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## Abstract<sup>1</sup>

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The present dissertation aims to explore some theoretical-methodological contributions of Historical-Cultural Psychology (PHC) for the qualification of pedagogical processes within the scope of Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA). To this end, we carried out exploratory research in two stages, namely: 1) a theoretical-conceptual study, in which we sought, through an integrative literature review, to map and systematize Brazilian theses and dissertations that investigate EJA in the light of PHC; and, 2) an empirical investigation with three teachers who work at EJA, through which we analyzed their conceptions about learning and development in young people and adults, as well as the way they organize pedagogical practices in this teaching modality.

The Educação de Jovens e Adultos is a specific modality of basic school training, aimed at those students who did not have access or conditions to continue their studies at the expected age. Its target audience is quite diverse in terms of age, origins, life trajectories and motivations, but its striking characteristic is its relationship with work activities. EJA is mainly accessed by students who were previously unable to attend school because

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they had to work, who return to school in order to meet the demands for professional qualifications in the job market and in search of better living conditions (BRASIL, 2000).

Returning to school with these characteristics takes us back to Vygotski's (2006) studies on the teaching-learning relationship and development, in which he points out the existence of optimal periods for learning, in which it is easier and more beneficial for it to occur. These periods, according to the author, are those in which the psychological functions significant for development are on the verge of transformation, in such a way that through pedagogical mediation the student can overcome their current capabilities and go beyond what was just potential.

With this, Vygotski (2006) argues that throughout the different periods of psychic development the individual thinks, acts and learns in a peculiar way. It turns out that, respecting socio-historical particularities, each cultural age of development is guided by a main activity that determines the most significant aspects and mobilizes the main qualitative transformations in the psyche. In this way, we understand that the relationship between learning and development reveals itself in different ways in children, adolescents and, certainly, in adults, as in each period social mediations and the subject's relationship with concrete reality also change (ELKONIN, 1987).

Given the changes that occur in this relationship throughout life, Rios and Rossler (2017) argue that educational institutions should not be oblivious to these movements; on the contrary, they must be based on the ontogenetic logic of development to think about educational processes and define the most appropriate pedagogical objectives for each cultural age. In this sense, this perspective can contribute to the planning of pedagogical activities considering the particularities and similarities of each period of development, as well as where a specific type of learning is more opportune and productive.

Adulthood, however, is a period of development that is still little studied and is usually portrayed by the main classical theories as a time of relative stability and the absence of important changes in the psyche. Within the scope of

PHC, some authors, such as Calve (2013), Martins and Eidt (2010) and Rios (2015), argue that work is the main activity of this period that mediates development and reorganizes the adult individual's entire life.

As a main activity, work acts on the subject both in the technical-operational or intellectual sphere, implying the development of new skills, capabilities and knowledge to act in new work situations, and in the affective-motivational sphere, reorganizing interests, emotions and interpersonal relationships (RIOS, 2015). This activity, therefore, expresses the various possibilities for humanization and development during this period and, as such, can guide the organization of pedagogical activity at EJA.

However, despite theoretical advances and the wide dissemination of PHC in research that addresses the relationship between Psychology and Education, EJA is still not a priority research topic. These studies are still focused on a reflection on learning and development in childhood and adolescence, while they have neglected to examine educational practices with young people, adults and the elderly, notably those with precarious education.

In this sense, we went back to the literature, through an integrative review, in order to investigate what readings have been made within the scope of PHC on the teaching-learning and development processes in EJA. We searched for theses and dissertations available in the Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações da CAPES and in the Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações, which resulted in 28 studies. Among the main findings, we highlight that this is a recent discussion with scattered and punctual production, especially when compared to studies on the education of children and adolescents. The main themes investigated are: (a) the meanings attributed to late schooling; (b) analysis of the pedagogical practices and resources used; (c) educational policies for young people and adults; and, (d) the development of higher psychological functions in students.

The analysis carried out show that the diverse students at EJA, due to their living conditions and the experience of late schooling, pose different challenges to the teaching-learning processes and the school has a hard time

accepting this diversity and promoting teaching that produces development. Furthermore, all studies address the student-worker condition as a striking feature in this type of teaching. However, work, which is a central ontological category for PHC, indispensable to the constitution of the human subject, is timidly incorporated into the discussion about the teaching-learning and development processes of young people and adults. The fact that schooling at EJA is characterized by the confluence of study and work activities is noteworthy, that is, the return to school in a period in which life is directed by and for work, however, this relationship is poorly explored.

Faced with these problematizations, the need to investigate; with EJA teachers, their conceptions regarding the learning and development of young people and adults, as well as the way in which they organize the pedagogical activity aimed at this audience. To this end, we virtually interviewed three EJA teachers, who work in the public-school system in the state of Rio Grande do Norte. The interviews lasted an average of 50 minutes and addressed issues such as: initial and continuing training, first impressions about teaching at EJA, characterization of students, learning and development of young people and adults, teaching methodologies used and the study-work relationship.

From the interviews, we evidenced that there is an insufficient appropriation of development and adult learning theories by teachers, which results from initial training that neglects the approach to EJA and its specificities. Therefore, when they arrive in the classroom, they begin to work in a similar way to what they do in regular classes, engaging in infantilized and incoherent pedagogical practices. The choice for such a teaching methodology is based on a prior idea of how these students learn and how they develop, even if this is not clearly stated for teachers.

When commenting directly on the learning and development of young people and adults, there is a tendency to naturalize social and educational inequalities by emphasizing the issue of age and insertion in productive activities as impediments to the process of basic schooling. In this conception, in adulthood there would naturally be a reduced intellectual capacity for school learning, at

the same time as there would be a greater affinity for the demands of the work routine. As a result of this supposed limitation, few academic stimuli are offered to students, as they are not expected to be able to engage in study tasks and, consequently, to fully develop their study.

This conception takes us back to Vygotski (2006) who defends the existence of an optimal window for learning, a moment when it is most productive, as previously mentioned. When it happens late, however, there are more obstacles, as students may be involved in other more significant activities at the time, such as work, and study becomes secondary. From this perspective, schooling difficulties are not limited to students' supposed cognitive limitations, but rather taking into account the social situation of development that requires the inclusion of these students in some social activities and not others.

Faced with this state of affairs, we argue that the study of the logic of the historical-cultural periodization of development can contribute to the qualification of pedagogical activity in EJA, especially if we consider work as a guiding activity in adulthood. This knowledge enables educators to organize the teaching activity with a view to taking advantage of the psychological processes that are boiling in students at different cultural ages, making the most of the potential of each period and actively influencing their development (RIOS; ROSSLER, 2017).

However, when we talk about work as a main activity in adulthood, it is necessary to differentiate from the conception brought in EJA educational policies, which values school training aimed at developing skills and competencies for the job market (BRASIL, 2000). In these, work is considered synonymous with employment or occupation and the condition of worker is presented as the main characteristic to be considered in the construction of the school curriculum. This limited perspective is ratified by the teachers interviewed, as well as being questioned in some studies in the review.

However, by presenting it as a guiding activity in our historical time, we highlight the need to think about work activity as it presents itself within capitalist society. In this context, work presents itself in a dubious and

contradictory way: at the same time as it is a force that enhances development, which expresses the maximum possibilities of humanization, it becomes alienated in the context of capitalist exploitation and causes physical and mental exhaustion of the worker (CALVE, 2013; MARTINS; EIDT, 2010). It is at the heart of the dialectical relationship between humanization-alienation that the EJA teacher works: with students involved in an alienated activity that poses obstacles to the process of acquiring higher structures of thought and personality, but also, through it, provides opportunities for their psychic development. Thus, within this contradiction also lies the possibilities of overcoming this alienated relationship and the pedagogical practices developed at school must actively engage in this process.

Finally, we understand that among the main contributions of PHC to the pedagogical activity at EJA is the reflection on the relationship between learning and human development, particularly in young people and working adults, and how it can be enhanced through teaching activity at school. However, we emphasize in the conclusion of this research that this is still an initial discussion within the scope of EJA and requires further studies and systematizations in order to explore the possibilities and limitations of this theoretical-methodological framework.

## Escolaridad básica en la EJA: enseñanza-aprendizaje y desarrollo de jóvenes y adultos trabajadores

Esta disertación tiene como objetivo explorar algunos aportes teórico-metodológicos de la Psicología Histórico-Cultural (PHC) para la calificación de procesos pedagógicos en el ámbito de la Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos (EJA). Para ello, realizamos una investigación exploratoria en dos etapas, a saber: 1) un estudio teórico-conceptual, en el que buscamos, a través de una revisión integradora de la literatura, mapear y sistematizar tesis y disertaciones brasileñas que investigan la EJA a la luz de la PHC; y, 2) una investigación empírica con tres docentes que trabajan en la EJA, a través de la cual analizamos sus concepciones sobre el aprendizaje y el desarrollo en jóvenes y adultos, así como la forma en que organizan las prácticas pedagógicas en esta modalidad de enseñanza.

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