

EsperançaArte – a school psychology proposal for Higher Education¹

EsperançaArte – uma proposta da Psicologia Escolar para o Ensino Superior

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ABSTRACT

In a close and productive dialogue with Education, School and Educational Psychology has been entering the field of Higher Education, notably in this century. In this article, we present a proposal for a School Psychology Internship, with the participation of undergraduate students from the Pedagogy and Psychology programs at a public university. The project, titled EsperançaArte, is aimed at newcomers and proposes meetings permeated by Art, in which the entry into the University, university life, the social commitment of the profession, and other topics related to this moment are discussed. Grounded in Historical-Cultural Psychology and School Psychology from a critical perspective, this proposal emerges as an

RESUMO

Em estreita e profícua interlocução com a Educação, a Psicologia Escolar e Educacional tem adentrado o campo do Ensino Superior, notadamente neste século. Neste artigo apresentamos uma proposta de Estágio em Psicologia Escolar, com a participação de estagiárias/os dos cursos de graduação em Pedagogia e Psicologia de uma universidade pública. O projeto, intitulado de EsperançaArte, é voltado a ingressantes e propõe encontros permeados pela Arte, em que se discute a entrada na Universidade, a vida universitária, o compromisso social da profissão e outras temáticas relacionadas a esse momento. Fundamentado na Psicologia Histórico-Cultural e na Psicologia Escolar em uma vertente crítica, essa proposta mostra-se como uma alternativa para o enfrentamento à evasão, a atenção e o

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alternative to address dropout rates, as well as to provide attention and care for students' persistence and course completion, considering the conditions of alienation and contradictions imposed by capitalist society and experienced by university students in their daily lives.

cuidado com a permanência e a conclusão do curso, considerando-se as condições de alienação e as contradições postas pela sociedade capitalista e vivenciadas pelas/os universitárias/os em seu cotidiano.

Keywords: Historical-Cultural Psychology; Higher Education; Students.

Palavras-chave: Psicologia Histórico-Cultural; Ensino Superior; Estudantes.

1 Introduction

[...] it seems hugely contradictory to me that a progressist person, who does not fear change, who feels bad about injustice, and gets outraged by discrimination, who leads a decent existence, who fights against impunity, who refuses to accept cynical, crippling fatalism, will not be a critically hopeful person. (FREIRE, 1996, p. 71).

Brazilian university, according to Chauí (2001, p. 13), displays the marks that characterize our society, and is circumscribed by the preponderance of the “private over the public” [...]it is strongly hierarchic in all its aspects: In Brazilian university, social and intersubjective relations are always realized by means of a relation between someone who is in a superior position and gives the orders and underlings who follow the orders”.

It is necessary to emphasize that, in this conjuncture, the university also expresses the contradictions of capitalist society, while internalizing and expressing practices that align with neoliberal assumptions, with the reverberations all on the academic everyday life, such as the very formation of students, the appreciation of research - especially in certain areas - at the expense of teachers, incentive to productivism, and an acritical nod to market realities etc.

Another fundamental aspect to be considered in this scenario is the impact of the Affirmative Action Law on the higher education public 11 years after its implementation, because although “it has proved satisfactory in its results and has promoted great inclusion in access to higher education” (SENKEVICS; MELLO, 2022, p. 209), Researchers still need to conduct more studies on the trajectory of these students, regarding permanence, evasion,

and the granting of degrees.

In the wake of these heated discussions, we ask: how School Psychology can take a stand in order to face some of the challenges inherent to the promotion of an emancipating education?

Saviani reminds us of the conditions for realization, according to Marx,

Human emancipation: only after real individual man recovers their inner abstract citizen and converts, as an individual man, into a generic being, and their individual labor and in their individual relations; only after man has recognized and organized their own powers as social powers and after, therefore, man ceases to take a distance from social power under the guise of political power, will human emancipation take place (*idem*, p. 38). (SAVIANI, 2020, p. 7).

However, also according to Saviani (2020), human emancipation will now take place in an automatic, spontaneous way. The author emphasizes the central role played by education, in the Gramscian conception, considering “the construction of a new hegemony that leads to human emancipation” (p. 5). This is the target of educational praxis, which “can be defined as a rectal human activity that is theoretically based” (*idem*, p. 10).

Thus, in the present article, we intend to present a proposal for professionalizing internship in higher education, realized with the students of a public university in Minas Gerais. An interdisciplinary character is present because it is a partnership between the areas of psychology and education, and the researchers resort to knowledge from school psychology in a critical perspective, which implies an extended look into the role played by the university in professional formation, into the teaching and learning activities and into the relations established in the educational context.

Our study is based on the precepts of cultural historical psychology, for the comprehension of individual constitution, which takes place necessarily by means of social relations and without a trajectory to be previously drawn, but by means of historically accumulated knowledge, of access to culture, which circumscribes us as candidates to the humanization process. In this

sense, thinking about the psychism of the young adults and the specificity of the moment of entering higher education is the core of this intervention. We understand the capitalist society to which we belong and the doors that can be opened by entrance into a graduation course, by leading to different labor and life insertions, and the academic context as well as in the lighter social context, and it is necessary to work on these determinants.

Regarding this scenario, we proposed a professionalizing internship in School Psychology for graduation students in Psychology and invited students from the Pedagogy course of a public university of Minas Gerais. The internship was monitored by a professor from the Psychology course and another professor from the Pedagogy course. Thus, the intention was to propose a space, based on free registrations by students in these courses, for the realization of meetings for dialogues on themes underlie university entrance and that involve the realm of studies as well as the realm of personal experiences by the students that now belong to this new level of education.

In order to do it, we resort to Art as important human production and as a tool that allows us to approach feelings, emotions, historicity, and ways of seeing and thinking the world beyond our immediate reality. As a guide for the meetings and naming the group “EsperançaArte” – as a tribute to Paulo Freire, Patron of Brazilian education, artistic processes guided the whole process of the meetings for the students entering higher education and also at the supervision moments among teachers and interns.

Therefore, we will present our assumptions regarding higher education, School Psychology, the schooling process, and the proposal of the group itself. We will illustrate such experience with some examples and productions by the participants along with discussions and considerations regarding this process. In order to contribute with studies and research works in the area, we will share this experience to inspire further actions and interventions in the realm of higher education in collaboration with School Psychology and Art.

2 School Psychology in Higher Education

Traditionally present in basic education, School Psychology has been gaining important space in higher education since the beginning of the current century (BARIANI; BUIN; BARROS; ESCHER, 2004; MARINHO-ARAÚJO, 2009, 2010, 2014a; 2014b; Moura, 2015; Oliveira, 2016; Pereira, 2020; Sampaio, 2010; Silva, 2018; Silva; Silva, 2019; Silva; Leal; Facci, 2021).

Here we retake the definition by Saviani (2020), according to Marx, of praxis understood as a “practical human activity that is theoretically based” (p. 10), to explain our position regarding School Psychology, which is a field of studies, research works and interventions. It is important to emphasize, however, that we defend a critical conception, and a practice by the psychologist thus regulated aims at the roots of the educational phenomenon, going beyond appearance; and considers the production of school complaints at the educational institution itself (it obviously also involves subjective, social, historical, political, and economic aspects); it aims at the elaboration of interpretation benchmarks that comprehend all segments involved in the educational process (students, teachers, technicians, managers) and, most importantly, at the emancipation finality of psychological practice (SOUZA, 2014).

If, in its early years, School Psychology focused its attention on the students and their families, disregarding the aforementioned dimensions, with the movement of criticisms to knowledge and practices that are out of step with the needs of Brazilian society, who claimed for urgent changes in the last gasps of dictatorship, the 1980s witnessed major advancements, based on the work by Patto (1987) and by psychologists who, in São Paulo, got articulated by the Psychologists Union, at the *Sedes Sapientiae* institute of the “Conselho Regional de Psicologia de São Paulo”, or São Paulo Psychology Regional Council (CRP-06), aiming at a new psychology project, which focuses on social issues of Brazilian society (PRATES, 2015 *apud* PEREIRA, 2020).

This movement leads to an amplification of the actions of School Psychology, which starts to comprehend the school community as a whole, the teaching-learning process, the continued formation of teachers, managers, and

other professionals, the elaboration and monitoring of the Pedagogical Political Project, and of public policies, etc, in a critical way, focused on the “dialectical reflection”, critical of knowledge, denunciation of human degradation, and the possibility of it being used as an instrument of social transformation” (MEIRA, 2000, p. 39). What about higher education?

According to the study by Moura (2015), the “Programa de Apoio a Planos de Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais” (Reuni)⁷, or Program for Support to Plans of Restructuring and Expanding Federal Universities, created in 2007, amplified the number of federal universities, of professors, and of registrations in the public system. Another milestone in terms of public policies in this realm is the “Programa Nacional de Assistência Estudantil” (Pnaes)⁸, or National Program of Student Assistance, also from 2007, in the aftermath of the Reuni. Regarding the necessary criticisms to the way such policies were implemented as a nod to neoliberalism (MELO, 2013), and also taking into account the numerous difficulties faced by students in different campuses all over the country, the scope of this article reminds us of the presence of psychology for student assistance. Not only access, but permanence and conclusion of courses turned into an important demand for psychology in this scenario.

2.1 Cultural-historical Psychology as foundation for praxis in School Psychology

Data from the 2nd quarter of 2022, obtained by the “Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua” - PNAD Contínua, or Continuous

⁷ The most important objective of the Reuni, instituted by Decree nº 6.096, from April 24, 2007, was to amplify access and permanence in higher education. It was and it still is one of the actions that integrate the Education Development Plan, or Plano de Desenvolvimento da Educação (PDE)¹³ (Ministry of Education, 2010).

⁸ “Created by Mec decree no 39, from December 12, 2007 and regulated by Decree no 7.234, from July 19, 2010, the “Programa Nacional de Assistência Estudantil” (Pnaes), or National Program for Student Assistance, is a program that aims at democratizing access and permanence in higher education for low-income students attending onsite graduation courses in the federal institutions of higher education, with the objective to provide equality in opportunities for all students and contribute to improvements in academic performance and reduce evasion and retention rates.” Available at: National Program for Student Assistance ([Pnaes](http://www.gov.br/pnaes)) — Ministry of Education (www.gov.br). Access on September 9, 2023. For further information on these policies, we recommend a reading of the dissertation by Melo (2013).

National Research by Samples of Residences, demonstrate that only 19.2% of the people aged 25 or older have completed their higher educations in the country.⁹ Such information indicates that the policies targeting access to higher education have failed to reach their objectives and reveals the necessity to come up with proposals for permanence and conclusion by students at this level of education. In this case, we see possibilities from school psychology. However, before we enter this specific field, it is important that we take into consideration some suppositions of Cultural-Historical Psychology that might support praxis at the university.

Since student activity in higher education is submitted to the logic of capitalism, and consequently subordinate to the ethos of a utilitarian practice, Abrantes and Bulhões (2016) – approaching the formation of these young adults – invert the discourse in order to disseminate the notion that youth is a development stage rather than a social category, according to the neoliberal model, which is a counterpoint to the essentially biological perspective (hormone changes), in order to regard it as a concept-process in movement, which follows reality.

Biological aspects are subordinate to social-historical laws because they do not determine the content of the development of young adults and nether do they explain limits and possibilities for their existence in the world (...) in the acquisition of a philosophical conscience of praxis, biological aspects are insufficient/secondary in the explanation of the conscious connection between individuals and reality (ABRANTES; BULHÕES, 2016, p. 244).

According to Cultural-Historical Psychology, in the periodization of human development there is a guiding activity that proves decisive when it comes to triggering transformations in the relations between individuals and reality. Regarding youth, so we can identify the predominant activity that allows us to support development with the purpose to establish a conscious praxis, it is

⁹ Available at: Education | Educa | Jovens - IBGE. Access on October 8, 2023.

necessary to assume a “contradictory unit between *the professionalizing study and the productive activity*, while emphasizing that the predominance of one of them take place by the determination of the position that a young person occupies regarding the means of production” (ABRANTES; BULHÕES, 2016, p. 242, highlights from the original version).

The alienating logic of capitalism is the basis for education in general and higher education, therefore, the educational process has migrated towards the formation of skills and competences regarding a specific and limited professional field. The educational process does not target what it should, which is full human development; and the “direct consequence of this movement is the undermining, or maybe the impossibility, of development for young people in its full scope.” (TRINDADE, 2021, p. 80).

When students enter university, it becomes necessary for them to learn the student occupation (COULON, 2008; SILVA; SILVA, 2019), a process that points at the social and individual dimensions that compose the moment, from the moment the young students enter university, going through permanence and conclusion, there are many challenges for formation depending on the material conditions available.

In the book named “A condição de estudante: a entrada na vida universitária”, or *The Student Condition: Entering University Life*, Coulon lists three moments that configure such an important moment:

The time for adaptation, when the students enter an unknown universe, away from the familiar world the student is leaving now; the time for learning, when students progressively adapt and produce some accommodation; and, finally, the time for affiliation, which is the relative management of rules especially identified by the capacity to interpret them or break them (COULON, 2008, p. 32, our highlights).

The research realized with students entering a psychology course in a public university, based on critical school psychology, Silva and Silva (2019) detected not only these three moments presented by Coulon. They elaborated one more moment: the time for hesitating, which precedes entrance at university, punctuated by questions regarding the choice of course, social pressure, family

pressure, the preparatory courses.

It is important to highlight the fact that these moments do not exclude each other. They have a dialogue. We have observed, for example, that the time for hesitation for many students lingers the whole first year, a situation where they often question themselves whether they have made the right choice of course, with the addition of other issues regarding the entrance into higher education, such as having to live away from home, the distance from family, financial difficulties to stay in the course, etc. And it is in order to handle such situations that we have proposed the EsperançArte.

.2 A proposal for students entering Higher Education: EsperançArte

According to Ezcurra (2009) and Silva and Silva (2019), the entrance of students into higher education is characterized by diverse feelings, of belonging or not-belonging; it includes the particularities of university life and ends up demonstrating the disparity between the needs for learning/development of young people, their concrete material conditions, and the opportunities that are effectively offered by the Instituição de Ensino Superior (IES), or Higher Education Institution.

The EsperançArte, a professionalizing supervised internship in School Psychology, has come a long way, it started in 2004, and has always focused on students entering IESs. Along these years, the format has gone through configurations and we will approach the current one here, ongoing since 2021, when the world went through a sanitary crisis, with the outbreak of the coronavirus (Sars-Cov-2), which left a deep scar in the history of humanity due to the untimely deaths of millions of people; and faced the sharp rise of social inequality, along with the structural crisis in capitalism, manifested by unemployment and hunger. In our country, the revisionist government further deteriorated the living conditions of the population during the pandemic.

With all pedagogical, research, and extension activities in the psychology course in question being realized from a distance, with the aforementioned internship things were not different. In 2021, the work with the new students, or “recém-

ingressadas/os”, term used by Ezcurra (2009), was realized in an online mode, by the *Microsoft Teams* platform. At that moment, the proposal was named *EsperançaArte*, based on the verb “esperançar”, or hope, which refers to the “Pedagogia da Esperança”, or Pedagogy of Hope, 1993) by Paulo Freire. Furthermore, the name of the internship was created as a tribute to a political manifest that was being experienced at the time, in which the patron of Brazilian education was being disrespected. To Freire, hope is an “ontological necessity”, it is “imperative, exceptional, and historical” (FREIRE, 1992 *apud* STRECK et al., 2008, p. 198).

The word “*EsperançaArte*” in Portuguese is a creation resulting from the verb “esperançar”, which is a free translation for hope plus the word *Arte*, art in English. Art is a primordial element for humanization and for the formation of individuals who are more sensible to others and to the world (DUARTE JR., 2010; SILVA; NUNES, 2023). The internship had the objective to realize an intervention project in School Psychology in Higher Education with the students who were entering the courses of Psychology and Pedagogy at the UFU, aiming at an emancipation education, regulated by Critical School Psychology and the dialogue with art in the formation of psychologists and pedagogues – group inserted after 2022.

Just like Saviani (2003, p. 22) establishes the specificity of education (habits, attitudes, knowledge, symbols, etc.) as necessary “to the formation of humanity in every single individual, as a second nature, which deliberately produces itself by means of historically determined pedagogical relations that take place among men”, we understand art as a *sine qua non* element for this process to happen so that it will lead to unity between cognition and affection in the human development process.

According to Vigotski,

“[...] art is a form of social sentiment that is prolonged or a technique of feelings” (VIGOTSKI, 1999, p. 308); it aggregates the more personal aspects of individuals into social life in a way that it would be more correct to say that feeling does not become social, it rather becomes even more personal, when each one of us

appreciates a work of art. It gets converted into the personal without ceasing to be social” (p. 315).

After 2022, with the return of onsite classes, the EsperançaArte started to take place in a classroom, at a time and date that were chosen by the participants. We introduced the project during the week of reception at the university and we provided a registration form with volunteer participation by the ones who were interested. We have proposed eight meetings along the school semester, with the duration of two hours, always permeated by music, short films, short stories, poems, photography, and visual art works. The themes for each meeting are chosen by means of theoretical references from the internship as well as requests from the new students and perceptions of the interns regarding entrance at university, the study occupation, the format of the classes, notes, learning assessments, social commitment of Psychology and of Pedagogy etc.

In addition, we would like to emphasize that another dimension promoted in the meetings is the development of imagination, which is made possible by Art.

[...] the creative activity of imagination depends directly on the inner wealth and diversity of individual experiences, because this experience constitutes the stuff with which fantasy is constructed. The richer a person's experience, the more material is available for imagination. (VIGOTSKI, 2009, p. 22)

2.3 The meetings with the new students

According to our report, the EsperançaArte project provides a moment for reflection and comprehension of how the university space is elaborated and appropriated by the students who are entering the courses of Psychology and Pedagogy, with a highlight on the importance of support provided by the interactions among university students who play a crucial role in adaptation and learning. Here we report, in detail, the execution of the internship in the school semester.

For the elaboration of the first meeting, an activity was organized in order to lead participants to think how university students entering the university

regarded the beginning of the course, by means of a drawing made by themselves along with the provoking question: what does it mean to be a university student?

The theme "What does it mean to be a university student and the first contact with the university" provided an opportunity for diving into the first and second moments for learning the student occupation, and also the moments of hesitation and adaptation, according to Silva and Silva (2019), based on Coulon. When students arrive in higher education, they are not yet full-fledged university students, because it all consists of a learning process. The conversation on this theme significantly contributed to the beginning of appropriation of the university space by the new students, after all, their first contact with the university environment, as mentioned by the text, is characterized by a deep feeling of wonder and also by hesitation, due to the entrance into an environment that is unknown and full of norms, regulations, and institutional expectations, where they sometimes end up in courses that are completely different from what they imagined when they took the entrance examinations.

Such feelings of wonder regarding the university space, experienced as confusion, was unanimously mentioned by all participants of the *EsperançaArte*, especially due to bureaucracy and to the new rules imposed by the new educational context, which have an effect on the institutional everyday life. In the interim, with the intention to develop such theme with the newcomers so that they would be able to articulate their expectations, worries, and uncertainties concerning entrance at the university, researchers built a space for dialogue that provided students with an opportunities to express themselves and embrace each other in order to mitigate initial anxieties, because by sharing their worries, they were able to identify with each other, and that made the newcomers feel less isolated, something essential to their adaptation to academic life and the learning process

referring to the first and second moments described above. We present now the report by one student on the first meeting¹⁰:

It was a very interesting experience. It was fun and we had the chance to share difficulties and find out that we are not alone. The ... were friendly, receptive, and fun at all times, which made the experience even better. (EsperançaArte Participant)

We emphasize that the intentionality of the mediation by the interns, since the first meeting, was fundamental for the students to feel at ease to be in the group and feel interested in participating in the next activities, because they understand that learning about the norms and values of the institution, as well as the academic and social expectations is a gradual process. We might consider that the practice by the interns dwelt on zone of proximal development, or “zona de desenvolvimento próximo” (ZDP) (VIGOTSKI, 1988) of the entering students, since at that moment the newcomers had the opportunity to think and feel, with the help of the interns, matters concerning academic life in their first month at the university. Such movement took place along with the other meetings.

Another point to be emphasized is the fact that the theme of this first meeting also significantly contributed to the movement of appropriation of the university space, by creating an environment for social and emotional support. Establishing connections with classmates and other members of the academic community at this first moment is fundamental for newcomers to truly feel part of the university community (EZCURRA, 2009; SILVA; SILVA, 2019). It is important to understand that this adaptation is a process and seek support in case they consider quitting the course.

Considering that entrance at university leads to a transition that does not limit itself to curricular changes, but rather on new dynamic of relationships, sets of problems, and expectations, we perceive the need to handle the themes “Relations among teachers and students” and “What would an ideal class be?”. Both themes were approached by means of provoking questions, and the basis for

¹⁰ The presented excerpts are texts written by the EsperançaArte participants in the last meeting, under the guise of project assessment with new students.

the development of planning were the chapter “The teacher-student psychopathology: the teacher as a socializing connection” by Bohoslavsky (1981) and the article by Leite and Tagliaferro (2005), “Affection in the classroom: an unforgettable teacher”.

It is worth it to explain that the intention to approach these themes originated from our experience with this public as well as from readings related to the transition from high school to higher education (Silva et al., 2020). The curricular structure of high school contrasts with the academic flexibility of higher education, in which students have the autonomy to design their own curricular trajectory; if this helps promote the decision power of these students over their own academic trajectories, it might, on the other hand, result in excessive anxiety and self-monitoring, in addition to difficulties to organize one’s studies.

Besides that, the transition from a pedagogical approach centered on the teachers towards an approach that leads to learning that is more autonomous proves a challenging transition. The assessment, previously based on standardized exams and tests, now comprehends varied methods, ranging from written papers to case studies discussed in the classroom, demanding a new responsibility by the students for their own trajectory to graduation. In this sense, it becomes necessary to handle these changes, and consequently, the current anxieties of newcomers regarding such matters.

The relation between teachers and students, which significantly changes in the university environment, was another discussed topic. At any level of education, teachers play a crucial role in students’ learning (EZCURRA, 2009; VIGOTSKI, 2003), however; due to greater teacher autonomy at the public university regarding pedagogic resources, to the organization of content the development of classes, the students’ relations with the different disciplines depend on the way the professors approach them. Consequently, there is greater autonomy and the students come up against a more dialogical, horizontal regulation in general. We present one of the reports by a participant on the meeting where the topic was discussed:

“I really liked the conversation on how the class worked for each one, it was good to create some new notions concerning who should be responsible for what (in the relation professor/student/learning). The post-meeting was very productive because of the students’ discussions.” (EsperançaArte participant)

During the meetings of the EsperançaArte, excessive self-monitoring and problems with self-confidence were issues recurrently presented by the entering students, so we organized a specific discussion on the matter. It is possible to say that such problems are intrinsically linked to be insertion into the university environment and all the changes such entrance produces; possibly such matters present themselves at the moments of a person's life, but due to the autonomy that the university provides, the comparison with classmates, the pressure by family members, the fear of failure/rejection, and also the expectations created at this specific moment intensify self-monitoring and therefore there is fragility in self-esteem. According to Trindade (2021, p. 79), “the capitalist context of flexible accumulation keeps imposing the concepts of protagonism and proactivity in the framework of demands regarding thoughts and practices by the young people”.

It is very important that such autonomy be encouraged. However, we can observe that the students understand that the responsibility of academic success depends solely on their individual effort and, consequently, any deviation from the objectives that they establish leads to intense self-criticism and, as a result, a depreciation of oneself and one's merits. This movement is also demonstrated by Ezcurra (2009); the author emphasizes and denounces the logic of reproduction of inequalities, in the academic context, where “social inequalities appear as disparities of individual talents, that is, as natural inequalities.” (p. 93).

Still under this logic, the presented freedom creates an environment in which the students are constantly compared with their peers, creating some sort of competition, which leads to excessive self-monitoring to reach elevated standards that are many times unreachable, considering their concrete material conditions, from family as well as from the university, which not always manage to provide for student permanence.

Furthermore, it is possible to observe that the fear of failure is a challenge for newcomers and it is connected to this excessive self-monitoring and to the importance given to grades in the academic context. After all, intensely monitoring oneself serves the purpose of avoiding failure, so to these students, failure is always an indication of their own inadequacy, leading to fragility in the aforementioned self-esteem. In this discussion it is important to emphasize that,

Considering the crescent advance of neoliberalism and conservatism all over the world, there is an urgency to foment the construction of successful individual projects that are increasingly competitive at the expense of collective projects. The unconvincing mask of civilization that capitalism has put on in the 20th century falls off now and there is an evidence of its limits in the scandalous numbers demonstrating the advance of poverty, the intensification of inequality, of unemployment, and in feelings towards an uncertain future. (GOUVEIA, 2019, p. 134).

We can see that the expectations regarding school performance end up generating excessive self-monitoring, because it is connected to the idea that individual effort is enough to reach objectives and in this case such effort will be enough to reach a certain “Coeficiente de Rendimento Acadêmico” (CRA), or Academic Performance Coefficient. In a nutshell, presenting the “self-monitoring and self-esteem” theme has created the possibility for a deeper discussion for relevant matters related to university everyday life and has promoted a comprehension that has amplified itself beyond the present moment at the university and also included previous records before entrance in higher education, especially from high school. The relation between failure and self-monitoring is perverse for students, because it put the blame exclusively on the students’ responsibility for academic failure, at all levels of education. Our intention is to deconstruct this logic with this group discussion. One of the repercussions can be read in the excerpt below:

I believe that this conversation here, the way it happened, with the whole deconstruction thing and new perspectives on the theme, was

very helpful for me to break away from some notions and manners to approach examinations and everything. It also helped me realize that, sometimes, the energy o would spend worrying about the CRA, for example, would be much better employed in the process... [learning]. (EsperançaArte participant)

With the diversity of academic, social and extracurricular activities, it is possible to observe that university life is multifaceted. While newcomers are going through the time of learning of the student occupation, approaching the routine theme seemed irrelevant demand brought on by this new phase in life.

Certainly, newcomers face a series of significant changes in their lives; this includes living away from home, quite often for the first time, taking care of one's own meals, laundry and other housework responsibilities. Thus, diverse hindrances and needs connected to the new routine of the students were approached. Living alone for the first time brings a sensation of independence, but it also creates specific demands. Therefore, sharing experiences regarding this new dynamic and how to deal with the recently acquired independence, with the good parts and the challenging ones, were themes for another meeting.

In addition, handling the administration of time, considering that university everyday life generally demands the ability to balance studies, professions, social lives, and amnestic lives, contributes through the organization of the routine of the students who are still adapting to this new phase of their lives.

Finally, because it is a group of newcomers, they are all going through similar situations and this creates an opportunity to share experiences and learn in a collective way. So there's identification, and it becomes possible to create a sense of belonging and community, things that are essential for this moment. The social interaction between peers and teachers contributes a lot to the fight against social isolation, which is experienced by some of the students in the beginning of their courses (EZCURRA, 2009).

The CRA issue also provokes immense preoccupation regarding grades and examinations, instead of helping students focus on their learning and

development process during the graduation course. This index is used by many educational systems in order to assess academic performance by university students. Although it is an important measure for learning institutions, the CRA, as well as other traditional examinations, makes students lose their focus on effective learning. I was certain content, limiting their appropriation of knowledge, which collaborates to an increase in anxiety, and might discourage students, which many times leads to students quitting their courses, according to reports by the participants.

The topic was approached in one of the meetings in order to produce more criticism on the system of grades, demonstrating flaws regarding effective appropriation of knowledge. In this sense, we discussed what is at stake in an examination process, especially traditional ones: what is this test testing? Who is this test assessing?

There is also the necessity to discuss the diverse involved nuances in the methods of assessment so that students might be better able to seek balance between preoccupations with grades and learning. A major hindrance produced by traditional methods is the lack of focus on real learning because the quest for good grades sometimes involves the mere mechanical apprehension of knowledge with the shallow intention to just memorize and repeat during an examination, which is the commercial education model so criticized by Freire (2005). Thus, the quest for effective learning, which really aims at knowledge appropriation, becomes secondary. Consequently, examination methods limit exploration and in-depth knowledge, discouraging the use of creativity and imagination.

During the process of learning the student occupation, during the affiliation time, which involves the learning of norms and the rules of the game, which comes together with the time for learning (COULON, 2008), students learn about the examinations in different disciplines, considering the professors that teach those disciplines, and discover ways to face with less difficulty the challenge of hiding from professors what they don't know" (BOHOSLAVSKY,

1993, p. 327), with a focus on grades and the CRA, in a productivist logic, that is many times encouraged by the very academic environment.

There are many issues that involved the examination process, considering the fact that anxiety, self-monitoring, and comparison are aspects that are very common among university students. During some meetings, words such as tiredness, unreasonable deadlines, intense workload of reading, academic competition and self-monitoring were predominant factors in an education process that might lead to mental exhaustion. Students feeling discouraged is something quite common regarding what they have really learned. After all, examination methods do not always measure knowledge appropriation. When grades do not meet expectations, some students start asking themselves, which might lead to loss of confidence in their own capacity to learn. That discouragement might become a sensation of impotence and lack of hope, leading students to quit their educational objectives.

It is important for us to highlight, in this discussion, that that didn't end up submitting to a logic that is connected to submission by teachers and the university to neoliberal standards (CHAUÍ, 2001). Thus, according to Trindade (2021, p. 254-255),

the very organizational conditions of higher education – by conducting the consolidation of different individual educational processes, the contents of which also relate to individual projects – , are the basis that propel the formation of an immediate, alienated conscience in the students. Likewise, it consists, according to Leontiev (1975/1978), of an essentially disintegrated form of conscience.

In order to truly overcome this form of conscience, it is necessary to question the purposes and the structure of the Brazilian higher education and to create new alternatives for this reality (TRINDADE, 2021, p. 255). In other words, appropriation of scientific knowledge with the purpose of professional constitution is the most important function of the university and

it is also indispensable for the formation of a conscience, which is the product rather than a premise of human formation (VIGOTSKI, 1934/2001, p. 395).

This is where we defend art as a mediating tool that is indispensable for the creation of conditions for critical formation in higher education, with practice in the horizon. Mediation by art, in the EsperançArte meetings led to discussions on a variety of topics as we have mentioned before. We list some of the artistic elements that we used during the meetings, sometimes as a warm-up activities, sometimes as a wrap-up activities or even to inspire discussions on certain themes.

We used songs such as: “Tô” (Tom Zé); “Rotina” (Emicida), “Oito Anos” (Paula Toller e Dunga); short films such as: “Tamo Junto” (Pedro Conti), “Scrambled” (Bastiaan Schravendeel), videos entitled: “Morando sozinho (Porta dos Fundos); Tirinha de Galvão Bertazzi¹¹; a book named “O pote vazio” (Demi); Poems: “Identidade” (Mia Couto), “Perguntas de um trabalhador que lê” and “O analfabeto político” (Bertolt Brecht). Images: “Cruzando Jesus Cristo com Shiva” and “Cristo Negro” (Fernando Baril); “Okê Oxóssi” and “Oxum em êxtase” (Abdias Nascimento), “Andy Mouse” and “Tuttomonto” (Keith Haring) and Performances: “Rhythm 0” and “Cleaning the mirror”¹² (Marina Abramovic).

To finish this report, we present excerpts written by the participants assessing the project at the end of the semester:

“Generally speaking, it was a fun, unique experience. It helped me see entrance at university in a more comprehensive way. It is a very important project for newcomers and it would be interesting if it went on uninterrupted throughout the years.”
(EsperançArte participant)

“having participated in the EsperançArte was something truly embracing and facilitating in my moment as a freshman. The themes as well as the way researchers approached matters made our space for discussions and sharing much more comfortable. I

¹¹ https://www.instagram.com/p/CpsE-L7uqL_/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D&img_index=5

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTBkbseXfOQ> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROpzk40Lmk>

really like the meetings and they definitely helped me in my experience at the UFU.” (EsperançaArte participant)

3 Final Considerations

Eu acredito é na rapaziada
Que segue em frente e segura o rojão
Eu ponho fé é na fé da moçada
Que não foge da fera e enfrenta o leão
Eu vou à luta com essa juventude
Que não corre da raia a troco de nada
Eu vou no bloco dessa mocidade
Que não tá na saudade e constrói
A manhã desejada (E VAMOS À LUTA!, 1980).¹³

In this article, we discussed the EsperançaArte project, a proposal by school psychology for higher education with a focus on entering students. We reported themes are broached in the meetings with the students in the courses of psychology and pedagogy, always permeated by arts. We believe that the practice of psychology in higher learning institutions needs to consider the subjective, social, cultural, historical, political, and economic dimensions, always in combination with an emancipation perspective on the education process. That is the only way to contribute to the emancipation of individuals, in a school in brass that focuses most importantly on humanization beyond a merely technical alienated formation with an important impact on society as a whole.

There is an interesting comment by Trindade (2021) which points out the necessity to create projects such as the one described here:

Brazilian Higher Education, since its origins, including its diverse historical moments, has always been driven by interests, agendas, and mediations that do not target the full development of young people, but rather the formation of a shallow education that fails to enhance human potential. It

¹³ Lyrics of iconic song by famous Brazilian composer Gonzaguinha. Translation: “I believe in youth / Who go ahead and face difficulties / Who never fear danger / And fight I am with these young ones / Who stand their ground and never sell out / I follow them The past stays in the past / Destiny is in our hands”

would not be a failure of humanity? (TRINDADE, 2021, p. 129-130, highlight by the author).

Seeking coherence for this emancipation practice in higher education and also aiming at unity between affection and cognition, we accept the challenge proposed by Freire, regarding our need to be critically hopeful!

EsperançaArte - uma proposta de psicologia escolar para a ensinância superior

RESUMEN

En estrecha y fructífera interacción con la Educación, la Psicología Escolar y Educativa ha hecho su ingreso en el campo de la Educación Superior, en particular en este siglo. En este artículo presentamos una propuesta de práctica profesionales en Psicología Escolar, con la participación de estudiantes en prácticas de los programas de Pedagogía y Psicología de una universidad pública. El proyecto, titulado "EsperançaArte", está dirigido a los recién llegados y propone encuentros impregnados de Arte, en los cuales se discute la entrada a la Universidad, la vida universitaria, el compromiso social de la profesión y otros temas relacionados con este momento. Basado en la Psicología Histórico-Cultural y la Psicología Escolar desde una perspectiva crítica, esta propuesta se presenta como una alternativa para hacer frente a la deserción, prestar atención y cuidado para garantizar la permanencia y finalización del curso, considerando las condiciones de alienación y las contradicciones impuestas por la sociedad capitalista y experimentadas por los estudiantes en su vida cotidiana.

Palabras clave: Psicología Histórico-Cultural; Palabras clave; Enseñanza superior; Estudiantes.

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