

From the daily lessons of so many other people: experiences in School Psychology in Basic Education

Das lições diárias de outras tantas pessoas:
vivências em Psicologia Escolar na Educação Básica

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ABSTRACT

A solid theoretical framework is considered of supreme importance for psychologists to develop actions in line with a critical perspective in School Psychology, which considers the numerous actors and aspects related to the teaching and learning processes: students, teachers, managers, families and their concrete material conditions; the school's political-pedagogical projects and educational public policies. In this article we report some of our professional experiences, considering that they can contribute to the work with students and teachers of Basic Education. We also bring considerations about a survey carried out with psychologists from the public education system in seven Brazilian states, which pointed out the theoretical and methodological inconsistency found with the research participants, which weakened the planning and development of educational practices and, often reduced them to the condition of problem solvers. These reports intersect with some

RESUMO

Um referencial teórico sólido é de suma importância para que psicólogas/os desenvolvam ações em consonância com uma perspectiva crítica em Psicologia Escolar, que considere os inúmeros atores e aspectos referentes aos processos de ensino e aprendizagem: estudantes, docentes, gestores, famílias e suas condições materiais concretas; os projetos político-pedagógicos da escola e as políticas públicas educacionais. Neste artigo relatamos algumas de nossas vivências profissionais, considerando que estas podem contribuir para a atuação com estudantes e docentes da Educação Básica. Também trazemos considerações sobre uma pesquisa realizada com psicólogas/os da rede pública de educação de sete estados brasileiros que apontou a inconsistência teórico-metodológica encontrada junto às/aos participantes da pesquisa, o que enfraquecia e despotencializava o planejamento e o desenvolvimento das práticas educativas e, frequentemente, os reduzia à condição de “resolvedores” de problemas. Esses relatos se entrecruzam com alguns conceitos da

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concepts of Historical-cultural Psychology, such as experience and zone of close development, in order to illustrate and reiterate the need for this theoretical perspective for an education aimed at humanizing the subjects involved in it and committed to it.

Keywords: Historical-cultural Psychology. Expertise in School Psychology. Basic Education.

Psicologia Histórico-cultural, como vivência e zona de desenvolvimento próximo, com o intuito de ilustrar e reiterar a necessidade dessa perspectiva teórica para uma educação voltada à humanização dos sujeitos nela envolvidos e com ela comprometidos.

Palavras-chave: Psicologia Histórico-cultural. Atuação em Psicologia Escolar. Educação Básica.

“So writing is the way of those who use words as bait: words fishing for what is not words. When this non-word—the subtext—takes the bait, something has been written.

Once the between-the-lines has been caught, one could throw the word away with relief. But that is where the analogy ends: the non-word, upon biting the bait, has incorporated it.” (LISPECTOR, 1998, p. 20)

Between the lines and between the lines and the words we managed to fish out of the sea of Historical-Cultural Psychology, we chose to base this unusual article on the concept of experience (*pereživânie*), as it brings together the inseparable unity between the individual and social dimensions. It is a concept that undergoes changes throughout Vygotsky's work, according to Toassa and Souza (2010), who also affirm, as do Delari Junior and Bobrova Passos (2009, pp. 8-9), that *pereživânie* is a word of intricate translation, expressing “a spiritual situation, provoked in one way or another by strong feelings and impressions.” In Vygotsky's own words (1935/2010),

Experience is a unit in which, on the one hand, in an indivisible way, the environment, that which is experienced, is represented—experience is always linked to that which is located outside the person – and, on the other hand, it is represented as how I experience it; that is, all the particularities of personality and all the particularities of the environment are presented in the

experience, both what is taken from the environment, all the elements that are related to a given personality, and what is taken from the personality, all the traits of their character, constitutive traits that are related to a given event. Thus, in experience, *we always deal with the indivisible union of the particularities of personality and the particularities of the situation.* (Vygotsky, 2010, p. 687, emphasis added by the author).

The “cognitive-affective unit” cited by Delari Junior and Bobrova Passos (2009, p. 7) translates faithfully, we believe, the intellectual and emotional elements instigated by the experiences arising from our professional trajectories in the field of school and Educational Psychology. It is with this concept, therefore, that we will begin this article, which aims to present some concepts of Historical-Cultural Psychology, such as experience and zone of proximal development, in order to illustrate and reiterate the need for this theoretical perspective for an education focused on the humanization of the subjects involved and committed to it..

1 Experience: The psychological assessment process and the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development

The year was 1993, and I had just been contracted by a special education institution with a strongly welfare-oriented approach and educational undertones to perform, as my primary function, assessments and reports to certify the intellectual disabilities of children and adolescents, who were, after all, the institution's target audience. During the selection interview, I had already been questioned about the psychological tests I knew how to administer, which indicated the focus of the work carried out there.

Each child and adolescent underwent an evaluation process that involved all sectors of the institution: Social Work, Psychology, Speech Therapy, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Neurology, Physical Education, and Pedagogy—in this case, the evaluation was carried out by the director of the Special Education

School³. This process took place over two weeks, and, at the end, in a clinical meeting with representatives from each of the sectors, the cases were analyzed based on the respective opinions, and the best care was defined, when necessary. The final word was always that of Psychology.

In my first case, I received a six-year-old boy enrolled in public preschool who had suffered a seizure while bathing. In the referral, the school reported that since then, the child had been unable to keep up with activities. During the evaluation process, the mother reported that she and her husband had separated shortly before the incident. Already in this first evaluation, I realized that the use of tests that required school knowledge in children referred to the institution precisely because of difficulties in the schooling process was to endorse a sentence of failure.

As the evaluation would need to be based on two intelligence tests, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) and the Columbia Mental Maturity Scale were applied, both considered classic in this area, with the WISC being one of the most widely used in the world (GIBBONS; WARNE, 2019, apud VIEIRA, 2020). American tests are based on a fixed view of intelligence and, in this case, on knowledge acquired through formal schooling, as in the subtest that assesses content learned in school and, in addition, includes questions that are foreign to the child's universe, such as “Who was Genghis Khan?” or “What is the average height of Brazilians?”⁴. In this sense, Patto (2007) questions and denounces the supposed neutrality of the tests:

One wonders why it is better to give money to a charity than to a poor person begging on the street. The correct answer favors charities because they distribute money in a more organized and fair manner. In other words, those who are prejudiced against the poor, participate in the welfare ideology, and are uninformed are intelligent, since they believe in the integrity of institutions that are generally known to be dishonest (PATTO, 2007, p. 5).

³ That was the terminology used at the time.

⁴ These are examples of questions from the version of the test used at that time. Today there are different versions.

Moysés and Collares (1997, pp. 70–71) also express strong criticism of the standardized instrument, that is, the test, because it

chooses one form of expression as the only one worthy of consideration. This applies both to the simplest balance tests and to the most sophisticated ones in the field of higher intellectual functions, precisely the field where knowledge is most complex and controversial, which differentiates humans from other species. One of the many controversial points in discussions about intellectual development is whether the concept of potential, in the sense of the maximum that can be achieved, is applicable to human intellectual functions. That is, whether there is a maximum intelligence that a given person could develop, this maximum being determined biologically by their genetic heritage, in short, by their genotype.

The result of the assessment, which focused solely on the tests, placed the child in the category designated as “borderline” rather than “intellectually disabled” according to the scale criteria, which would mean that she would not need to be treated at/by the institution.

However, as the neurological assessment indicated a “focus,” the opinion of the neurologist—who did not participate in these meetings—together with the educator’s appeal for the child to remain for a while to be allowed to develop, led the team to include in their final opinion on the case the need for institutional support. Still inexperienced in this type of assessment, I agreed but very quickly realized the mistake I had made.

Enrolled in the institution's Special Education school, the child excelled in all activities and began to show an obvious lack of interest in them. As the next assessment could only be carried out six months after the first, in accordance with the area's protocol, I began to meet with the boy's professor to organize a different curriculum for him, similar to that of a regular school, so that after the reassessment he could return to the school he should never have left⁵.

⁵ Back then, the discussion about inclusive education was just starting; the Salamanca Statement, drafted by the UN, dates back to 1994 (UN, 1994).

After this period, a reassessment was carried out using the same scales, and the result was, in the terminology of the instruments, “normal.” I had to use all my powers of argument, together with colleagues from other sectors, such as Physical Therapy and Speech Therapy, to show that the child would not continue to benefit from the institution if he remained there and was at risk of having his development stagnate. My assessment was contrary to that of the neurologist, who in his new report continued to reiterate the need for the boy to remain. Fortunately, as the final word was up to the Psychology department, the next day the social worker and I went to the child's former school to discuss his return. To our great surprise, the school refused to enroll him, and it was only at the third school we visited that we were able to secure a place for him. In addition to the inadequacy of this situation, since according to both the Brazilian Constitution and the ECA (Child and Adolescent Statute), children have the right to education, the prejudice against children from institutions that serve people with disabilities was blatant, something that still happens today. However, thanks to inclusive education policies, such as CNE/CEB Resolution No. 2/2001, which

defines national guidelines for Special Education in Basic Education, regular schools must enroll all students in their regular classes, with the necessary support. This support may constitute part of specialized educational services (provided for in Article 208 of the Federal Constitution) and may be carried out in partnership with the public education system⁶.

Thus, this episode alerted me to the need for caution when evaluating the complaints that filled the institution's daily routine, because if I remained restricted to the limited and nativist understanding of psychometric tests, I would continue to experience situations similar to that one. Furthermore, as Leontiev (2005/1959, p. 76) writes,

⁶ Available at: <http://portal.mec.gov.br/busca-geral/125-perguntas-frequentes-911936531/educacao-especial-123657111/115-as-escolas-sao-obrigadas-a-oferecer-vagas-para-alunos-com-deficiencia-elas-precisam-de-alguma-licenca-para-oferecer-essas-vagas>. Accessed on December 6, 2021.

Intelligence tests, which merely establish which tasks a child performed well and which they performed poorly, without illustrating in any way the characteristics of their mental processes, should be considered totally inadequate for assessing a child's intellectual potential, especially when there is the problem of a slight delay.

In the meantime, some professors from the Special School and speech therapists asked me to reevaluate other children, as they realized the limitations of certain types of psychological assessment. It should be noted that I also ran groups focused on continuing training for teachers, and the learning and development processes were some of the topics discussed, which also contributed to the teachers looking at their students differently.

At the same time, I was finishing my master's degree at Unicamp⁷, with Historical-Cultural Psychology as my theoretical foundation. On one occasion, while thinking about other ways of conducting psychological assessments, I remembered the concept I was appropriating, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)⁸, by Vygotski (VIGOTSKII, 1988/1933). The author advances in the understanding of the relationship between learning processes and the development of cognitive abilities.

Near Development Zone (ZDP) by Vygotsky (VIGOTSKII, 1988/1933). The author advances our understanding of the relationship between learning and development processes, emphasizing that it is not enough to focus only on what children can do on their own, that is, in activities performed independently, considering their current level of development.

Vygotsky innovates by showing the importance of adults or more experienced peers who, by helping children with clues, hints, or instructions, configure another level of development: that of potential. Thus, “The difference between the level of tasks that

⁷ Under the guidance of Prof. Maria Cecília Rafael de Góes, PhD.

⁸ According to Marinho (2018, p. 14), “The concept of *zona blijaichego razvitia* has been translated in various ways into Portuguese: *zona de desenvolvimento imediato* (used in Paulo Bezerra’s translations of Vygotsky’s work), *zona de desenvolvimento proximal* (used by Zanella, 2014), *zona de desenvolvimento próximo* (used by Duarte, 2001), and *zona de desenvolvimento iminente* (used by Prestes, 2010).” In this article, we use *zona de desenvolvimento próximo* (*proximal development zone*).

can be accomplished with the help of adults and the level of tasks that can be developed through independent activity defines the area of the child's potential development” (VIGOTSKII, 1988/1933, p. 112). This area allows us to

determine the child's future steps and the dynamics of their development, and examine not only what development has already produced, but also what it will produce in the maturation process. [...] Therefore, the state of the child's mental development can only be determined by referring to at least *two levels*: the level of actual development and the area of potential development. (VIGOTSKII, 1988/1933, p. 113, emphasis by the author).

The appropriation of the ZPD concept at that moment was equivalent to a theoretical epiphany and was decisive in my decision to take a different direction both in my understanding of children's learning and development processes and, especially, in the organization and implementation of a new assessment procedure based on a qualitative concept that involved offering hints regarding the activities proposed throughout the assessment. This procedure, considered a process focused on children's potentialities rather than their deficiencies and failures, also began to incorporate all of their attempts during the activities. In addition to working with the child and his/her family, there was contact with the professor to understand the complaint from the perspective of all those involved (SOUZA, 2007).

If, according to Vygotsky, for learning to stimulate development, teaching must focus on the ZPD, the same must happen in relation to psychological action, which must be carefully planned based on this theoretical concept, in addition to others. In this case, it is a powerful theoretical perspective, Historical-Cultural Psychology, which contributes in an invaluable way to work in the field of education⁹.

⁹ The use of the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development in psychological assessment was addressed and analyzed in depth by Facci, Eidt, and Tuleski (2006), Facci et al. (2007), and Vieira (2020).

2 Experience: school notebooks in understanding and intervening in regard to school complaints

In 1998, having recently graduated in Psychology from USP and starting my professional career in the field of Education, I enrolled in the Institutional Psychopedagogy Improvement course offered by the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas and supervised by Prof. Maria Silvia Pinto de Moura Librandi da Rocha. Like many psychologists, I did not start the Psychology course with the intent of working in School Psychology; however, my undergraduate studies provided me with an extremely meaningful experience that shaped my desire to dedicate myself to this field. The discussions presented in the previous section on the ideological and stigmatizing bias of psychological tests had strongly influenced my training, as well as the perspective that school complaints need to be understood from a network of relationships composed of all the people and contexts that participate in the educational process, making it necessary to listen to the child or adolescent, school professionals, and the family. These actors need to be understood in a contextualized way, covering historical, cultural, and political aspects (SOUZA, 2020/2007).

The activities involved in the improvement course included clinical consultations for school-related complaints carried out at the institution's Psychology School Service and at Health Centers in the city of Campinas. Most of the children were in the early grades of public elementary schools. My supervisor invited us to request notebooks in the very first sessions, as described in Sadalla, Bariani, and Rocha (1999). This procedure provided a wealth of information: stories of suffering by students and families when school activities were not carried out; desperate expressions from professors who no longer knew what or whom to turn to appeared in notes addressed to families.

I searched for bibliographic references available at the time, but they seemed insufficient to uncover the content and gaps present in the pages of school materials. I found only works that understood the contents of the notebooks in a decontextualized way that would only be able to reveal the children's personality traits and pathologies (COSTA, 1983, 1993).

At that time, I was beginning to learn about Historical-Cultural Psychology, which showed me the extent to which notebooks were an element of culture, whose use was a part of the process of integration into school and social relationships. There are many different ways of using them, and they take on different facets and peculiarities in each country, city, and perhaps even in each classroom. As a quick example, we can mention the concept of margins, which is fundamental to the proper use of notebooks. However, there is no single way of conceiving margins. In some classrooms, it is established that this space should be left blank, while in others, the shadow of the red line is not considered a limit, and there are even those who value drawings and decorations in this area of the pages. Given such complexity, it became urgent to conduct a study that would make it possible to understand the relationships and contexts in which notebooks took shape. A long research process then began, which gave rise to my master's and doctoral theses¹⁰ (SANTOS, 2002, 2008), ethnographic research that allowed me to spend a long time in 1st and 4th grade classrooms in elementary school¹¹. I also learned about the use of notebooks in French classrooms¹².

In this life experience, Agnes Heller's concept of everyday life was fundamental. Heller (2000) defines everyday life as the life of all people, in which “all their senses, all their intellectual capacities, their manipulative skills, their feelings, passions, ideas (sic), ideologies are ‘put into operation’” (2000, p. 17). Given the need to keep all capacities functioning, none of them are used to their full intensity. And everyday life is marked by spontaneity, since it is not possible to apply reflection to each of the activities we perform; by actions based on probability, given the impossibility of “calculating with scientific certainty the possible consequence of an action” (p. 30); by the economism of actions and thoughts, used in the right measure of necessity; by pragmatism; by imitation; by

¹⁰ With Dr. Marilene Proença Rebello de Souza as my advisor.

¹¹ The research was conducted prior to the implementation of the 9-year elementary school system, through Federal Law No. 11,274, enacted in 2006.

¹² This was a sandwich period during the PhD program carried out in 2005 at the *Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique*, under the supervision of Dr. Anne-Marie Chartier.

the use of precedents to interpret facts, making it impossible to capture the unique and unrepeatable nature of each situation; and by the use of overgeneralization to react to singular cases, which favors prejudices and implies the use of provisional judgments and analogy. And, certainly, teaching work in classrooms with large numbers of students, with an overload of tasks and demands, with a shortage of time to prepare activities, favors such functioning.

Thus, as Rossler (2004) rightly points out, Heller equips us to understand the psychic workings of everyday life in a society marked by processes of alienation, which limit the intellectual, emotional, and moral development of individuals. In doing so, he broadens our possibilities for understanding how to transcend the logic of everyday life, overcoming it, since, after all, “there is no ‘Chinese wall’ between everyday activity and non-everyday praxis or non-everyday thinking, but there are infinite types of transition” (HELLER, 2000, p. 33). After all, as Patto (1997, p. 60) reminds us,

The problem-solving action with individuals and groups, which has the humanization of men on the horizon while denouncing a dehumanizing reality and the ideological instruments that maintain it (such as psychological examination techniques), announces a transformed reality and keeps alive the dream of a more humane life.

Therefore, when studying everyday life, it also becomes possible to pay attention to possibilities for escaping from the everyday, moments of reflection, discontinuity, criticism, and expression of individuality.

From this perspective, the research carried out made it possible to identify that notebooks are recurring objects in teaching and learning spaces. Then, more so than today. However, even though we have seen significant growth in other media for recording and school activities, notebooks still occupy a very important place in the daily lives of students and education professionals. They are objects that enable records and express elements of the context in which they take shape. As they are used for activities in different

subjects, they teach students how knowledge is divided (CHARTIER; RENARD, 2000). In other words, from a specific set of tasks grouped under the title “mathematics,” children construct a representation of this area of knowledge. The set of activities carried out in the notebooks also shows students what school knowledge is legitimate and what the hierarchy between subjects is. Portuguese, for example, appears to be a clearly more important subject, since many pages of the notebooks are dedicated to it. Meanwhile, Physical Education, which leaves no recorded traces, is seen as less important.

Notebooks help students learn and can also lead to important developments. The notes in them can help you remember things and do activities related to the content. Notebooks can be used to encourage different uses of writing. However, students need to learn how to use them first. They need to understand how to use the tool in a social setting. During my master's program fieldwork, I followed a teacher who had trouble telling her students what she expected of them when she asked them to "jump the line" between one activity and another. In that neighborhood, which was crossed by a train line, jumping the line meant crossing boundaries, facing dangers, and doing something that felt like it was off-limits. She had to pay attention to the meanings that children attributed to her words. This allowed her to find other ways of teaching that took into account the previous experiences of her young students.

In addition to content, the use of these materials requires a range of skills, such as organization and planning. And so, what is commonly referred to as “whimsy” enables important learning for both academic success and other aspects of life. However, we do not mean to say that only the use of notebooks in accordance with the expectations of education professionals promotes development. Sometimes, insubordination (revealed through illustrations and unauthorized communications, for example) is an important form of expression. As Vygotsky (2004, p. 312) discusses, referring to the transgression of rules as a way of acting in accordance with one's own concepts of good and evil: “this child reveals unusual cunning, agility, intelligence, and authentic heroism.”

The interplay between the cognitive and affective dimensions, so dear to Historical-Cultural Psychology, is evident in the pages of the notebooks.

The affective-cognitive unit that underpins human activity requires the affirmation of emotion as an inherent part of the cognitive act and vice versa, since no emotion or feeling, nor any act of thought, can be expressed as pure content, independent of each other. (MARTINS; CARVALHO, 2016, p.702)

Expressions of affection, both positive and negative, between the teacher and her class are often revealed in the way she checks the activities carried out, in her praise and corrections, and in her reprimands expressed through notes. Such marks are so significant in relation to school materials that they greatly favor the willingness and desire to learn or, conversely, can culminate in the complete elimination of notebooks. It is a fact widely recorded by research in the field of education history that only people considered “good students” keep their school materials (GVIRTZ, 1999; BUKIET, MÉROU, 2000; CHARTIER, 2003).

During the long research process, children who had a school history marked by setbacks and difficulties commonly got rid of their school materials. The situation of one of the children was quite emblematic: in the middle of the school year, he burned his notebook, which contained complaints from his teacher, and recorded the difficulties he was experiencing in the literacy process.

Amid a complex web of relationships, notebooks take shape, and their contents express personal, relational, pedagogical, and contextual aspects.

It is very common for us, psychology professionals, to be sought out by families or teachers to give opinions and advice on difficulties that arise in the schooling process, based on the elements present in these materials.

Very often, we are asked for immediate interpretations based on characteristics such as: the presence or absence of records and completion of tasks, the care taken in performing activities, and mistakes or successes, among many other characteristics. From the long research process that I have briefly summarized here, it was possible to identify that:

School notebooks cannot be understood solely on the basis of what can be identified by observing their content and presentation. They are school materials that take shape in an educational, social, and political context and are therefore composed of a multiplicity of relationships that occur in school and around its organization. Thus, to understand the contents of notebooks, it is important to have additional information about the schooling process in its different facets, with a view to seeking to understand aspects expressed by the subject and other actors in this process, which, although not directly revealed in the pages of the notebook, can be grasped through different forms of communication. (PERETTA; LIMA, 2021, p. 45)

It is therefore very important to investigate school complaints, seeking a contextualized analysis of the different elements that make up the schooling process. As Facci, Eidt, and Tuleski (2006) point out:

An adequate psychoeducational assessment should therefore include a prospective analysis of child development, indicating those notions and concepts that are at the next level of development. It is precisely on these notions and concepts that teaching should focus in order to develop higher psychological functions. (p. 118)

Therefore, in order to contribute to planning how teaching will take place, it is important to understand, in particular, the child's potential and what is in the process of development. In other words, it is essential to pay attention to the ZPD so that mediation can produce advances in the acquisition of knowledge and the development of Higher Psychological Functions.

As such, notebooks can be extremely valuable in school psychology practice if understood as triggers for broad research processes that focus on institutional and relational dimensions. This may include actions with the teaching staff that enable them to collectively discuss and plan the place that various school materials and didactic resources will occupy, as well as the mediation necessary to carry out the activities. As we discussed in Peretta and Lima (2021), it is essential to commit “to the construction of pedagogical proposals that provide for the establishment of

positive links between subjects and school learning, which are directed toward potentialities and promote emancipation” (p. 43).

3 In practice, the theory is the same

We began this article with an account of the authors' experiences in the field and research in School and Educational Psychology. Different paths, albeit full of common elements, brought us closer to Historical-Cultural Psychology. These experiences illustrate the urgent need for any professional practice to be grounded in theory. If, as Bourdieu states, “Every technique is a theory in action” (apud THIOLENT, 1987, p. 44), all practice is always based on a specific theoretical foundation that needs to be continuously explained and explored in depth. It is also an ethical and political commitment of the psychologist to their training, their work, and society. For Saviani (2005, p. 262), “the more solid the theory that guides practice, the more consistent and effective the practical activity is.”

We emphasize, however, that theoretical-practical coherence is not the prerogative of a particular theoretical framework but involves some elements, as listed by Peretta, Caldas, and Lara (2014) based on Tanamachi's (1997) thesis, “Critical view of Education and Psychology: elements for the construction of a critical view of School Psychology”:

Consideration of multiple determinants (social, economic, political, historical) and the presence of a conception of man and education; Theoretical and practical contributions linked to the reality in which they are inserted; Theoretical and methodological assumptions/reference to authors of critical thought and how they are appropriated; Explanation of a technical-political and/or theoretical-practical commitment to the transformation of psychology (PERETTA; CALDAS; LARA, 2014, p. 41).

We would like to emphasize that, regardless of the reference framework adopted, these premises must guide practice in school psychology. Historical-cultural psychology is certainly not the only theoretical perspective that allows for a critical approach to educational issues. However, the adoption of a conception

that understands human constitution in a dialectical relationship with its historical and social context and considers the development of higher psychological functions as culturally mediated is potentially capable of supporting actions that aim to overcome innatist understandings, which imprison individuals in labels and set limits on human development. Even so, we understand that it is sometimes necessary to resort to authors who do not start from Historical-Cultural Psychology, but dialogue with it, either because of the themes they address or because of their importance in the historical construction of knowledge¹³.

We note, in the definition presented above, the break with the myth of scientific neutrality, which, by separating subject and object, commits itself to “the maintenance of divided societies” (PATTO, 2007, p. 12), exploitation, and oppression. The commitment to society, especially in these terrible times of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, becomes even more pressing, as it leads us to an understanding of the human dimension that must necessarily encompass political, economic, historical, and social aspects and not look at the subject in an aseptic way, detached from their concrete material conditions.

As Moraes (2001, p. 10) so lucidly writes.

The celebration of the “end of theory”—a movement that prioritizes efficiency and the construction of a consensual ground based on immediate experience or the current concept of “reflective practice”—is accompanied by the promise of an educational utopia fueled by an indigestible pragmatism (Burgos, 1999, p. 468). In such a practical utopia, “know-how” is sufficient, and theory is considered a waste of time or metaphysical speculation and, when not, restricted to persuasive and fragmentary oratory, trapped in its own discursive structure.

In the inter-institutional research study, “A atuação do psicólogo na rede pública de educação frente à demanda escolar: concepções, práticas e inovações (*The role of psychologists in the public education system in response to school demand: concepts, practices, and innovations*)”, conducted in seven Brazilian states

¹³ For example, Patto (1997; 2007) and Heller (2000).

(Acre, Bahia, Minas Gerais, Paraná, Rondônia, São Paulo, and Santa Catarina)¹⁴, coordinated by Professor Marilene Proença (SOUZA; SILVA; YAMAMOTO, 2014), whose objective was to understand the role of psychologists in the public education system, the authors found that only in the state of Paraná did psychologists work from an institutional perspective “(79.3%) covering more comprehensive activities in the school institution” (SOUZA; YAMAMOTO; GALAFASSI, 2014, p. 248) and not in clinical settings or in both modalities, as in other states. Not coincidentally, most of the participants from Paraná cited authors related to psychology and education as foundations for their work, and 47% also took postgraduate courses in the field of education, as the authors report: “In fact, we noticed that there is a significant association between the areas of postgraduate courses and authors cited by participants.” (idem, p. 251).

In the states of Bahia, Minas Gerais, Santa Catarina, and São Paulo, participants cited authors from both the education and clinical fields, in line with the national panorama described above. However, we may ask: how can psychologists establish a dialogue between scholars who often have disparate understandings of issues related to development, learning, and education? Is it possible to establish such a dialogue? How can professionals bring these authors into their practice at the Department of Education? (idem, p. 251)

It is interesting to note that the discourse of participants from the states of Paraná and São Paulo was considered critical by the researchers and analyzed as the result of undergraduate studies at public state higher education institutions and postgraduate courses in the field of education, evidenced in their predominantly institutional activities, covering all segments of schools (students, family members, teachers, administrators, and other employees) and with a theoretical foundation in authors in the field of education, such as Vygotsky, Luria,

¹⁴ A study of this magnitude involved dozens of researchers. The authors of this article were directly involved in the various stages of the study, which was coordinated in Minas Gerais by Dr. Silvia Maria Cintra da Silva. Dr. Anabela Almeida Costa e Santos Peretta initially participated in the São Paulo team and later joined the Minas Gerais team. It was during the development of this research that the authors of this article began a series of collaborative projects.

Leontiev, Dermeval Saviani, Maria Helena S. Patto, and Marilene Proença. Considering the consistency between the mention of these names and the practices developed in the public education system by the psychologists involved in the research, we highlight the importance of both initial and continuing training based on a consistent and critical framework. In addition,

Psychologists need to be committed to educational issues so that psychology does not fall back into the technocratic paradigm, which attempts to bring it closer to the ideals of modern science or completely abandon scientific methodologies. Therefore, graduate programs need to focus on preparing professionals who are capable of criticizing the clinical, pathologizing model that has often characterized the work of psychologists in education, seeking to train students who are committed to transforming the material conditions in which they operate. (FACCI; SILVA, 2014, p. 278)

In this formative process, it is essential that psychology students understand that each theoretical approach reflects a conception of the world, society, and human beings, so as not to fall into “theoretical-methodological eclecticism” (idem, p. 279). This criticism had already been made by Vygotsky (1996) at the beginning of the 20th century, due to the way human facts were analyzed by psychology. The author reminds us that

The regularity of change and the development of ideas, the emergence and death of concepts, including changes in categorization, etc., all of this can be explained scientifically if we relate the science in question to 1) the sociocultural substrate of the time, 2) the general laws and conditions of scientific knowledge, and 3) the objective demands that the nature of the phenomena under study at the current stage of research places on scientific knowledge. That is, ultimately, with the demands of the objective reality that the science in question studies. (Vygotsky, 1991, p. 270, our translation).

Therefore, it is essential that students learn the guiding principles of the different theoretical concepts presented to them, as a way to avoid mere assimilation

without understanding or repetition without proper epistemological support. We therefore advocate an education that can foster theoretical and practical experiences, intense both emotionally and cognitively, in which students can use theory based on an awareness of their place in the world, the concrete conditions of education, and the need for changes in the way social relations occur. And so that theory, beyond words emptied of meaning, can constitute, as Clarice Lispector told us, “incorporated words,” tools for understanding and transforming reality.

It is often said, almost like a popular saying, that “in practice, theory is different!” but we argue here that in practice, theory is the same. In other words, if psychologists effectively appropriate the theoretical framework they have **intentionally** chosen to develop their professional practice, they will find that both are constituted dialectically and that only through this dialogue can they carry out their work and overcome, through rupture, elements that are at odds with this theory.

To conclude, we bring an excerpt from the song “Caminhos do Coração” by Gonzaguinha (1982), which summarizes in a poetic way the importance of the different relationships and experiences that mark the initial and continuing training for working in psychology

E aprendi que se depende sempre De tanta, muita, diferente gente
Toda pessoa sempre é as marcas
Das lições diárias de outras tantas pessoas

E é tão bonito quando a gente entende
Que a gente é tanta gente onde quer que a gente vá
E é tão bonito quando a gente entende
Que nunca está sozinho por mais que pense estar

É tão bonito quando a gente pisa firme
Nessas linhas que estão nas palmas de nossas mãos
É tão bonito quando a gente vai à vida
Nos caminhos onde bate, bem mais forte o coração

*And I learned that we always depend
On so many different people
Every person is always marked
By the daily lessons of so many other people*

*And it's so beautiful when we understand
That we are so many people wherever we go
And it's so beautiful when we feel
That we are never alone, no matter how much we think we are*

*It's so beautiful when we stand firm
On those lines that are in the palms of our hands
It's so beautiful when we go through life
On the paths where our hearts beat much stronger*

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