

Group processes and teaching activity: an interventional proposal for psychological health

Processos grupais e atividade docente:
uma proposta interventiva para saúde psicológica

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ABSTRACT

The present research investigated how group process can be an instrument of resistance to suffering, illness, and alienation in the teaching work. It presents the cultural-historical psychology and the historical-dialectical perspective of human groups as theoretical contributions. The methodological procedures were based on a lecture on “Teacher's Health”, orientation interviews, and the concrete group process. The main results demonstrate that collective reflection on the singular and general elements of the negativity and positivity of teaching work produce contradictions and advances in pedagogical consciences. Group process allows the fulfilment of multiple humanizing needs, which turn into motivating reasons for individual activities, namely: therapeutic reasons, reasons that reveal teaching difficulties, reasons for learning, reasons for collective work, reasons that reflect the health-disease process, and affective-emotional reasons. The fulfilment of humanizing needs, obliterated in the concrete plan of the school and social reality, produces positive affects in teachers. These findings corroborate the defense of the hypothesis that group and collective activities generate processes of resistance to

RESUMO

A pesquisa investigou como o processo grupal pode ser um instrumento de resistência ao sofrimento, ao adoecimento e à alienação no trabalho docente. Apresenta como aportes teóricos a Psicologia Histórico-Cultural e a perspectiva histórico-dialética dos grupos humanos. Os procedimentos metodológicos basearam-se em uma palestra sobre “Saúde do Professor”, entrevistas de orientação e o processo grupal concreto. Os resultados principais demonstram que a reflexão coletiva sobre os elementos singulares e gerais da negatividade e da positividade do trabalho docente produzem contradições e avanços nas consciências pedagógicas. O processo grupal permite a satisfação de múltiplas necessidades humanizadoras que se transformam em motivos estimuladores das atividades individuais, quais sejam: motivos terapêuticos, motivos reveladores das dificuldades docentes, motivos de aprendizagem, motivos do trabalho coletivo, motivos reflexivos do processo saúde-doença e motivos afetivo-emocionais. A satisfação das necessidades humanizadoras, obliteradas no plano concreto da realidade escolar e social, produzem afetos positivos nos professores. Essas constatações autorizam a defesa da tese de que a atividade grupal e coletiva gera processos de resistência ao

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suffering and to alienation in pedagogical work and, therefore, of psychological health.

sofrimento e à alienação no trabalho pedagógico e, por conseguinte, de saúde psicológica.

Keywords: Cultural-historical psychology. Group process. Teaching work.

Palavras-chave: Psicologia histórico-cultural. Processo grupal. Trabalho docente.

1 Introduction²

Brazilian schools, especially public ones, are currently in disrepair, with teachers facing precarious working conditions exacerbated by deepening neoliberal policies. Teachers do not find meaning or satisfaction in their work. The most immediate expression of this is the high rate of psychological distress and illness related to teaching.

Students, in turn, do not have their knowledge needs fully met (Asbahr, 2011), and there are no social or pedagogical situations that promote full study and learning activities. Public education's failure is reflected in students and teachers, who are primarily responsible for implementing policies unrelated to the school environment's needs and demands (SOUZA, 2010).

However, it is important to consider the essential theoretical and methodological contributions of critical school psychology, especially in explaining school failure as a synthesis of multiple social determinants. School psychology emerged in the 1980s as a critical response to psychological approaches that attributed school difficulties to students (Tanamachi, 2000).

The clinical perspective was questioned regarding its actions in schools. Historically, it has been limited to providing individual psychological care to students diagnosed with emotional difficulties, which were mechanically correlated with school failure (Antunes, 2012). This hegemonic practice, in

² The text was constructed from excerpts from the doctoral research entitled “The group process as resistance to suffering and teacher illness: a study in light of the historical-dialectical perspective” (FERNANDES, 2015). The research was developed with the support of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES).

which psychologists were considered holders of psychological knowledge in education, relied on tests and psychological reports as main tools of work and reinforced processes of labeling and exclusion in schools (Patto, 1999; Firbida & Vasconcelos, 2018).

Despite the problems and contradictions permeating the theory and practice of psychology in schools, significant progress has been made in scientific research and the ethical-political realm. This progress has created conditions for socially engaged and committed practices that overcome various forms of exclusion and prejudice. From a critical perspective, school psychology has advanced in explaining school failure as the result of multiple social, pedagogical, and economic elements. This perspective has enabled the involvement of teachers, parents, and other school professionals as fundamental agents in overcoming school difficulties. It has also opened up a range of new alternatives for action from an emancipatory perspective (Patto, 1999; CFP, 2013).

According to Tanamachi (2000), school psychology, from a critical perspective, still presents a collective challenge: to produce research and practices that constitute theoretical-practical mediations for constructing new approaches between psychology and formal education. The author adds: "In these circumstances, the object of study of psychology is 'the way in which students' activity is determined by education,' and the goal is to discover the psychological laws that govern this process" (Tanamachi, 2000, p. 91).

Given the condition of the teacher in relation to pedagogical activity, some issues can be considered. What role does the educator play as an object of research and action in critical school psychology? What contributions has this praxis provided to teaching activity in schools? What theoretical and investigative importance is given to promoting the mental health of teachers in public schools, whose primary social function is transmitting historically accumulated knowledge?

We recognize the urgency and importance of researching teachers' health and illness processes, as well as establishing psychosocial practices in schools that

promote psychological health and awareness of the social and economic determinants of teaching in a class-based society.

Research reveals alarming information, such as worsening psychological distress and the resurgence of psychosomatic and occupational illnesses.

Brazilian teachers in basic education (Silva, 2007). This influences and impairs the quality of teaching and learning activities.

Teachers have been held responsible for improving the poor conditions of their work (Oliveira, 2004). The concepts that correlate teaching with vocation, talent, mission, and mothering are still prevalent today. The same is true of the idea of individual responsibility for reflection, training, and research processes at work. In his research, Facci (2003) offered important critiques of the perspectives of the "researcher teacher," the "reflective teacher," and the "critical intellectual," analyzing how fallacious these perspectives become when they disregard teachers' vital activities amid objective working and living conditions, thereby serving a neoliberal project.

We understand that, in explaining school failure and difficulties, especially among poor children, psychological discourses are also present in a similar way in the analysis of teaching activity. Certain psychological and pedagogical concepts in educational policies hold teachers responsible for success or failure in teaching. Educators are blamed when they are considered failures in their roles of teaching scientific knowledge and transforming students' personalities (Souza, 2020).

Teaching is a complex research category that must be contextualized within the contradictions and mediations between the particularities of schools and their broader social contexts (SAVIANI, 2013), otherwise falling back on abstract and simplistic explanations. It is important to consider other perspectives that indirectly blame teachers for their workplace suffering and illness and suggest individual improvements to the situation (Reinhold, 2002), without questioning the economic and social bases that sustain it.

Other investigations carried out in the field of historical-cultural psychology reveal frequent psychological suffering, illness, and fragmentation among teachers in relation to their work (Aguiar, 2000; Martins, 2001; Asbah, 2005; Silva, 2007). Based on a materialistic and historical conception, these studies demonstrate how working conditions prevent teachers from fully expressing themselves in their teaching activities and constructing humanizing motives and meanings. Consequently, the results of teaching actions often fail to align with initial expectations and motives. Work, as the main source of contact with objective reality, causes immense suffering and the emergence of illnesses, such as depression, stress, and labyrinthitis. It also causes severe psychological impairment as fragmentation and alienation spread to other dimensions of social life.

On the other hand, several authors (Aguiar, 2000; Martins, 2002; Fernandes, 2013) advocate for the creation of collective spaces as a means of combating the heterogeneity and reification that characterize schools and everyday life. In this sense, we recognize the importance of systematic research on group processes as a means of resisting and transforming the alienating conditions that affect teachers' work.

This research aims to investigate how group processes with teachers can serve as instruments of resistance against suffering, illness, and alienation in educational work. This investigation is based on references from Historical-Cultural Psychology and the historical-dialectical perspective of human groups. Our goal is to encourage deliberate and reflective actions that promote teachers' awareness of the economic and historical-social factors that influence their work. Our hypothesis is that group processes generate new needs, motives, and teaching activities that promote humanization. These processes build expectations and needs for emancipatory projects in schools, education, and society. This movement, made possible by the mediation of others, can produce resistance to the objectification of psychological suffering and the alienation of pedagogical work. It can also create conditions that strengthen health processes.

This research is guided by the notion of groups³ from a historical-dialectical perspective, represented by the following theories and authors: a. Silvia Lane's dialectical analysis of the individual in the group; b. Martín-Baró's psychosocial theory of human groups; c. Arthur V. Petrovski's stratometric conception of groups and collectives: These three groups share a fundamental theoretical and methodological basis in Marxism.

In the 1980s, Silvia Lane and Martín-Baró conducted research on groups, considering the reality of their Latin American countries. They questioned traditional small group psychology, particularly studies and research that disregarded the historicity, ideology, economics, and society of human groups.

In her dialectical analysis of groups, Lane (2004) highlights aspects related to alienation, institutions, life histories, and social roles. This consolidates a more individualized analysis of the individual within the group process.

Martín-Baró (1989) conceives of the group as a totality that can be fully understood in relation to other social groups. He emphasizes the necessity and importance of intergroup analysis in relation to the social division of labor in capitalism. He proposes three parameters for analyzing human groups: identity, power, and activity.

In the 1960s, Petrovski and his collaborators developed the stratometric conception of the group, which is based on Vygotsky's circle and Leontiev's theory of activity. This conception is also based on Vygotsky's theses on the mediated nature of human consciousness and higher psychological functions. The concept of the collective is central and can be defined as a group with a higher level of development in which interpersonal relationships are mediated by the socially and personally significant content of shared activities (Petrovski, 1986).

³ This term was coined by Dalla Vecchia (2011) in order to categorize and distinguish group theories into two theoretical perspectives within the field of social psychology in Latin America, namely: Freudo-Marxist and historical-dialectical. The latter includes the group theories of Silvia Lane, Martín-Baró, and Russian psychologist Arthur V. Petrovski.

According to the author, some phenomena can be observed in the collective. Among these phenomena is referentiality, which is understood as a process of selective orientation within a circle of important people or groups. In other words, an individual represents an object capable of satisfying various needs. Finally, we highlight Petrovski's (1984) proposal to expand and systematize the category of activity within collective and group frameworks.

2 Method

The research was conducted with teachers from a public high school in a medium-sized city in the state of São Paulo. To address our research topic, we used three main tools: an interactive lecture regarding "Teacher Health," guidance interviews, and the group process itself.

The interactive lecture aimed to raise awareness among the teaching staff about the topic and introduce potential participants to the group process. The 1.5-hour presentation covered topics related to health, suffering, illness, educational policies, and school violence. Eight teachers agreed to participate in the group, and seven remained until the end.

The second stage consisted of orientation interviews to present research information, answer questions about the working group, present the informed consent form, and gather information about participants' personal lives and professional backgrounds. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The third and final stage of the research involved developing the group process. We proposed ten meetings to the group, all of which were recorded with the teachers' consent. We coordinated the group process for eight months (from April to November 2013), suggesting planned activities based on specific themes. The themes that the group worked on throughout the process were: 1) unique life stories, 2) power relations and autonomy, 3) salary and social devaluation, 4) teacher appreciation, 5) perceptions of students, 6) educator fears, and 7) the positive aspects of teaching (parts I and II). At the last meeting, we carried out a written and oral evaluation of the entire group

process. We organized our work using plans that included the date, theme, objective, procedures, and general observations, and we carried out these plans through initiation, development, and completion actions. The main resources used were texts, activities, and a video. Audio recordings of the meetings were made and transcribed.

The theoretical precepts and procedures of this research should be understood in light of historical and dialectical materialism, a social theory conceived by Karl Marx in the historical context of the effervescence of nascent capitalist society. Here, we are particularly interested in his central ideas regarding the dialectical method in relation to his object of study: bourgeois political economy. We agree with Netto (2011) that totality, contradiction, and mediation are fundamental categories in dialectical and materialist logic for explaining social reality.

Initial readings of the empirical data revealed several general themes: teacher training, school management, teacher powerlessness, fragmented teaching methods, students' social conditions, the enjoyment, and potential of objectifying teaching activities, and significant social and emotional relationships, among others. We consider this stage to be the beginning of the analytical process, which is characterized by describing main and recurring themes. However, our interest extends beyond mere description; we also seek to explain the information gathered in light of the multiple determinants that constitute it, going beyond the apparent and empirical concrete, the "chaotic representation of the whole" (Marx, 1978).

We raise the following question: How should the group process be analyzed? Would following and investigating only its chronological development fall into the trap of formal and positivist logic? What categories and elements express its real, concrete movement? What are the main theoretical and explanatory elements that establish essential relationships with each other and with the totality of the group? With these questions in mind, we will refer to the three categories of materialist dialectics—totality,

contradiction, and mediation (Lukács, 2012; Netto, 2011)—in theoretical dialogue with authors of the historical-dialectical perspective of human groups.

An important assumption is that the group process is a whole embedded in a larger whole (Lane, 2004). Thus, the group must be studied in light of the economic and social mediations that constitute it. In other words, the group is a synthesis of multiple factors (Martins, 2003); it is a unity of diversity. When analyzing the group, relationships with the concrete whole and less complex wholes must be considered, as well as the dynamic relationships between its constituent elements. In this sense, the group as a whole and "social structure" cannot be reduced to a mere sum of its parts (Martín-Baró, 1989, p. 206).

The group process is viewed as both a totality and a historical, contradictory entity. Contradiction forges the group; it appears in its genesis and in the dynamic, essential relationships between its theoretical elements and core categories. Thus, the group process must be understood as a constant movement of contradictions and conflicts (Lane, 2004), which can lead to leaps in quality. This conception is far from a harmonious view of the group.

The group's categories and constituent elements establish mediations with each other; that is, they produce essential and necessary relationships. The fundamental aspects of a group interact with each other in complex ways, forming reciprocal connections with the group and the larger whole. The group as a whole also undergoes the complex mediations of the "concrete and inclusive totality" (Netto, 2011). The group's categories must be understood in their ontological peculiarity and diverse interrelationships. Keep in mind that a predominant moment may exist in the unity of the group's categorical universe.

We understand that the category of activity refers to the predominant "first-order mediation" (Dalla Vecchia, 2011, p. 91) in interconnection with the other group categories. Furthermore, the development of group activity created conditions for the formation of the categories of affectivity and identity, which gained prominence throughout the group's history. This stage corresponds to the

second analytical phase, which results from the abstraction of ontological categories and generic theoretical elements by consciousness in the face of reality. In other words, it is the detachment from apparent concreteness through theoretical thinking.

The third analytical stage was characterized by identifying, categorizing, explaining, and theorizing singular data in complex, reciprocal mediations with the extracted ontological categories (activity, affectivity, and identity). General and abstract categories that reproduce the essential and real relationships of the group as a whole were used as instruments to guide and analyze singular situations and contents. In this sense, we arrived at an explanation of the object that no longer coincides with the apparent and chaotic starting point. The group process is now thought of concretely, and we have reached the fourth and final analytical stage.

3. Results and Discussion

This **activity category** includes group actions that focus on the presented themes, with the theme of reflection being the teaching activity and its connection to the process of psychological suffering and illness among teachers in a single public school, as mediated by institutional and social determinants.

Regarding "power" in teaching activities, most teachers understand the need to exercise it but seem to have varying degrees of difficulty performing this function. According to Martín-Baró (1989), power permeates the social fabric, and the relationship between teacher and student involves differential possession of resources and forces. Thus, when organizing spaces, times, and rules and discipline, it is expected that the teacher will define himself and define the student in school.

Teacher-student relationships presuppose the consolidation of teaching and learning activities. For the group, the dual demands of the educational task cause physical fatigue and mental exhaustion, especially in a unique reality that demands multiple functions (Oliveira, 2004) that supplant the

primary purpose of transmitting knowledge. "[...] We, the educators and trainers, are always in command. In a classroom, you are in charge. You are always introducing new things and teaching rules. That is what exhausts us" (Teacher Julia⁴).

Educators also experience significant psychological stress from relationships with school administrators: "When there's a problem, the administration wants to talk to you. Or we get upset with the secretary. That causes much more stress than the students" (Teacher Fernando). This data is concerning and suggests traditional management practices, which is consistent with research by Batista and Odelius (1999) that found a positive correlation between traditional management and psychological distress or illness among teachers.

Another issue that causes psychological distress to the group is the "devaluation of teachers' salaries and social status." Teachers also interpret social devaluation, which, when combined with the intense demands of teaching, exacerbates internal conflicts and feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy. The group questions these meanings and attempts to explain the origin of these inadequacies and feelings. This situation is reflected in the teachers' psyche: "We teachers have the weapon in our hands. We know the way. And yet, it appears that we swim and swim and swim, only to die on the beach" (Teacher Rosa). We observe the difficulty educators have in humanizing themselves and their students during pedagogical activities. Their ideals do not align with their actions, and their dreams do not become reality (ASBAHR, 2005).

In the speeches of these educators, we observe the often frustrated expectation of fulfilling the essential role of ensuring their students' acquisition of knowledge despite precarious working conditions. "If you're going to hold a math competition, you can't prepare for it. You can't even manage the classroom properly

⁴ The names of the teachers mentioned in the text are fictitious.

because you have to review the subjects [...]" That's with good will, good humor, and a bad salary" (Teacher Aline).

The serious implications of students' academic failure lead teachers to question the meaning of their work and, consequently, their lives. Meaning in work is vital for psychological health and the full development of an individual's personality. Thus, dehumanization in education calls into question the humanization of life as a whole.

When discussing the "valorization of teachers," the meanings and dilemmas circulating in pedagogical and social ideas arise, such as teaching as a vocation versus a profession. We found that the teaching vocation stereotype (RÊSES, 2008) remains prevalent, as evidenced by the majority of participants' reports. However, the group reflects the meanings attributed to valuing teachers, especially the ideologized conceptions of teaching as a vocation or profession: "Why do we have to be [...] saviors? This is imposed on us to justify the lack of financial recognition we deserve. We are not missionaries. We are teachers!" (Teacher Julia).

Other important questions arise in the collective discussion about the impacts of educational policies, such as the "Merit Promotion Program⁵" and the "Performance Bonus."⁶ Educators question the meaning of their work when they realize that students' performance is insufficient and yet they still pass: "And we as teachers see that our students have achieved nothing; we feel the same way, right? I am responsible for this failure. I feel distressed in a way" (Teacher Fernando).

Despite the group's progress in explaining how educational policies compromise the humanization and training of students by determining teaching activities, teachers ultimately blame themselves for this state of

⁵ "Promotion" is the transition of the holder of a position in the teaching, pedagogical support, and pedagogical support classes that are being phased out to a higher level than the one in which they are currently placed, upon passing a theoretical, practical, or theoretical and practical assessment of specific knowledge (SÃO PAULO, 2021a).

⁶ The "Performance Bonus" is paid to civil servants working in the Department of Education and is based on the achievement of pre-established goals, with a view to improving and enhancing the quality of public education (SÃO PAULO, 2021b).

affairs. Thus, their consciousness is limited to the particular and fails to consider all elements in the evaluation of a phenomenon or object, which manifests the spontaneity characteristic of common sense and alienated everyday life (HELLER, 2008).

Reflections on "the fears of the educator" once again express the contradictions in teachers' consciousness. Participants report difficulties and fears of carrying out innovative actions at school, expressing the dilemma between conformity and transformation: "Am I going to settle down? Am I going to innovate at school? How am I going to innovate at school? Nobody does anything. Alone?" (Teacher Fernando). On the other hand, another educator reports having already developed extracurricular educational activities and says that other teachers would like to do the same but seem constrained from questioning the established status quo. "I love it! When I go, I succeed. We go everywhere, right? But there are teachers who don't do it. I would like to be doing it. Yes, even if it's in the schoolyard" (Teacher Rosa).

Teachers expressed discomfort and outrage, criticizing the change in material and spatial conditions that affect their ability to carry out their educational activities. "We had a classroom environment. They took it away because it was too much work and because the students moved around" (Teacher Julia).

Once again, it is clear that a discipline is imposed on teachers and students at school. Teachers questioned the latent norms of silence and limited movement but felt powerless to propose innovative actions outside the classroom. In light of these reports, we understand that acceptance or transformation in the face of the conditions and everyday social relations reproduced in school depends on deciding "about a given alternative" (Heller, 2008, p. 39). The greater the commitment, morality, and risk involved in this decision, the more it rises above reified everyday life. In Leontievan terms, rejecting the rupture between the motives and ends of pedagogical actions and searching for the transformation of the objective conditions that engender

consciousness and activity (Leontiev, 2004) is a significant step toward resisting submission and alienation.

Teachers play an important role in dialogues about "positivity at work." They highlighted positive feelings arising from desired educational outcomes, such as fulfillment, relief, happiness, satisfaction, emotion, and gratification. "I worked on grammar, interpretation, and the final product in Portuguese. I noticed that the student could use conjunctions, link ideas, and write clearly. [...] Look, I won the night!" (Teacher Anita). Manifesting these feelings is an important parameter of unity between motive and end, between planning and achievement. Thus, expressing unique feelings in unity with the results of teaching actions can provide essential information about teachers' consciousness and alienation processes.

It is also worth noting that positively objectifying teaching work influences the development of prospective educational actions. Satisfying higher and generic needs, externalizing motives that generate meaning, resonances in students' learning activities, and expressing positive emotions stimulate the formative and creative processes in teleological teaching actions. "I come with an activity ready, and then sometimes the student does something else with what I planned, and then I incorporate it into my new classes" (Professor Fernando).

Thus, these meaningful educational actions reflect on both student learning and the transformation of teachers. Information reveals important elements in the dynamics of teaching activities that influence the professional and prospective development of educators. In this sense, we cannot deny the formative dimension of meaningful educational actions (Moura et al., 2010).

In the category of **group affection**, moments are observed that reveal the pre-existence of affection between teachers and the development of genuine group affection. New needs and humanizing motives resulting from the activity are observed, as well as possible links between positive emotions originating from the group process and psychosocial suffering in education.

The discussion reveals elements indicating the presence of emotional relationships before joining the group. "[...] it is a group that already embodies these qualities daily. It already values and respects" (Teacher Imaculada). These prior emotional bonds create favorable conditions for consolidating emotional productions specific to the group (MARTINS, 2003). The existence of positive affective bonds appears to further unite the teachers. However, the construction of group affectivity depends on actions in the construction of the mediating activity; therefore, it is historical, procedural, and contradictory.

Through the group process, we can observe the affection that develops from the experiences shared within the group. "Outside the group, he is more affectionate. I learned to admire Fernando a lot," said Teacher Julia. "I think we did too." "I didn't talk much. Now, I joke around more" (Teacher Aline). It is possible to notice aspects of an embryonic affective bond forged in the group process. The teachers report that the group members are closer in their daily schoolwork. The previously established affective relationships acquire a new quality through the exchange of meanings made possible by group activities. Additionally, the manifestations of this phenomenon have repercussions in the contexts of school and social life.

A concrete analysis of the group requires revealing the feelings and emotions that permeate its activity, as well as investigating the justifications and "whys," or what stimulates individuals to act cooperatively: their real motives (Leontiev, 1983). From the reports, we can infer that the initial expectations and motives that encouraged educators to participate in the group process were to do something different, to learn, to contribute to the research, to emphasize the importance of the work topic, and to leave the Collective Pedagogical Work Classes (CPWC). We started from the hypothesis that new needs are formed through group activity and that these needs constitute new motives. The therapeutic dimension was emphasized: "We addressed topics that are part of our daily lives, things that we experience. From the first session on, I left feeling better than when I arrived" (Teacher

Fernando). Another motive that seemed to stimulate the teachers' actions was the possibility of expressing the main difficulties of the teaching profession. "We found a way to make our voices heard here. This is what had such an effect on all of us; it had an important impact" (Teacher Rosa).

Another reason that motivated the educators in the group was the symbolic exchange about pedagogical activity. "It's a time for us to share these issues, listen to our colleagues, and realize that we're not alone. Everyone is struggling, suffering from the same things" (Teacher Julia). Learning was also emphasized: "I learned countless academic concepts and had the opportunity to listen and be heard" (Teacher Anita). The possibility of reflecting consciously on the elements of pedagogical work and their influence on the health-disease process seems to have been another motive: "Recognizing the negative aspects of the profession that make us sick to combat them, as well as the positive aspects to appreciate the pleasures of education and find the strength to continue" (Professor Fernando).

The following is an approximate summary of the concrete movement of motives constituted in the group process with the following denominations: 1) therapeutic motives, 2) motives revealing teaching difficulties, 3) learning motives, 4) collective work motives, 5) reflective motives of the health-illness process, and 6) affective-emotional motives. These motives arise from the satisfaction of humanizing needs provided by group mediations. Therefore, they present the possibility of generating personal meaning in pedagogical consciousness through their relations with the ends.

The group process appears to occupy a significant place in these educators' motivational spheres. In this sense, we can speak of a restructuring of the motivational hierarchy; that is, the group has acquired a new quality and status in teachers' consciousness and activity. The group has become a space for meeting, dialogue, reflection, and the appropriation of experiences and knowledge—human and generic needs that, in theory, should be considered daily in work and in the unitary pedagogical project.

Thus, the group process creates new expectations and motivations related to an ideal school project. Paradoxically, it also confronts educators with the reality of the school project, where emancipation and freedom are limited by the necessity of performing alienating educational work.

Teachers expressed feelings of well-being and personal appreciation that seemed to influence their work-related psychosocial suffering: "I was exhausted and didn't want to go [...] The most interesting thing is that, eventually, I always felt better than when I arrived" (Teacher Aline). Collectively evoking and reproducing feelings and emotions of various kinds (e.g., inferiority, incapacity, tiredness, discouragement, grief, anger, frustration, anguish, impotence, unhappiness, fear, fulfillment, relief, happiness, satisfaction, commotion, gratification) during work generated positive feelings in the participants. "It was very good to be able to express our feelings. Letting them out did us good because we often only make small remarks about our performance without a concrete result" (Teacher Rosa).

Satisfying various needs and constructing genuine motives produced feelings of joy, gratification, and empowerment: "Getting to know each other a little better allowed us to create significant bonds. Being able to share my experiences was also beneficial. The respect with which you treated us the whole time [...] without knowing that the greatest joy is ours!" (Teacher Julia).

Another finding is that positive emotions, such as well-being, personal appreciation, joy, gratification, and empowerment, were predominant in the evaluation of the group process as a whole. How, then, can we explain the feelings of helplessness, anguish, discomfort, unhappiness, and frustration experienced during group activities? The group process carries this fundamental contradiction within it: it produces psychological suffering by confronting teachers with peculiar aspects of alienation from their work, while also generating positive emotions by satisfying certain humanizing needs that may be denied by school and social reality.

Processes that raise awareness about teaching work produce new emotions that become part of the concrete struggle alongside their opposites. These opposing feelings and emotions may emerge from the intensification of contradictions in pedagogical consciousness through collective activity. Suffering and pleasure are united. However, awareness of these positive feelings can potentially hinder psychosocial suffering and, essentially, the alienation of work.

In the category of **group identity**, we observed that the common elements of these teachers' identities can be understood as initial parameters for group development. In this sense, training and transforming others as a motive for choosing a profession is the first aspect of this identity. "I started teaching and really saw it as a calling. I like to talk [...] I'm here because my work is important. I want to educate people. With geography, you can educate critical thinkers" (Teacher Fernando).

As we have seen, teachers also claimed to find meaning and satisfaction in teaching. One teacher said, "I love teaching. I realized that I am an educator [...] I just get very sad about the neglect we suffer. I am here by choice. I earn money elsewhere, right?" (Teacher Julia). The educators' commitment to educational activities is evident as well: "Last week, they told me that Anita was leaving. I said, 'Guys, I can't believe it! We are going to lose a great teacher because she reaches out to each student'" (Teacher Rosa). (Teacher Rosa):

These shared elements of teaching identity shape individuals' roles and actions within the group and may have created favorable conditions for developing its activity and, consequently, its collective identity. However, these common attributes are insufficient to define the group's identity, which is forged through the participants' coordinated actions (MARTÍN-BARÓ, 1989). We will present analytical indicators suggesting the group's development toward a collective identity.

The first group meetings were marked by discussions about whether to participate in the strike. Despite their diverse individual positions and actions, educators presented various reasons that led them not to participate in the

work stoppages and strikes of their category. "Why don't we have the courage to go on strike?" (Teacher Lourdes). "Because we need the money," said Teacher Aline. "They brought in riot police, dogs, and tear gas," said Teacher Rosa. "But it was good," said Teacher Fernando. The unique processes of social consciousness, fears of possible retaliation in institutional settings (from micro to macro), the absence of solid references, the historical fragmentation of the category, and the internalized social and salary devaluation are elements that explain teachers' passivity in the face of opportunities to protest for improved working conditions.

Paradoxically, teachers showed signs of potential group cohesion and felt that the newly formed group could question and transform dominant power relations in the school. "Through our colleagues here and the knowledge they have about the school, maybe we can change how we treat people and how we ask for things," said Teacher Imaculada. [...] I'm going to organize an excursion for us to get out of school. Whether she will authorize it, I don't know" (Teacher Rosa).

These strike dialogues exemplify the absence of an organized teaching group that develops actions to challenge their immediate reality. However, the group began to express reflective actions that questioned power relations and submission at school, confronting members with their responsibilities in transforming them.

Another relevant finding is that sharing and reflecting on unique life stories at the beginning of the group process led to identification processes within the group (Martins, 2003). "You went to the US [...] to take courses, and one day you were sitting on your sofa crocheting. We have to have the courage to break away from something that hurts us" (Teacher Anita). One teacher recalled her colleague's story in detail, sharing it with the group and extracting values and lessons that became an important guide for her life. Empirical evidence of identification and reference phenomena within a group can be an important indicator of its level of development (Petrovski, 1984), though it is not the only indicator. Additionally, group identification should be viewed in unity with differentiation processes.

Another significant moment occurred when the group showed signs of collective organization to address the episode in which a student unexpectedly grabbed a teacher's arm at school while discussing situations of conflict between students and teachers. "[...] And who would take responsibility for what would happen to the teacher in the parking lot?" asked Teacher Imaculada. "No, no one is taking responsibility, even now. We are the ones who are going to do something!" (Teacher Aline).

The group discussed the topic "The Fears of the Educator" and planned actions to resolve the situation. The educators seemed more empowered and supported by the group, expressing feelings of solidarity and courage. Considering that the topic addressed that day coincidentally led to a discussion of content related to school violence, the group had already accumulated significant production and history, and the group, by using "we," once again encouraged educators to take action, we can assume that the group process contributed to this specific articulation.

4 Final Considerations

The group process enables educators to reflect on the general and specific aspects of fragmentation and alienation in their work, which prevents them from fully identifying as intellectual workers. Conversely, it fosters an appreciation for the positive aspects of work, even in the most challenging circumstances. Teachers criticize idealistic and ideological conceptions of teaching work, as well as hegemonic educational policies that devalue them socially and financially. These policies treat teachers as executors of ready-made tasks to be reproduced in everyday school life. This occurs amid the massive precariousness of work.

However, this macrosocial criticism does not seem to obscure the tenuous emancipatory possibilities of work, which position teachers as conscious agents in determining their educational activities. Thus, the group's fundamental moments were permeated by the contradictory processes of becoming aware of the dual

nature of educational work, which is immersed in the complex determinations of capitalist sociability.

During the group process, educators share and perceive similar meanings about the difficulties they experience at school and in their work with social totality. Without the group, we believe that teachers would not have the opportunity to discuss the unique aspects of social particularity that influence their consciousness and daily activities. There are no other spaces where they can authentically reflect on their work in a democratic, horizontal, and collective manner.

The unique social conditions of this school exacerbate psychological distress and illness among teachers. These conditions include the lack of democratic management and support during difficult times, the bureaucratization of ATPC, precarious working conditions, inadequate teaching resources, overcrowded classrooms, and students' serious social and economic problems. However, intervention research demonstrated teachers' continuous effort, concern, and daily commitment to educational activities.

The research carried out allowed us to reach the following conclusions:

1) Human needs are met through teachers' activities, but these are constrained by social particularities, leading to the creation of new activities, actions, and motives that humanise and produce positive emotions. This is an important mechanism for the processes of awareness in tension with historical and social reality. 2) Contact with the determinations of concrete totality and its complex ideological, political, and institutional intermediations on teaching work accentuates the processes and contradictions of consciousness. 3) The collective realisation of the possible positive dimensions of work awakens in pedagogical consciousness the ideals of a transformative education, beyond alienated everyday life. 4) The transformation and strengthening of affective-emotional bonds allows for greater humanisation among teachers and appears as a barrier to psychological suffering and, therefore, as a form of resistance to fragmentation and alienation at work.

Future research focusing on group processes with teachers and centring on discussion and reflection on the interrelationships between mental health and pedagogical work in a class-based society should include more structured and in-depth theoretical studies, deliberately coordinated by the group, in its planning. This represents a significant challenge for research and interventions in public schools, which often lack the opportunities to engage with the scientific objectifications produced by humankind, and which tend to homogenise activities and suspend reified daily life.

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