

# School life in the process of human development: contributions from Historical-Cultural Psychology<sup>1</sup>

A convivência escolar no processo de desenvolvimento humano:  
contribuições da Psicologia Histórico-Cultural

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## ABSTRACT

This article discusses the importance of collaborative school coexistence within formal education for the formation of subjectivity and critical consciousness, as essential dimensions for understanding and confronting violence. It is grounded in the theoretical perspectives of Historical-Cultural Psychology and Historical-Critical Pedagogy, both based on the historical-dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels, which explain human development and learning as processes determined by cultural, historical, and social factors. These theories view psychic development as continuous and permanent, requiring meaningful activities and collaborative social relations as conditions for humanization. The school institution plays a fundamental role in this process when it offers activities contextualized to students' realities and needs, promoting a critical and emancipatory formation. However, educational policies implemented in Brazil since the 1990s, conceived according to

## RESUMO

O presente artigo discute a importância da convivência escolar colaborativa na educação formal na constituição da subjetividade e da consciência crítica, para a compreensão e o enfrentamento da violência. Fundamenta-se na perspectiva da Psicologia Histórico-Cultural e da Pedagogia Histórico-Crítica, que, por sua vez, se embasam no materialismo histórico-dialético de Marx e Engels e explicam o desenvolvimento humano e a aprendizagem a partir dos determinantes culturais, históricos e sociais. Tais teorias consideram o desenvolvimento psíquico contínuo e permanente, que necessita de atividades significativas e relações sociais colaborativas para o seu processo de humanização. A instituição escolar é fundamental neste processo, quando oferece atividades contextualizadas com a realidade e com as necessidades dos estudantes, promovendo uma formação crítica e emancipatória. Mas observa-se que as políticas educacionais implementadas no

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neoliberal principles, have simplified school activities and curricula while precarizing teachers' work, thus acting against the process of human development. Such policies serve corporate interests, transforming education into a commodity, contributing to violence against schools, undermining teachers' autonomy, disseminating individualistic and competitive values, stimulating social prejudices, fostering interpersonal violence, and compromising the educational process. Nevertheless, it remains possible to construct counter-hegemonic pathways that enable the consolidation of policies aimed at promoting quality school coexistence, through the participation of educators and students in dialogical spaces, such as student councils (*grêmios*), school assemblies, and help teams, that problematize the concrete reality and the needs of the school community, analyzing emotional lived experiences and employing tools such as School Climate Assessment.

**Keywords:** School Psychology. Neoliberal Policies. School Coexistence.

Brasil desde a década de 1990, concebidas a partir dos princípios neoliberais, simplificam as atividades escolares, os currículos e precarizam a atuação docente, atuando na contramão do processo de desenvolvimento humano. Visam a interesses empresariais, transformando a educação em mercadoria, contribuindo para uma violência contra a escola, retirando a autonomia dos educadores, disseminando valores voltados ao individualismo e à competição, estimulando os preconceitos sociais, fomentando a violência interpessoal e comprometendo o processo de escolarização. Contudo, é possível a construção de caminhos contra-hegemônicos que permitam a consolidação de políticas voltadas à convivência escolar de qualidade, com a participação de educadores e estudantes em espaços dialógicos, como os grêmios, as assembleias e as equipes de ajuda, que problematizem a realidade concreta e as necessidades da comunidade escolar, através da análise das vivências escolares, inclusive por meio da Avaliação do Clima Escolar.

**Palavras-chave:** Psicologia Escolar. Políticas Neoliberais. Convivência Escolar.

## 1 Introduction

Cases of violence in Brazilian schools have increased dramatically in recent years, generating social concern, fear, and insecurity within the school community, as well as leading to student dropout and compromising the schooling process of children and young people, especially in public schools which serve most of the working-class populations. Reports of physical, psychological, verbal, and online aggression have become increasingly common, along with cases of moral harassment and violent attacks that have led to the deaths of students and educators. Between 2001 and 2024, there were 43 recorded incidents of extreme violence against Brazilian schools, affecting 168 people, resulting in 47 deaths, 115 injuries, and the deaths of six perpetrators as well (MEC, MEC, MDHC, UNESCO & FBSP, 2024). Although these are complex phenomena, it is possible to assume that the school experiences of these students were marked by situations of violence and suffering (Tognetta, Fodra & Boni, 2020).

This article discusses the importance of collaborative school coexistence within formal education for the formation of subjectivity and critical consciousness, essential for understanding and confronting violence. It is grounded in the perspective of Historical-Cultural Psychology and Historical-Critical Pedagogy, both of which are based on the historical-dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels and explain human development and learning as processes determined by cultural, historical, and social factors.

## **2 Human Development from the Perspective of Historical-Cultural Psychology**

Human subjectivity and behavior are produced through “material activity with the material interchange among men” (Marx, 2007, p. 93)<sup>6</sup>, that is, through meaningful work and social relations. Vigotski (1991) states that human beings have unlimited possibilities for development and that the material bases available, the cultural aspects present in society, and collaborative social relations are essential to enhance human development.

From birth, human beings require collaborative social relationships for their psychic development: “(...) man is a social being and, outside his relationship with society, he would never develop the qualities and characteristics that are the result of the methodical development of all humanity” (Vigotski, 2018a, p. 90). Initially, interaction with the family ensures survival and promotes the first learning experiences, initiating the process of development and the formation of subjectivity, which expands as the child comes into contact with other social groups that contribute to the incorporation of culture and the development of higher psychological functions (HPFs). “All higher functions originate from real relations between human individuals” (Vygotsky, 1991, p. 41). These higher psychological functions are developed within the social environment through the appropriation of cultural elements. The higher psychological processes are, first, interpsychological, they occur through social relations within the environments in which people participate and then later become intrapsychological, as the individual internalizes the social dynamics and the knowledge acquired (Vigotski, 1991).

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<sup>6</sup> All quotations from works originally read in Portuguese were translated into English for the purposes of this article.

Memory, perception, attention, speech, thought, emotion, will, and concept formation are examples of HPFs developed through cultural, historical, and social processes, mediated by meaningful activities and social practices: “(...) man is a social being whose development is conditioned by the activity that links him to nature” (Martins, 2011, p. 212). Meaningful activities refer to human practices that drive creative thinking to meet people’s needs; they may be material or intellectual and are related to productive work, motivated by both individual and collective necessity: “(...) activity characterizes a unity of human life that encompasses, in an integral structure, corresponding needs, motives, purposes, tasks, actions, and operations” (Davidov 1988, p.59). Human needs change at each stage of life and demand increasing complexity, promoting the development of neoformations, which are psychological transformations that propel human evolution through dialectical leaps of development (Vigotski, 1991, 1996; Leontiev, 2004; Davidov, 1988).

Emotions and intellect are inseparable and directly related to the execution of activity. Emotions/affects foster desire, motivation for action, and the appropriation of knowledge: there is no possibility of knowledge without affective mobilization; cognition is imbued with affectivity, and vice versa (Leon & Calejon, 2017). Affects drive thought and action, knowledge and consciousness, but as Vigotski observes, “emotion is a call to action or a renunciation of it. No feeling can remain indifferent and fruitless in behavior” (2001, p. 139). Emotion regulates behavior and action, eliciting positive or negative feelings depending on the lived situation. The unity between affect and cognition is evident in the relationship subjects establish with the world, manifesting in their social relations and activities developed.

The experiences lived by individuals occur within a context that Vigotski referred to as the environment (medium), where cultural elements, organized knowledge, and the human particularities developed throughout history are present. “They (these particularities) exist in every man by virtue of his belonging to a social group, of being a historical unit living in a given epoch and under specific historical conditions” (Vigotski, 2018b, p.90). People incorporate meaningful information from the environment through social

interactions and activities, transforming it into learning. The relationship between people and their environment is active, they engage with objects and with others, influencing and being influenced by them, while also promoting changes in the environment itself. The significant interactions individuals establish with the environment were called emotional lived experiences (*perezhivaniya*), consisting of real and objective experiences that become subjective through social relations, communication, and lived experiences, which expand opportunities for exchanging, incorporating, and producing new meanings within the environment (Toassa, 2009; Beatón, 2017).

The contents produced within the environment shape subjectivity and generate “myths, beliefs, traditions, theories or explanations, works of art, science, objects, [...] creation and imagination within the individual, [immersed in] culture, which is the product of all social life, of human labor, and of history” (Beatón, 2017, p.144). The same author also points out that the emotional lived experiences contain “(...) the conjunction of the cognitive and affective, and thereby the integration of the external and internal, the biological and cultural, the interpersonal and intrapersonal, in a dynamic manner” (Beatón, 2017, p.124). Beliefs, values, physical resources, disseminated knowledge, manifested behaviors, and the historical and cultural elements present in the environment are all revealed through emotional lived experiences; the external world is appropriated by the subject in a singular way (Fodra, 2025).

It is important to emphasize that the elements present in the environment can either qualify or disqualify the emotional lived experiences that constitute human subjectivity and, consequently, human behavior. Violence does not exist in isolation; it manifests

within the capitalist relations of exploitation and overexploitation, violence [appears] as an immanent and intrinsic constituent of the very structure of capitalism [...]. We may [...] affirm that, nowadays, given the aporia between labor and capital, [...] spiritual misery is as intense, or perhaps even more burning, than material misery. This is what renders capitalist society increasingly violent. (Nascimento, 2019, p. 20)

Such a condition permeates all institutions, social networks, and people's everyday lives, including education itself, highlighting the need to define the role of education in confronting this reality.

## **2.1 The Role of Education in the Process of Human Development**

All spaces of human coexistence are educational. However, according to Historical-Critical Pedagogy, the school is a fundamental institution in the formation of children and young people. Its primary function is to socialize the knowledge accumulated throughout human history, to promote sociability among members of the school community, to disseminate collective values, and to form critical and emancipated citizens (Martins, 2011; Saviani, 2013), ensuring “the full development of the student,” as established in Article 2 of the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education. BRAZIL, Law 9394/1996). The school represents the environment, containing material and scientific resources that provide meaningful experiences, pedagogically planned to meet students' needs and promote their integral development.

Saviani explains that Historical-Critical Pedagogy was created to “(...) elaborate the conditions for the organization and development of educational practice in schools as an instrument to strengthen the working class's struggle for the structural transformation of contemporary society” (Saviani, 2013b, p.44). He conceives school education as a social practice aimed at developing a critical and transformative view of capitalist society, encompassing both theory and practice in the educational process. Educational projects must therefore be grounded in critical pedagogical conceptions that promote spaces for reflection and the resolution of problems experienced by the school community.

According to Saviani (2011), the educational process is related to the category of non-material labor (intellectual activity), which promotes a critical analysis of reality through scientific knowledge (historically produced) that expands awareness of both global and local issues. This process enables students and educators to seek solutions and to create new knowledge, referring to “the production of ideas, concepts, values, symbols, habits, attitudes, and skills. It



concerns the production of knowledge, whether knowledge about nature or about culture, that is, the totality of human production” (Saviani, 2011, p.12). The school can greatly contribute to the humanization process of individuals, but educators must consider the triad of content–form–recipient when designing curricula and educational practices.

Contents consist of the essential knowledge within the educational process that transforms common thinking into scientific thinking, helping to understand and overcome social problems while transcending hegemonically disseminated ideologies. Historical-Critical Pedagogy emphasizes the participation of students, based on their emotional lived experiences and concrete needs, in spaces of dialogue, engagement, discussion, and collective problem-solving, as the most effective way to develop school activities. It rejects the transmission of abstract, disconnected content that does not contribute to the critical formation of students (Saviani, 2011).

Speech is a complex activity and fulfills an essential function in the development of HPFs, as it activates thought, stimulates the creation of ideas, and enables the exchange of information among people: “(...) the convergence between thought and speech constitutes the most important moment in the development of an individual, and it is precisely this connection that elevates human thought to an unprecedented height” (Vigotski & Luria, 1996, p.209). Spaces for dialogue mobilize thought and higher psychological structures, establishing new social relations.

In this sense, dialogical spaces and collaborative social relationships are essential in the educational process, as knowledge is internalized through dialogue, through opportunities to discuss concrete reality (interpsychological process) that are then converted into new knowledge (intrapsychological process). These processes stimulate the development of HPFs, affective bonds, and solidary emotional lived experiences.

For this to occur, it is necessary to understand the reality and needs of the students (the recipients) so that knowledge carries personal meaning and relevance, linking to social practice and contributing to the development of critical

consciousness and personal autonomy, enabling students to act toward overcoming social problems (Saviani, 2011).

Educators must connect scientific content to concrete reality; therefore, their training should encompass theories grounded in human development and the constitution of human subjectivity to ensure an emancipatory education for children and youth. It is essential that educators understand the political, economic, and social context in which they operate. The school enhances human development, but to fulfill this role, certain elements are necessary to ensure the quality of the educational process.

The concept of “quality of education” is polysemic, as there are political, historical, sociocultural, economic, and ideological perspectives on what truly defines educational quality. The central question that should guide educators and public administrators is: education for what kind of society?

The document *Indicadores da qualidade na educação* (Quality Indicators in Education. BRAZIL, 2005), organized by several governmental and non-governmental institutions, presents a set of proposals to be implemented in schools in order to ensure the success of the educational process. The first observation made in the document is: “But those who can best define and give life to the general guidelines on quality in schools, according to local sociocultural contexts, are the school communities themselves,” thus valuing the autonomy of the school community in defining and carrying out the political-pedagogical project.

The publication outlines structural dimensions aimed at guaranteeing access, permanence, participation, and success within the educational process. The first dimension concerns the educational environment, which should promote well-being, joy, positive interpersonal relationships, friendship, affective bonds, respect, and solidarity among members of the school community. Pedagogical practice is identified as another key element because, as mentioned previously, it is the knowledge connected to students’ realities and needs, present within spaces of dialogue and reflection, that gives meaning and significance to learning and contributes to the humanization process. Assessment is considered one of the school’s central activities;



however, it should be process-oriented, using multiple instruments and not limited to a single exam. Self-assessment should also be encouraged, allowing the entire school community to reflect on activities and academic performance. Democratic management represents the dimension responsible for engaging and involving the whole community in the school's decisions and actions. The organization of councils that include parents, staff, student unions, and partnerships with institutions surrounding the school contributes to citizenship formation and strengthens both individual and collective values.

The training and working conditions of education professionals are also key structural components of educational quality. Fair salaries, training activities focused on human development, and a respectful, welcoming environment enhance the value of teaching and foster commitment to the school's objectives. The topics selected for continuing education programs should be collectively defined, based on educators' needs and the guidelines of the school's political-pedagogical project. A clean, organized, well-lit, and safe physical environment, equipped with adequate pedagogical resources, supports the execution of school activities and the well-being of all community members. Finally, the document addresses access, permanence, and academic success as integral factors in defining the quality of education.

In Brazilian reality, however, there are still many children and young people who do not attend school, or who experience failure and social stigmatization. It is therefore essential to ensure conditions for access and permanence, guaranteeing the right to education and citizenship formation. The school must thus be reaffirmed as an indispensable institution in the process of human development, particularly the public school, which serves the vast majority of working-class populations in Brazil, groups that often have limited opportunities for access to cultural and educational spaces. In this sense, educational policies must be conceived with the aim of promoting human emancipation and overcoming capitalism through new forms of sociability. This underscores the need to value and provide continuing education for teachers, as well as to respect school autonomy, both crucial factors in fostering commitment to teaching and in

improving the quality of the educational process. For these goals to be achieved, however, it is necessary to problematize and develop new policies that promote dignified work and collaborative, solidarity-based social and school coexistence.

### **3 Public Education Policies and the Advances of Neoliberalism**

Reflecting on the issue of violence and school coexistence in the current Brazilian context cannot be separated from a critical understanding of the educational policies in force in Brazil and the transformations brought about by neoliberal principles and directives. According to Fodra and Souza (2022), violence in Brazil is closely linked to the hegemonic values of a class-based society grounded in neoliberal ideology. The phenomenon of violence present in society is also manifested in the school context. The inequality inherent to capitalism, together with “the social, political, and economic problems and inequalities experienced in Brazil, promotes situations of violence that [manifest] within schools, undermining school coexistence and [...] the quality of education” (Fodra & Souza, 2022, p.03).

Educational projects influenced by neoliberalism advocate for the full privatization of public services. For Anderson (1995), since the late twentieth century, the State has come to treat education as a commodity, ceasing to guarantee it as a basic right. It has adopted policies centered on meritocracy, competitiveness, and privatization, disseminating values tied to efficiency and productivity, and thereby affecting the constitution of human subjectivity and the way education itself is conceived.

Assuming that education is a social policy that responds to the interests of a particular class within a neoliberal society, educational policies have historically been constrained by neoliberalism, which promotes productive modes and contributes to the maintenance of its ideology. The school, therefore, is understood as a space of ideological struggle. Since education is a public policy accessible to the population, the school, through its practices, must constantly be the object of critical analysis and reflection, with the goal of building spaces capable of transforming social reality, upholding a public, universal, free, democratic, secular, and quality education.

The implementation of neoliberalism in the last decades of the twentieth century resulted in a regressive process leading to barbarism and the exclusion of the majority, intensifying conservatism, misinformation, and various manifestations of violence. Within the national context, these changes have produced significant transformations in political, public, economic, and educational relations (Frigotto, 1999). Following global trends, public authorities and the private sector began to establish partnerships known as public-private, incorporating the premises of the so-called Third Way. In this context, the idea of civil society participation came to justify the growth of such partnerships and gained increasing support among agents of capital.

Neoliberalism took shape in Brazil after the 1990s as an adaptation to the international capitalist system, promoting economic, social, and political ideas based on minimal state intervention and the principle of the free market. Digiovanni and Souza (2014) emphasize the privatist model and note that “the assumptions of neoliberal ideology began to take effect in Brazil in the 1990s, following the orientations of the Washington Consensus and with the support of the World Bank.” (p. 48).

Tessaro, Costa, and Souza (2021) corroborate this by affirming that education in Brazil has been profoundly affected by neoliberal reforms, which have precarized teachers’ work and reconfigured the role of educational institutions and of the State itself. International organizations have dictated policies for Latin America since the mid-twentieth century, encompassing the period of the Brazilian Civil-Military Dictatorship (1964–1985). It is worth noting that during the redemocratization period (1980s), there was a strengthening of social movements demanding an emancipatory and revolutionary education. Nevertheless, despite this social mobilization, neoliberal thinking continued to expand, disregarding the social function of the school and education as an inalienable right. With the rise of technocratic measures, emphasis shifted toward results-based assessments and curriculum standardization, undermining teachers’ autonomy (Saviani, 2017).

In the definition of policies, neoliberalism articulates itself with neoconservatism, ostensibly seeking to shape young people through an

instrumental education oriented toward the labor market and grounded in moral and traditionalist values. This model promotes an image of disciplined and productive youth, yet detached from critical and civic formation. It replaces public educational management with managerialism, emphasizing results and blaming individuals for learning outcomes as measured by standardized assessments. Such policies disregard structural inequalities and the broader social, economic, political, and contradictory relations that reinforce mechanisms of exclusion (Peroni et al., 2021). Moreover, neoliberal policies regulate investments and promote changes in curricular proposals based on reductionist pedagogical principles, strengthening ultra-individualistic thinking and defending individual competition at the expense of collective organization and rights (Frigotto, 1999).

Neoliberal educational policies in Brazil have generated multiple impacts, including the High School Reform, the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC), the School Without Party Movement, and policies concerning the initial and continuing education of teachers. Such measures have contributed to the dismantling of democratic education through the devaluation of teachers, the deterioration of teaching conditions, and the loss of pedagogical autonomy. Education has increasingly been treated as a service rather than a right, causing harm to the teaching and learning process (Tessaro, 2021).

The influence of private capital groups, through the funding of movements and corporate partnerships, has interfered in public decision-making within the Brazilian educational sector, forming a hegemonic bloc that represents a national education project. An example is the production of teaching materials by private companies in partnership with the State, reinforcing capitalist principles that are subsequently disseminated within school spaces, where the market itself becomes a source of profit generation (Magalhães, Martineli & Vasconcelos, 2024)

When analyzing education in contemporary times, it is crucial to highlight how the neoliberal model has guided and reshaped the political context of Brazil, directly influencing educational policies. The market becomes the sovereign law, and its demands dictate the services provided by the State. The essence of the neoliberal model is based on privatization, minimal state intervention, social

inequalities, deregulation, individualism, and market freedom (Frigotto, 1999). Neoliberal policies absolve the State of responsibility for organizing education in Brazil, as the logic of commodification transforms social rights into services. With this distancing and omission by the State, education undergoes an accelerated process of dismantling and privatization (Saviani, 2009 and Carmo, 2020).

Educational policies embedded in a market- and profitability-oriented society reproduce the ideological discourse of neoliberal culture. As a result, Brazil has witnessed an intensification of social inequality, income concentration, unemployment, and poverty, consolidating the insertion of such policies. Within this context, educational policies have been affected by mercantilist logic, influencing the school environment, from human formation and the initial and continuing education of students and teachers to notions of productivity and competition. This has increased individualism and uncritical thinking, promoting alienation within the educational process. Education ceases to be a governmental priority, and the responsibility is shifted to individuals, expanding the meritocratic conception and reinforcing the idea of a minimal State, which in turn leads to the deterioration of social rights and the intensification of social inequalities (Freitas, 2002).

In current educational policies, the alteration of the State's role within the neoliberal model is evident, marked by the overvaluation of the economic sphere to the detriment of the social one, naturalizing individualism and selfishness, and contributing to the rise of violence, which also manifests within the educational system. Public education, understood as a right, is attacked and subjected to coercion, revealing an intentional effort to weaken civil society and promote its dismantling. When the public school is silenced in its educational mission, through violence and coercion, it fails to fulfill its social function of educating future generations.

A clear example of how neoliberal policies have affected education in Brazil can be seen in the state of Paraná, where the process of privatization has intensified in recent years through the "School-Partner Project" (*Projeto Parceiro da Escola*), which promotes a hegemonic school model driven by business interests.

The project involves the outsourcing of managerial services within public schools, allowing private companies to manage educational units under state jurisdiction (Fonseca, Ruppel e Lima, 2023). The influence of international and corporate organizations on educational policies in Brazil can be observed in discourses surrounding the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC), High School Reform, School Without Party, Gender Ideology, and All for Education movements - all aligned with market logic. Consequently, the school becomes a bargaining token for dominant classes, leading to the loss of free and quality public education. The alleged inefficiency of the State is used to justify the privatizations occurring within schools, as seen in Paraná's School-Partner Project, where private companies are hired to manage public schools (Fávero, 2021).

Another Brazilian state where the intensification of neoliberal policies in public education can be observed is São Paulo, where technological resources have been increasingly integrated into educational practices, both in pedagogical and administrative areas. This process has affected teacher education, particularly through public-private partnerships, leading to the precarization of teaching work and deepening the problems inherent to the teaching-learning process (Fodra, 2025). Neoliberal policies promoting the privatization of education continue to advance within São Paulo's public education system, as neoliberal values become progressively incorporated into society, further intensifying

with each new administration, there is an increase in control, platformization of education, disciplining, alienation, deterioration, and privatization of public schools within the state network. This educational model does not favor human development [...] nor does it promote emotional lived experiences that are meaningful to students [...]. Instead, it reinforces social exclusion and prepares students to serve the interests of capital as a cheap and obedient workforce, depriving them of the right to a quality education that fosters the democratization of knowledge and social emancipation (Fodra, 2025, p. 178)

The struggle for control over the educational market intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, beginning in March 2020, with the creation of emergency remote teaching policies. During this period, partnerships emerged between

departments of education and technology companies, leading to the commodification of public education, the data capture of public schooling, the platformization of teaching, and the provision of consultancies and textbooks through public–private partnerships (Cruz & Venturini, 2020). In this pandemic context, social inequalities among working-class populations deepened, as limited access to technological resources restricted opportunities for engagement with scientific knowledge.

The educational sector began to be regarded as an expanding market, sustaining the idea that schools should be monitored and evaluated according to the model of productive enterprises. The discourse claiming that public schools are less efficient than private ones has fostered the privatization of public education, shifting the responsibility for the teaching–learning process onto educators (Freitas, 2014). In this sense, evaluation proposals, particularly the numerous external assessments, have followed a meritocratic and classificatory model, justifying the entry of the private sector into public education on the basis of large-scale evaluation results.

Neoliberalism, in its attempt to ideologically appropriate educational policy, distorts reality by masking educational regression. An example of this is the High School Reform, which produces an alienating education for the children of the working class, while offering the children of the bourgeoisie far greater developmental opportunities, thereby reproducing the class struggle (Frigotto, 2016).

Given the contemporary scenario, marked by severe political, social, and educational setbacks, it becomes essential to critically analyze reality in order to confront the challenges posed by ongoing neoliberal policies. In this context, education constitutes one of the main spaces of resistance, assuming a strategic role in the struggle for the preservation of social rights. This resistance must be active and conscious, especially in the face of efforts to commodify public education and to subordinate it to market interests. It is urgent to confront policies that restrict access to free, quality public education, reaffirming the ethical and political commitment of educators to defending a school oriented toward collective and emancipatory purposes (Saviani, 2017).



The persistence of state neglect toward public education, subordinated to market dictates, represents a historical practice in Brazil, which, in the current context, has deepened and produced significant, harmful impacts on the integral formation of individuals. The consolidation of educational policies guided by neoliberal logic has contributed to the emptying of public education, particularly for the popular classes, thereby reducing its social and formative meaning. Such policies represent a form of violence against education, as they precarize teaching work, reduce students' opportunities for development, and undermine the transformative potential of schooling. Nevertheless, even though this context amplifies processes of alienation, it remains possible to build counter-hegemonic paths that expose social contradictions and enable resistance to structures that reproduce inequality.

### **3.1 What Public Policies Do We Want for Basic Education: Coexistence and Learning**

The issues discussed in this article prompt us to reflect on the need to move toward action proposals that may materialize into long-term public policies, capable of consolidating methodologies that serve as pedagogical and participatory tools for confronting situations of discrimination, violence, and all forms of violation of human and social rights.

Research that seeks to understand the phenomenon of violence is unanimous in affirming that it is a social phenomenon and, as such, must be understood, confronted, and overcome (UFMT, FENPB, 2018). Another important point to consider is that underlying acts of discrimination or violence lie racism, xenophobia, ageism, ableism, gender or religious prejudice, among others, forms of bias historically instituted and in need of deconstruction. Therefore, addressing such issues within spaces of school coexistence becomes essential, as it is necessary to make explicit the ways in which difference is lived and understood in contemporary society, culture, and school relationships, so that new possibilities for dealing with these contexts may be learned. Encouraging students to express

their feelings and perceptions about peers, teachers, and school management, and to discuss the multiple realities experienced in schooling, is a fundamental element for understanding the affective and cognitive dimensions present in social and educational practices.

The promotion of cooperative and participatory activities, grounded in belonging and mutual support, that take into account diversity, interests, and the need to confront all forms of discrimination and violence, poses a major challenge to society as a whole, and even more so to educators. In this regard, it is crucial to recognize that we live in a capitalist society characterized by numerous discriminatory social practices that foster or incite violence. Thus, action proposals that adopt a critical and reflective lens on social practices enable a reading of the world that exposes the prejudiced and stereotyped dimensions present in social relations. It is necessary to identify a set of interventions and actions that enable a critical movement in the face of social and school violence.

Although in the year 2000 UNESCO declared the beginning of the Decade for a Culture of Peace, little progress has been made in this regard. Twenty-five years later, the world has become increasingly violent; the principles of respecting all forms of life, rejecting violence in every form, listening to understand, being generous and supportive, and protecting the planet have all succumbed to an ever more perverse capitalist model. Analyses and proposals must consider Brazil's particular reality and conditions: a large economy embedded within dependent capitalism, heavily reliant on commodity exports, and burdened by stark levels of social inequality. It is also necessary to develop mechanisms capable of engaging the attention of children and young people, steering them away from social networks that abound with material promoting violence, both self-directed and toward others.

In this sense, the organization of student councils (*grêmios escolares*) enables collective activities that are fundamental for learning and the exercise of democracy. As Asbahr (2022) notes, these councils must be understood as a student right, fostering an essential kind of learning: participation, allowing students to voice opinions, reflect, and engage in collective activities through

which “they become protagonists of collective action” (p. 29). School assemblies are also important instruments for the development of participatory activities, enabling decision-making, reflection, and an understanding of the complexity of school reality.

In the specific discussion of actions addressing peer discrimination and violence, often identified as bullying, there are significant initiatives to highlight, such as the “help teams” (*equipes de ajuda*) proposed by Tognetta, Souza, and Lapa (2019), which work from a perspective of care, respect, and democratic coexistence, fostering values of solidarity and resistance to discriminatory processes.

Another increasingly relevant practice is the analysis of perceptions of students, teachers, administrators, staff, and parents regarding the school climate. Understanding how relationships among peers and institutional actors are constituted provides valuable insights into how to address situations arising in daily school life. To this end, a school climate diagnostic instrument has been developed (MORO, NASCENTE, YAMAZATO, 2025), which facilitates a process of self-regulation of school relations, promoting democratic and participatory education.

Finally, another point to be emphasized concerns the practices developed with the support of multidisciplinary teams, allowing shared actions among professionals from Pedagogy, Psychology, and Social Work, among others. These professionals work together to promote initiatives aimed at confronting violence, discrimination, and all forms of prejudice within school relations. The participation of psychologists and social workers in these teams became possible through the enactment of Federal Law No. 13.935/2019, which regulates the role of these professionals in Brazil’s public basic education network.

Reflecting on coexistence in the schooling process is therefore both urgent and necessary. Incorporating such discussions as an integral part of the learning process remains a challenge for schools. It falls to those involved in the training of teachers, psychologists, and social workers to broaden training modalities so that the contributions of each professional field can effectively support basic education from a multidisciplinary perspective.

## 4 Final Considerations

Grounded in Historical-Cultural Psychology and Historical-Critical Pedagogy, this study has highlighted the importance of collaborative school coexistence within formal education, emphasizing the processes of subjectivity formation and consciousness development as essential to understanding and confronting violence, which, originating in society, increasingly manifests within educational institutions.

Educational policies based on neoliberal principles do not contribute to the integral development or emancipation of individuals. Such policies, often naively, attempt to address school violence through behavioral and isolated actions that focus solely on the individuals involved within the school community. In reality, however, what is required are analyses, reflections, and actions that promote a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of social practices, in order to unveil the prejudiced and stereotyped dimensions inherent in a capitalist society marked by high levels of inequality and violence.

To envision new perspectives, it is first necessary to value educators, ensuring dignified salaries and working conditions. Moreover, it is essential to establish democratic practices among students and teachers, such as school-wide assemblies, the work of student councils, and the creation of school boards. Failing to provide adequate working conditions for teachers and staff, or denying students and other members of the school community a voice, constitutes a form of violence.

A quality school coexistence requires reflection by all those involved on coexistence itself and its challenges. It is precisely within the democratic process of discussing school practices that participants can collectively construct a higher quality of coexistence, finding shared solutions to difficulties that arise within daily school relations, or even beyond them.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that, in a context of high levels of violence, the theme of school coexistence and its implications must be openly debated by the school community. Through such collective and reflective practice, its members can better understand both the determinants of individualistic, authoritarian, and violent coexistence, and those that foster democratic, supportive, and peaceful coexistence.

## La convivencia escolar en el proceso de desarrollo humano: aportes desde la Psicología Histórico-Cultural

### RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza la importancia de la convivencia colaborativa en la educación escolar para enfrentar la violencia y contribuir a la constitución de la subjetividad, la conciencia y el aprendizaje de los estudiantes, desde la perspectiva de la Psicología Histórico-Cultural y la Pedagogía Histórico-Crítica. Estas teorías consideran al ser humano como un sujeto histórico, social y cultural, con posibilidades ilimitadas de desarrollo psíquico, que necesita de actividades significativas y relaciones sociales colaborativas en su proceso de humanización. La escuela es una institución fundamental en este proceso, ya que puede ofrecer actividades contextualizadas con la realidad y las necesidades de los estudiantes, y promover una formación crítica y emancipadora. Sin embargo, se observa que las políticas educativas implementadas en Brasil desde la década de 1990, concebidas a partir de principios neoliberales, simplifican las actividades escolares, estandarizan los currículos y precarizan la labor docente, actuando en contra del proceso de desarrollo humano. Estas políticas responden a intereses empresariales, convierten la educación en mercancía y promueven la violencia contra la escuela, al quitar la autonomía de los educadores y difundir valores orientados al individualismo y a la competencia. Esto estimula los prejuicios sociales, fomenta la violencia interpersonal y compromete el proceso de escolarización. No obstante, es posible construir caminos contrahegemónicos que permitan la consolidación de políticas orientadas a la convivencia escolar, con la participación de educadores y estudiantes, y con la creación de espacios dialógicos para discutir los problemas de la realidad concreta y las necesidades de la comunidad escolar, como los gremios estudiantiles, las asambleas, los equipos de ayuda, así como el análisis de las experiencias escolares mediante la Evaluación del Clima Escolar.

**Palabras clave:** Psicología Escolar. Políticas neoliberales. Convivência escolar.

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