludes the school's participation as the cause of these problems while preserving the school's responsibility for its programs and strategies. These programs and strategies focus only on students who perform as expected.

Thus, psychologists began to have a strong presence and influence in schools and pedagogy. They assisted in resolving school issues that arose in the daily life of educational institutions. They also initiated a broad process of separating individuals and attributing their success or failure to their abilities. These abilities were considered to be innate, originating from their biological and/or intellectual makeup. By identifying individual intelligence and aptitudes and highlighting these characteristics as the cause of success or failure in a social environment, psychology transformed social inequality into

individual responsibility. This also paved the way for assessing and diagnosing students who could not keep up with the school's expected pace (Patto, 1987, 2015; Souza & Machado, 2010). This opened the path to understanding difficulties in the teaching and learning process as the child's responsibility, and the formulation of this as a "school complaint" became popular.

In Brazil, Patto (2015) began questioning this situation in the 1980s when she examined the causes of school failure in her research. She pointed out the stigmatization process of children in public schools that blamed a large portion of students, especially poor and Black students, for their difficulties. This stigmatization was justified mainly because of psychometric tests and widely disseminated psychological concepts about individual differences in intelligence and aptitude. The author challenged this perspective, sparking criticism of the naturalizing, biologizing, and individualistic approach to understanding academic struggles.

Despite the criticism, the current scenario still reflects the idea that individual differences and various disorders and disturbances influence student learning. This has led to significant complaints about psychologists in schools. As Meira (2011) and Souza and Machado (2010) state, schools often fail to enable all their students to advance in the learning process due to difficulties present in everyday school life. These difficulties may be caused by a lack of investment, poor infrastructure, a lack of equipment and materials, poor working conditions for teachers, the naturalization of pedagogical concepts, the biologization of understandings of development and learning, or other factors.

School education has not provided equal access to the knowledge produced throughout human history. Leonardo, Rossato, and Leal (2012, p. 15) argue that "school education has not been able to enable the majority of the population to acquire knowledge, hindering their ability to understand reality in all its complexity."

The primary function of school is to transmit content constructed by humanity throughout history, ensuring students appropriate it so they can understand and consciously act in their reality. To this end, quality, intentional teaching with clear objectives is necessary to allow for a deeper understanding of reality rather than a shallow, fragile one. According to Duarte (1996, p. 40), substandard teaching "will not produce anything qualitatively new, but only a quantitative increase in the information mastered by the child."

However, when we examine school results using statistics from official sources, we see that a significant percentage of students are currently attending school. According to the Brazilian Basic Education Yearbook (2021), which references information from 2020, 99.4% of children and adolescents between the ages of 6 and 14 were enrolled in school. Among young people aged 15 to 17, the enrollment percentage is 94.5%. These data are presented as indicative of advances and achievements in education in terms of student enrollment. On the other hand, based on Meira (2011), we can point out the maintenance of old exclusionary processes masked by social appearances, in which many of our students remain illiterate.

When we focus on the idea of "success" in student learning and development, several questions, challenges, and obstacles arise. Official statistics indicate that educational results in the public school system are far below desirable or acceptable levels. However, these statistics do not point out the network of relationships involved in these results, the political dimension of the school institution, or the naturalizing conceptions that give rise to this idea. In addition to discussing official data, we cite that only 61.1% of fifth-grade students (in 2020) had adequate Portuguese proficiency and 51.5% had adequate math proficiency, showing levels well below what is expected for this grade in these subjects. Regarding literacy, the latest publicly available data (from 2016) shows that only 45.3% of third-grade students had sufficient reading proficiency and 45.5% had sufficient math proficiency (ANUÁRIO

BRASILEIRO DE EDUCAÇÃO BÁSICA, 2021). This reveals the inefficiency of schools for these students, as more than 50% were not literate. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that only 23.4% of students from very low and low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds had sufficient reading skills, which is almost three times lower than the figure for the high and very high SES group (68.2%) (Brazilian Yearbook of Basic Education, 2021).

Although it is questionable and requires further analysis in terms of how this data is consolidated and who it serves in this exclusionary society, as Meira (2011) points out, it is produced under the guise of equality, in the farce of democratic discourse, and with prolonging the illusion of inclusion. It draws our attention to the fact that school education is far from effective for everyone as an essential mediator of access to cultural goods.

Thus, in a capitalist society where social inequalities and class divisions are prevalent, we can identify that school education, especially public education, is fraught with flaws and gaps. Therefore, it is unable to fulfill its real objectives of humanizing and emancipating the individual. Clearly, people belonging to the lowest socioeconomic level are marginalized and do not have the same opportunities to engage with the produced culture. According to Leal et al. (2020, p. 17), we have witnessed

[...] to the increase in complaints about the academic difficulties of students who have not had opportunities to enrich their development process or alternatives to overcome these difficulties. Identified by their difficulties, they are, paradoxically, increasingly distanced from effective learning and knowledge acquisition, marked by a diagnosis of incapacity.

Nevertheless, when schools focus on conducting assessments to identify students with learning difficulties, they transfer responsibility to other spheres, such as the family or the health sector, which is expected to "cure" the child. This search for a diagnosis assumes that difficulties in the schooling process are due to differences in aptitude, intelligence, or specific student

characteristics. We want to highlight that schools structure their educational processes with specific pedagogical concepts and teaching methods, as well as a particular didactic approach. Schools also relate to students based on this structure. If students learn, all is well; however, if they do not learn, the problem is assumed to lie within them, their abilities, or their relationships with their families rather than in the organization of the educational process. This is how "school complaints" arise—problems that should be referred to other spheres, such as the health sector, so they can be resolved. This exempts the school and the education system from responsibility for their occurrence.

It is important to note that explaining school complaints from an individual's perspective is not a new practice. According to Patto (2015), the causes of school failure have always been associated with individual factors; that is, justifications were sought within the students themselves. Today, as in previous decades, students remain the main target of explanations for school failure, perpetuating the individualization of school complaints.

In this sense, Bray's (2012) study explains the individualizing aspect of clarifying problems in the teaching-learning process. Upon interviewing teachers, principals, and pedagogical coordinators from public and private elementary schools in a city in the state of Paraná, the author discovered that the majority of participants from both types of schools attributed school complaints to students and their families. According to the author,

[...] these justifications naturalize social issues, failing to relate learning problems to the historical moment in which they are produced in society. In this way, they maintain a school education system that fails to fulfill its commitment to teach all students the historically produced content. (BRAY, 2012, p.122).

We will now discuss Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) as an example to demonstrate the relationship between school complaints and the medicalization process. A study by Jou et al. (2010) reveals differences in how suspected cases of ADHD are handled. In one school, professionals

automatically referred students to health professionals, viewing school problems as individual and organic. According to the authors, this generated a high percentage (51%) of ADHD diagnoses.

In contrast, the researchers found that only 0.2% of students were diagnosed at another school. They considered this discrepancy to be since the institution with the lower rate believed that learning and/or discipline problems should first be addressed by the family and school, and only then, if necessary, be referred for evaluation.

This study points out that when schools consider the educational process and see themselves as an integral part of it, rather than focusing solely on students with academic difficulties, they become spaces where social and individual relationships are formed within a complex network. There is evidence that these schools understand and have the conditions necessary to envision and act as a constituent part of the problems and solutions, supported by structure, appropriate training, and collective effort.

However, it is important to note that, unfortunately, in our country, the idea that students' learning problems are caused by organic, innate issues and are therefore medical rather than academic in nature has become increasingly widespread. This belief opens the door to health professionals, tests, labels, diagnoses, and medications aimed at legitimizing the idea and turning children into "problem" or "abnormal" children (GARRIDO; MOYSÉS, 2010, p. 150).

Based on studies and research by Leonardo, Leal, Rossato (2012), Bray (2012), and others, we have noticed superficial, decontextualized analyses of school complaints. Education professionals do not perceive the complexity of difficulties arising in the schooling process or the multiple determinants of these difficulties. Without understanding what is happening, the quickest route is to refer the child to health professionals who only examine the child's body. Due to their training, these professionals rely on diagnostic tools and medication.

According to Tada, Costa, and Silva (2020, p. 44),

[...] criticism of the production of school complaints requires an analysis of the background to the scenario in which school complaints exist, such as educational policies and the interests of the pharmaceutical industry in the production of diagnoses made with increasingly younger students, as in the case of Attention Deficit Disorder.

In light of the above, we concur with Depetris, Santos, and Silva (2021), who assert that there is a widespread movement to pathologize the educational process. A significant number of children who struggle to learn or behave according to societal norms are referred for evaluations and diagnoses at clinics and health centers.

It is necessary to reflect on how schools organize their teaching systems since they often fail to ensure that all students acquire scientific knowledge, a driver of development. They are also imbued with stereotypes and prejudices. Schools tend to attribute children's learning and developmental deficiencies to intrinsic factors, such as alleged disorders, while disregarding the educational, cultural, social, economic, and political determinants that contribute to school-related challenges.

Consequently, schools have embraced and perpetuated the naturalization and pathologization of teaching and learning processes. They anchor themselves in biological and psychological explanations for school-related issues because, as Meira (2011, p. 95) states, biologization is understood as "the recurrent use of biological explanations to describe and analyze phenomena that are not within the scope of biology." Psychologization is "the recurrent use of psychological explanations to describe and analyze phenomena while disregarding their social production process" (Meira, 2011, p. 113).

Sanches et al. (2019) point out that learning difficulties and atypical behaviors in students, such as agitation, inattention, and hyperactivity, are viewed as pathologies or neurobiological disorders that can be resolved with medication. The authors emphasize the need to question this practice and that the

[...] addressing problems in the medical field through clinical therapy is reciprocated by education professionals, who have used it as a “modus operandi” in their daily classroom activities when identifying the existence of these behaviors, considered atypical, which challenge their work routine. From this perspective, the pedagogical aspects that are dialectically related to the phenomena of learning and human development, and which should be elements of problematization for education professionals, are diluted and captured by the hegemonic discourse of medical explanations, which are naturalizing and ahistorical (SANCHES et al. 2019, p. 37-38, emphasis added by the authors).

Thus, we can conclude that pathologizing and naturalizing school complaints creates fertile ground for the medicalization of students, as Suzuki's (2012) research reinforces. The author points out that the participants in her study view learning difficulties and student behavior as intrinsic to the students themselves. She states that educators argue that medicated students can concentrate more, participate in classroom activities, and achieve satisfactory results (Suzuki, 2012, p. 10).

As we can see, medication is considered the main resource for addressing school complaints in school contexts, a solution capable of "effectively resolving social and educational conflicts that present themselves as personal problems" (Barroco, Facci, & Moraes, 2017, p. 18). However, the impacts of medicalization on the development of the human psyche are rarely discussed, as these drugs have significant side effects.

It is important to note that Brazil is one of the countries that uses the most controlled drugs to address student behavior issues. Ritalin®, the brand name for the drug methylphenidate, is commonly prescribed to school-age children to help them advance in their learning and development. According to the National Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA, 2014), consumption of this drug increased from 40 kg to 226 kg between 2002 and 2006. Additionally, methylphenidate sales increased by 75% between 2009 and 2011. This significant, growing consumption has made Brazil the world's second-largest producer of methylphenidate.

According to research by Franco, Tuleski, and Eidt (2016), even preschool children aged zero to five are using controlled drugs to address behavioral issues. It is important to reflect on how such young children, who are in the early stages of psychological development, are being diagnosed with disorders or behavioral disturbances.

It is important to consider that the social environment must be organized in a way that enables the development of involuntary attention into voluntary attention. This development should occur in the context of education and socialization through adult language. In other words, this does not happen naturally. Appropriate, systematic educational actions must be implemented for this purpose.

Thus, we agree with Bonadio and Leite (2021, p. 58), who state that:

[...] psychologizing and medicalizing conceptions reduce the social impacts of poor education with minimal investment, masking deficiencies in teacher training and parental involvement. Maladjusted social behavior and learning difficulties that reveal the weaknesses of an educational system are justified on the grounds of a diseased brain, which is therefore treatable. They disregard the fact that capitalist society, by promoting an emphasis on the individual, blames the victim and weakens the role of the school as a promoter of human development.

Thus, after the discussion and seeking to counter the aspects raised, we will now address some assumptions of Historical-Cultural Psychology that allow us to reflect on this hegemonic conception of school complaints, bringing to light the social, cultural, political, and other determinants directly or indirectly involved in the phenomenon of their production.

3 Learning and human development: school complaints from a historical-cultural perspective

Here, we will discuss elements that counteract the biologizing and pathologizing views of school complaints. We will highlight elements found in the educational and social spheres beyond the individual. Therefore, it is

necessary to address how learning and development occur. These aspects are linked to the sociocultural context and the mediations established in the process of individual formation.

According to Lev Semenovich Vigotsky (2014), a Belarusian psychologist who made significant contributions to historical-cultural psychology, human beings can only be understood based on their historical, cultural, and material relationships, which are linked to the way society is organized. From this perspective, the human psyche forms through dialectical relationships with other people and with human cultural acquisitions, which are mediated by instruments and language.

When analyzing the difficulties that arise in the schooling process and turn into complaints, it is important to consider that, as Leontiev (2004) states, individuals are not born humanized but rather as aspirants to humanization. This is because what nature provides at birth is insufficient for living in society, and each individual must learn to be human (Leontiev, 2004, p. 285). Therefore, the characteristics and abilities that are specifically human are not transmitted by heredity but rather by an educational process through which the individual appropriates the material and non-material culture created by humanity throughout history. Only through this process does the individual become humanized. The author emphasizes that human development is governed by socio-historical laws, not biological ones.

According to Leontiev (2004), humans only become fully human by appropriating the wealth accumulated by countless generations over the centuries. These generations constantly renew themselves and perpetuate themselves through what they produce. To ensure this continuity, the accumulated cultural heritage must be passed on to future generations. New generations "multiply and improve the wealth passed on to them through work and struggle and 'pass on the baton' of human development" (Leontiev, 2004, p. 285, emphasis added).

Nevertheless, we can assert that the development of the psyche and the constitution of humanity are complex processes.

[...] the achievements of the historical development of human abilities are not simply given to men in the objective phenomena of the material culture that embodies them but are placed there. To appropriate these results, to make them their skills, the organs of their individuality, the child, the human being, must enter into a relationship with the phenomena of the surrounding world through other men, that is, in a process of communication with them. Thus, the child learns the appropriate activity. By its function, this process is therefore a process of education (LEONTIEV, 2004, p. 290, emphasis added).

Since the process of human development is fundamentally educational, we must consider the conditions of access to cultural products and the mediations offered to individuals so they can understand this material. In this sense, school education plays an important role by providing a systematic transmission of knowledge that acts on individuals and promotes the development and complexity of their higher mental functions.

Therefore, recognizing the social nature of the human psyche and the fact that individual formation occurs through an educational process governed by socio-historical laws rather than biological ones allows us to understand school education as a social process. This process is not anchored in biological laws of development, and the influence of biology, when it exists, can be overcome by education and the conditions and strategies made possible in the school environment during the teaching and learning process.

According to Pasqualini (2017, p. 88), it is necessary to understand that psychological development does not occur based on existing biological conditions and genetic inheritance. Therefore, it needs to be considered beyond symptoms or behavioral signs since it develops from the relationships established with the environment and the appropriation of produced culture.

We are convinced that a successful pedagogical practice is only possible when there are theoretical and methodological resources that lead to the

organization of systematized and intentional teaching with a developmental purpose. Therefore, teaching must be organized with clear objectives that promote the development and complexity of higher psychic functions, going beyond the spontaneity of life.

According to Martins (2017), this type of teaching, which focuses on the omnilateral development of individuals, must drive the development of the psyche. This development should guide the subject's conduct based on the ability to perform operations specific to logical reasoning, establish voluntary control of behavior, and understand ethical values. In short, the subject should be able to perform activities in their entirety and complexity.

We therefore advocate for an educational system that aims to develop higher psychological functions, such as perception, memory, voluntary attention, and abstract thinking. These functions are specifically human and socially constructed based on relationships individuals establish with more experienced people and the appropriation of cultural instruments and signs.

Considering these aspects, it is worth reflecting on so-called "school complaints" beyond ahistorical and individualistic perspectives, which reduce the issue to biology. We must understand their social character. The goal is not to blame students or their families, but to understand that they are being deprived of a quality education that provides them with the necessary tools to understand their reality.

These complaints are produced by and in the school and are largely independent of the students' specific characteristics. The entire educational structure is involved in this process of creating difficulties. Organized in accordance with capitalist society, it is tasked with training people to adapt to that society unquestionably.

Analyzing the consequences of not learning reveals obstacles that prevent individuals from integrating into society. This makes it difficult or impossible for them to understand their reality and themselves, which can lead to an uncritical approach to life. Even worse, students who are the target of

school complaints begin to believe in their incapacity and an illness that prevents them from reaching their maximum potential. This also affects those who do not stand out in school but simply pass through without acquiring knowledge that would enable them to understand the world and themselves. As Leontiev (2004) explains, children maintain relationships with the world through their relationships with other human beings as they develop.

Development, as described above, must consider the individual's complexity and multiple determinants. In this regard, Vygotsky (2014) acknowledges the importance of biology but emphasizes that it is merely the foundation on which the individual develops their unique characteristics. However, biology alone is insufficient for development to occur in its full complexity; learning must also take place. According to the author, learning drives development.

Vygotsky (2014) emphasizes the need to consider the relationship between learning and a child's level of development since they are interconnected processes. Well-organized learning leads to development. His famous phrase, "Good teaching anticipates development" (Vygotsky, 2006, p. 114), highlights the importance of the educational process and the need for systematization, adaptation of objectives, and alignment with the child's developmental stage. According to Vygotsky, there are at least two levels of development: the actual or real level and the potential or next level. The former refers to "the development of the child's psychosocial functions achieved through a specific developmental process" (Vygotsky, 2014, p. 111). The second level, potential development, refers to what the child cannot yet do alone but can do with the help of others. However, the author draws our attention to the fact that the

[...] effective developmental level does not fully indicate the child's state of development. Suppose we test two children and establish a mental age of seven for both. But when we test the children further, substantial differences between them emerge. With the help of guiding questions, examples, and demonstrations, one child easily solves the tests, exceeding

their actual developmental level by two years, while the other child solves tests that only exceed their actual developmental level by half a year. At this point, the fundamental content necessary to assess the scope of potential development comes directly into play (Vygotsky, 2014, p.111).

According to Vygotsky (2014, p. 113), potential development allows us to "determine the child's future steps and the dynamics of their development. It enables us to examine not only what development has produced thus far, but also what it will produce in the maturation process."

This provides the basis for asserting that learning should focus on the zone of potential development because it refers to functions in development. We also agree with Vigotsky (2001) that good teaching focuses on knowledge the child has not yet acquired but will soon achieve because teaching what the child already knows adds nothing to their psychological development. The goal should be to teach mastery of cultural mediators, which induce development. Vygotsky (2014, p. 115) reminds us that the proper organization of children's learning activates a whole group of developmental processes. From this perspective, Vigotsky (2014, p. 115) considers learning an "intrinsically necessary and universal moment for the development of these non-natural, yet historically formed, human characteristics in children."

However, it is important to note that not all learning promotes the development of the human psyche. Among the various aspects involved, we emphasize the importance of the more experienced other in this process, particularly intentional mediation. Teachers are fundamental figures because they organize students' content and activities, mediating their relationship with knowledge.

Based on the precepts of Historical-Cultural Psychology, which are discussed briefly here, we emphasize the importance of understanding the limitations of conceptions that start from an uncritical and ahistorical perspective of development. These conceptions analyze learning and behavioral problems that stand out in the school context as having biological and organicist determinants, focusing on individual aspects.

Supported by the understanding that, as Leite (2015, p. 169) points out, the human psyche is formed and "transforms itself in interaction with multiple social situations, promoting its development," we disagree with the unrestrained pathologizing and medicalizing of children who present with difficulties conventionally classified as school complaints. When we consider the complexity of an individual's learning and developmental processes and, based on the premise that students are not the only participants in these processes, we conclude that explanations for common and naturalized school complaints are inconsistent with a critical psychological perspective.

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Based on the precepts of Historical-Cultural Psychology, which are discussed briefly here, we emphasize the importance of understanding the limitations of conceptions that start from an uncritical and ahistorical perspective of development. These conceptions analyze learning and behavioral problems that stand out in the school context as having biological and organicist determinants, focusing on individual aspects.

Supported by the understanding that, as Leite (2015, p. 169) points out, the human psyche is formed and "transforms itself in interaction with multiple social situations, promoting its development," we disagree with the unrestrained pathologizing and medicalizing of children who present with difficulties conventionally classified as school complaints. When we consider the complexity of an individual's learning and developmental processes, and based on the premise that students are not the only participants in these processes, we conclude that explanations for common and naturalized school complaints are inconsistent with a critical psychological perspective.

We oppose the current practice of diagnosing learning disorders in students who do not learn at the established pace or in the prescribed manner. We also oppose identifying children with behavioral disorders simply because the school is unable to make them behave in a passive, mechanical manner. We disagree with biological and pathologizing explanations for school-related issues and oppose this practice. We agree with the concepts of development and learning in historical-cultural psychology, which state that higher psychological functions develop in children through properly organized educational activities. From this perspective, we question the practice of diagnosing a child with ADHD simply because they are inattentive and move around a lot in class. This diagnosis limits their development and neglects their fundamental need for the objective conditions necessary to reach new levels of development.

Is it necessary to medicate children who are inattentive or misbehave? How does this effectively help them acquire knowledge, learn, and develop? Wouldn't these children benefit from effective mediation to succeed in school? Addressing these questions highlights the significant role critical school psychology can play in confronting the medicalization and pathologization of students' lives and advocating for public policies and material conditions that promote development for all.

4 Final considerations

This article discusses and reflects on school complaints from the perspective of historical-cultural psychology. This theoretical perspective is based on the premise that individuals are not born human, but rather candidates for humanization. This means that individuals are not born ready; rather, they become human through relationships with others and with material and immaterial cultural products. In this sense, it is important to emphasize that the greater the access to the highest achievements of humanity, the greater the individual's development. Leontiev's (2004, p. 285)

idea that each person "learns to be human" has allowed us to view school complaints beyond hegemonic ideas stemming solely from organicist and/or biologicist views of learning and human development.

With this, we were able to question and oppose the common practice of attributing students' difficulties in advancing in their schooling process to intrinsic aspects of themselves. Justifications such as "they do not learn because they are inattentive, hyperactive, uninterested, or aggressive" or "they have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or autism" have become common. We are also uncomfortable with the common practice of naturalizing school complaints by seeking justifications and explanations in the student, their body, or their family. This idea reinforces the notion that such problems are the sole result of individual disabilities, illnesses, and/or neurological disorders, thereby exempting the educational system, public policies, and the organization of capitalist society. This organization implies unequal access to knowledge and material resources.

Analyzing the phenomenon of school complaints from critical, historical, social, and cultural theoretical perspectives reveals the misconceptions of capitalist society, which blames individuals for their failures. The same is true of school complaints, as Leonardo and Silva (2013, p. 315) point out. With the aim of "[...] camouflaging the inequalities of today's society as the root of school problems," a series of simplistic explanations emerge that attribute responsibility for the chaos in education and society to the child, the family, or the teacher.

This understanding poses challenges to school and educational psychology, requiring them to move away from their traditional positions, recover the complexity of the schooling process, and develop collective analyses and practices. These practices should give rise to ethical, political, and pedagogical positions that counteract exclusion and promote the transformation of educational realities.

Several studies have been conducted in this direction, including those by Garrido and Moysés (2010), Souza and Machado (2010), Meira (2011), Leal et al. (2020), Leonardo, Leal, and Rossato (2012), and Franco, Tuléski, and Eidt (2016). However, we advocate for further investment in studies that delve deeper into the theoretical and practical relationships of the theme and present proposals in favor of maximizing human development.

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