

The Concrete Child at the Center of Collective Learning: Subjectivity, Symbolic Play, and Learning Activity in "Far Beyond the Cognitive"

A criança concreta no centro da aprendizagem coletiva: Subjetividade, jogo simbólico e atividade de estudo em "*Muito além do cognitivo*"

El niño concreto en el centro del aprendizaje colectivo: Subjetividad, juego simbólico y actividad de estudio en *Mucho más allá de lo cognitivo*

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ABSTRACT

The article presents a critical analysis of the monograph *Muito além do cognitivo: articulando aprendizagem, didática e subjetividade* [Beyond the Cognitive: Articulating Learning, Didactics, and Subjectivity] by Roberto Valdés Puentes and Flávia Pimenta de Souza Carcanholo, devoted to the problem of subject formation within mathematics study activity during the early years of schooling. The analysis focuses on the theoretical and methodological dialogue between Developmental Didactics within the Elkonin–Davydov–Repkin tradition and González Rey’s Theory of Subjectivity. It is demonstrated that the authors of the work seek to overcome a predominantly cognitive interpretation of developmental learning by placing intentionality, goal formation, subjective sense, fantasy, symbolic play, and the child’s emotional involvement at the center of analysis. Special attention is devoted to the concept of study activity, to the modeling of the relations between magnitude, measure, and number, as well as to the problem of theoretical generalization in mathematics learning. It is argued that the work opens new perspectives for understanding mathematics not as a neutral cognitive sphere, but as a cultural, symbolic, and subjective activity. At the same time, the article discusses the theoretical tension present in the monograph between the logic of study activity and the expansion of the problematic of subjectivity, emotion, and creativity. It is concluded that the work constitutes an important contribution to contemporary international discussions on developmental learning, subjectivity, and the formation of the subject in education.

Keywords: Developmental Didactics; Study Activity; Subjectivity; Collective Learning; Mathematics Education.

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RESUMO

O artigo apresenta uma análise crítica da monografia *Muito além do cognitivo: articulando aprendizagem, didática e subjetividade*, de Roberto Valdés Puentes e Flávia Pimenta de Souza Carcanholo, dedicada ao problema da formação do sujeito na atividade de estudo em matemática nos anos iniciais da escolarização. A análise concentra-se no diálogo teórico e metodológico entre a Didática Desenvolvimental da tradição Elkonin-Davydov-Repkin e a Teoria da Subjetividade de González Rey. Demonstra-se que os autores da obra procuram superar a interpretação predominantemente cognitiva da aprendizagem desenvolvimental, introduzindo a intencionalidade, a formação de metas, o sentido subjetivo, a fantasia, o jogo simbólico e o envolvimento emocional da criança no centro da análise. Especial atenção é dada ao conceito de atividade de estudo, ao papel da modelação das relações entre grandeza, medida e número, bem como ao problema da generalização teórica na aprendizagem coletiva matemática. Argumenta-se que a obra abre novas perspectivas para a compreensão da matemática não como esfera cognitiva neutra, mas como atividade cultural, simbólica e subjetiva. Ao mesmo tempo, discute-se a tensão teórica presente na monografia entre a lógica da atividade de estudo e a ampliação da problemática da subjetividade, da emoção e da criatividade. Conclui-se que a obra constitui uma importante contribuição para as discussões internacionais contemporâneas sobre aprendizagem desenvolvimental, subjetividade e formação do sujeito na educação.

Palavras-chave: Didática Desenvolvimental; Atividade de estudo; Subjetividade; Aprendizagem coletiva; Educação matemática.

RESUMEN

El artículo presenta un análisis crítico de la monografía *Muito além do cognitivo: articulando aprendizagem, didática e subjetividade* [Mucho más allá de lo cognitivo: articulando aprendizaje, didáctica y subjetividad], de Roberto Valdés Puentes y Flávia Pimenta de Souza Carcanholo, dedicada al problema de la formación del sujeto en la actividad de estudio de las matemáticas durante los primeros años de escolarización. El análisis se centra en el diálogo teórico y metodológico entre la Didáctica Desarrolladora dentro de la tradición Elkonin-Davydov-Repkin y la Teoría de la Subjetividad de González Rey. Se demuestra que los autores de la obra buscan superar una interpretación predominantemente cognitiva del aprendizaje desarrollador, situando en el centro del análisis la intencionalidad, la formación de metas, el sentido subjetivo, la fantasía, el juego simbólico y la implicación emocional del niño. Se presta especial atención al concepto de actividad de estudio, al papel de la modelación de las relaciones entre magnitud, medida y número, así como al problema de la generalización teórica en el aprendizaje matemático. Se argumenta que la obra abre nuevas perspectivas para comprender las matemáticas no como una esfera cognitiva neutra, sino como una actividad cultural, simbólica y subjetiva. Al mismo tiempo, el artículo discute la tensión teórica subyacente en la monografía entre la lógica de la actividad de estudio y la ampliación de la problemática de la subjetividad, la emoción y la creatividad. Se concluye que la obra constituye una importante contribución a los debates internacionales contemporáneos sobre aprendizaje desarrollador, subjetividad y formación del sujeto en la educación.

Palabras clave: Didáctica Desarrolladora; Actividad de estudio; Subjetividad; Aprendizaje colectivo; Educación matemática.

1 Introduction

Contemporary education is increasingly confronted with the problem of the loss of the subject within the learning process. Despite ongoing discussions about learner-centered education, creativity, motivation, and individual development, school practice in many countries remains excessively standardized, oriented toward external results and the formal assimilation of knowledge. In such a situation, the child is often reduced to the role of an executor of instructional routines, while their inner position, experiences, meanings, and personal agency remain outside the scope of pedagogical analysis (GONZÁLEZ REY, 2005; PUENTES, 2020).

For this reason, studies that seek to return the concrete child to the center of collective learning and to rethink the very emergence of study activity as a subjective process acquire particular importance today.

In this context, the book by Roberto Valdés Puentes and Flávia Pimenta de Souza Carcanholo, *Muito além do cognitivo: articulando aprendizagem, didática e subjetividade* [Beyond the Cognitive: Articulating Learning, Didactics, and Subjectivity], is of considerable interest not only to researchers in the cultural-historical and activity-theoretical traditions, but also to a broader community of specialists in contemporary didactics, the psychology of learning, and developmental education. At the same time, the book will undoubtedly be of interest to schoolteachers, undergraduate and postgraduate students, and everyone seeking to understand learning not as a formal process of knowledge transmission, but as a space for the development of the subject, thinking, and the child's creative activity.

The book is not merely the result of an empirical study of mathematics learning in primary school. Above all, it represents an attempt to conceptualize the problem of the emergence of the subject within collective study activity and to build a dialogue between the developmental learning system of V. V. Davydov and V. V. Repkin and Fernando González Rey's Theory of Subjectivity (REPKIN, 2019a; GONZÁLEZ REY; MITJÁNS MARTÍNEZ, 2017).

The authors pose a fundamentally important question: why does the same learning situation generate different levels of involvement, initiative, creativity, and acceptance of the task among children? How do intention, emotion, imagination, and

collective activity form a unified process of subject development? And most importantly, under what conditions does a learning task become internally meaningful for the child and truly become an activity for the child?

The empirical material itself constitutes one of the book's greatest strengths. The authors work not with abstract schemes, but with the living process of children's activity: dialogues, mistakes, contradictions, play situations, unexpected associations, and different forms of acceptance or rejection of the learning task. This gives the study psychological persuasiveness and makes it possible to view study activity not as a formal mechanism of knowledge assimilation, but as a complex process of the emergence of meaning, intention, and goal formation. Particularly interesting is the authors' attempt to conceptualize the role of symbolic play, emotional involvement, and fantasy in the emergence of study activity. In the book, play appears not as an external motivational device, but as a space for the emergence of subjectivity, within which the child begins to experience the task as their own. In this sense, the study addresses an extremely relevant problem of contemporary childhood – the gradual impoverishment of the symbolic space of play and the transformation of children's forms of experience (*perezhivanie*) and participation in learning (VYGOTSKY, 2009b; ELKONIN, 2009).

At the same time, we consider it important to emphasize that the Kharkiv school of developmental learning historically developed a unique tradition of play-based narrative modeling and emotional involvement of students long before current didactic explorations in this field. Descriptions of these forms of organizing study activity can also be found in recent publications devoted to the history and development of the different groups within the Elkonin–Davidov–Repkin tradition (PUENTES; LONGAREZI; DE MARCO, 2022). In the initial literacy courses, conceptual characters, play-based problem situations, role interactions, and special forms of didactic modeling were employed, through which theoretical content was revealed to children by means of symbolic action and collective discussion (EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM..., 2020; PEREPELYTSYNA et al., 2020). Furthermore, in the Kharkiv tradition, play was not understood as a simple external “embellishment” of learning, but as a genetically original condition of conceptual modeling through which children discovered the general mode of action and the theoretical content of the study task.

In this sense, the book by Roberto Valdés Puentes and Flávia Carcanholo appears not as a rejection of the activity-theoretical tradition, but rather as an attempt to theoretically reinterpret and further develop some of its internal potentials through the categories of subjectivity, symbolic play, and emotional implication.

At the same time, the book is of interest not only because of its empirical results, but also because of its attempt to rethink the very logic of developmental learning. The authors seek to demonstrate that collective learning cannot be reduced merely to concept formation or the assimilation of modes of action, but presupposes a complex process of the subjective production of meaning, intention, and the child's creative participation in activity.

It is precisely this attempt to articulate Activity Theory and the Theory of Subjectivity that makes the book an important event in the contemporary development of Brazilian *didática desenvolvimental* and opens a new space for international theoretical dialogue.

2 Subjectivity and Study Activity: points of convergence between González Rey's Theory of Subjectivity and developmental learning

The first theoretical chapter of the book, devoted to González Rey's Theory of Subjectivity, is conceptually coherent and organically connected to the overall logic of the study. The authors consistently introduce the main categories of this theory – *sentido subjetivo*, *configuração subjetiva*, the unity of the symbolic and the emotional, as well as the distinction between agent and subject. Importantly, these concepts are presented not in isolation, but in direct relation to the problem of study activity and child development (GONZÁLEZ REY, 2005, 2015).

One of the chapter's strengths is its attempt to demonstrate that subjectivity is not an "inner world" detached from activity, but is formed through interaction, dialogue, lived experience, and the production of meaning. Particularly important is the idea that the emotional and the symbolic do not exist separately, but constitute a unified system of subjective meaning. This allows the authors to understand learning not merely as a process of knowledge assimilation, but as a process of the child's internal production of meaning (GONZÁLEZ REY, 2012).

At the same time, in some passages it becomes noticeable that activity begins to be understood predominantly as a space for the manifestation and production of subjectivity. As a consequence, attention to the internal structure of activity, the logic of the study task, and the mode of action becomes somewhat weakened – that is, precisely those aspects that traditionally constitute the central core of the Kharkiv tradition of developmental learning within the broader field of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (REPKIN, 2019a; REPKIN; REPKINA, 2019a). At certain moments, activity appears more as a medium for the subjective production of meaning than as a specific form of organizing the development of theoretical thinking and the self-transformation of the subject through the resolution of study problems.

Particularly interesting is the distinction introduced by the authors between agent and subject. In many respects, it resonates with Repkin's conception of the qualitative difference between the "carrier of activity" (agent) and the "subject of activity" (subject) (REPKIN, 1997). For this reason, the book opens a genuine possibility for dialogue between two theoretical traditions, rather than merely their formal juxtaposition.

One of the strongest ideas of the chapter appears to be the thesis: "Only genuine collective learning exists – the creative one."

The authors essentially argue that learning cannot become genuinely developmental unless the child acts as a subject who produces their own meaning, rather than merely reproducing ready-made modes of action. This idea possesses significant potential for future research, especially in connection with the problems of play, imagination, creativity, and the formation of subjectivity in contemporary childhood (MITJÁNS MARTÍNEZ, 2012; VYGOTSKY, 2009b).

It is also important that the authors gradually refine their position regarding V. V. Repkin. If, at the beginning of the book, one may still have the impression that the emotional dimension is almost absent from developmental learning, later the text becomes considerably more differentiated. The authors explicitly state that Repkin did not ignore emotions, but understood them as an internal moment in the genesis of activity itself, connected with intention, need, and goal-formation (REPKIN, 2019c; REPKIN; REPKINA, 2019b).

In this context, particularly important is the idea that the problem lies not so much in an “absence of emotions” as in the insufficient specialized elaboration of these aspects within the research tradition of the Kharkiv school. Such an approach creates far more productive conditions for dialogue between theories than a simple opposition between “cognitive” and “emotional” approaches.

Overall, the first theoretical chapter gives the impression of a serious and intellectually honest attempt to construct a theoretical bridge between different directions within the cultural-historical tradition. The most promising aspect of the work appears precisely in those passages where subjectivity, activity, creativity, and learning begin to be understood not as separate phenomena, but as interrelated processes in the formation of the child as the subject of their own activity, thinking, and development.

3 Between formative experiment and the study of subjectivity: methodological foundations for the analysis of study activity

The second chapter of the book presents a highly elaborate and carefully constructed methodological framework. The authors seek not simply to combine different approaches mechanically, but to construct an integrated logic of research in which Didática Desenvolvemental, Experimento Didático-Formativo, and Metodologia Construtivo-Interpretativa perform distinct yet deeply interconnected functions (PUENTES, 2019a; GONZÁLEZ REY, 2015).

One of the greatest strengths of the chapter lies in its clear awareness of the complexity of the research object itself. The authors directly pose the question of how it is possible to investigate the emergence of the subject of study activity if subjectivity, intention, meaning, and emotional involvement cannot be directly measured or reduced to observable behavior. For this reason, the critique of traditional test-based and positivist approaches appears entirely justified in this context (GONZÁLEZ REY, 2011, 2015).

It is particularly important that the authors do not abandon the structure of study activity but, on the contrary, attempt to connect it with a qualitative methodology. In this sense, the idea that the Experimento Didático-Formativo provides the genetic-modeling construction and didactic architecture of activity itself, while the Metodologia Construtivo-Interpretativa makes it possible to interpret the subjective processes emerging within it, appears especially productive (MITJÁNS MARTÍNEZ; GONZÁLEZ REY, 2012).

Another particularly significant merit of the chapter is its careful introduction of the problem of microcycles and macrocycles within formative experiment. The authors convincingly demonstrate that their investigation constitutes precisely a microcycle – a local, yet carefully designed and theoretically structured study of the emergence of specific forms of study activity and subjectivity. This gives the work considerable methodological clarity.

Particularly interesting is the interpretation of V. V. Repkin's contribution. The authors emphasize that, within the Kharkiv tradition, the center of formative experiment gradually shifts – from the formation of the theoretical concept toward the emergence of the subject of activity. This is an extremely important and highly accurate observation. In fact, the authors demonstrate that, for Repkin, what becomes fundamental is no longer simply the correct execution of study actions, but rather the emergence of the child's internal intention, need, and their own process of goal-formation (REPKIN, 2019b, 2019c). It is precisely at this point that the book most convincingly demonstrates the real potential for dialogue between the Kharkiv school and the Theory of Subjectivity.

At times, it appears that subjectivity gradually begins to dominate over the structure of study activity itself. As a consequence, there emerges the risk that the logic of the concept, the mode of action, the construction of the study task, and the specificity of theoretical thinking may gradually recede into the background in comparison with the analysis of subjective experiences and individual meanings.

Nevertheless, the authors themselves recognize this problem and attempt to balance it. Particularly revealing is their effort not to reduce the investigation either to the observation of external behavior or to the loss of the didactic structure of activity. It is precisely this attempt to maintain a balance between the objectal-operational and the subjective-personal dimensions of study activity that appears to be one of the most interesting and original aspects of the book.

Special attention should also be given to the organization of the research itself. Prolonged participant observation, the construction of a social scene, and the use of drawings, dolls, psychodrama, and unfinished sentences create not merely a research procedure, but a distinctive space of interaction within which the child may reveal their own way of experiencing the learning situation (GONZÁLEZ REY, 2015).

In this context, the authors' idea that learning cannot be understood solely through external results appears especially important. The very same study action may possess entirely different subjective meanings for different children. It is precisely for this reason that the authors move from the traditional "collection of data" toward the construction of qualitative subjective indicators intended to assist in the interpretation of the process through which the subject emerges.

Overall, the second chapter proves to be a serious attempt to construct a new methodological model for the investigation of study activity – one in which the development of thinking, subjectivity, emotional involvement, and the structure of activity are understood as deeply interconnected processes. The most promising aspect of the chapter appears to be precisely the authors' effort not to abandon the logic of activity, but rather to expand it through careful attention to the child's inner subjective and semantic life.

4 Mathematics, subjectivity, and cultural meaning: didactic and theoretical contexts of the research

The third chapter of the book presents an extremely rich, conceptually dense, and carefully structured overview of the contemporary state of mathematics teaching in Brazilian primary education. The authors do not limit themselves merely to the description of official documents or teaching methodologies, but seek to reconstruct the broader theoretical, historical, and research context within which the problem of mathematics learning in contemporary schooling takes shape.

One of the strongest aspects of the chapter lies in the fact that the authors consistently preserve the central question of the entire book: who is the child in the process of learning mathematics – an executor of proposed operations or the subject of their own study activity? It is precisely through this perspective that both the BNCC and the different didactic approaches are analyzed throughout the chapter.

Particularly convincing is the thesis that the *competências e habilidades* approach defines what the child should be able to do, yet almost never poses the deeper question of how study activity itself emerges, how the subject is constituted, and what the inner meaning of learning becomes for the child. In this sense, the contrast between the empirical logic of skill acquisition and the developmental logic of the subject's self-transformation appears especially productive and theoretically significant (DAVYDOV, 1982; REPKIN, 2019c).

The authors repeatedly return to the idea that the child must become the source of their own collective learning. It is precisely this idea that allows them to preserve the connection between mathematics, subjectivity, and the fundamentally creative character of learning.

Another profound merit of the chapter is its analysis of different didactic traditions – constructivism, ethnomathematics, conceptual nexuses, and Davydov’s approach based on the modeling of genetically originating relations between quantities and measures. The authors do not merely enumerate these approaches, but carefully reveal their theoretical premises, their different understandings of development, and their distinct conceptions of the role of the child in learning.

Particularly interesting is the critique of constructivism. While recognizing its importance for the development of the child’s activity, the authors simultaneously emphasize that the subject still remains there predominantly a cognitive structure rather than a bearer of personal meaning and an inner experience of activity itself.

Also highly promising is the line of analysis connected with the history of the constitution of the theoretical concept of number. The authors convincingly demonstrate that number is not a “neutral” or purely technical construction, but possesses a cultural, historical, symbolic, and even imaginative nature. It is precisely at this point that the book begins to connect mathematics, imagination, play, symbolization, and subjective meaning in a particularly rich and intellectually productive way.

Especially powerful is the reference to Ifrah and the idea that the history of number contains not only logic, but also fantasy, cultural practices, human experiences, and symbolic forms of appropriating the world. This allows the authors, in effect, to “humanize” mathematics and to present it not merely as an abstract system of operations and symbolic transformations, but as a living symbolic form of human culture and subject development.

Equally important and intellectually compelling is Muniz’s idea of *ser matemático* [being a mathematician]. It resonates deeply with Repkin’s problematic of the subject of study activity, since the child is understood not as a universal bearer of cognitive functions, but as a unique subject with their own history, their own mode of experiencing, and their own particular way of entering into learning activity.

Special attention should also be given to the substantial state-of-the-art review of Brazilian research presented by the authors. This constitutes one of the most valuable parts of the chapter. The authors demonstrate with considerable intellectual honesty both the strengths of the Brazilian tradition and the active development of Didática Desenvolvimental, as well as some of its limitations – the fragmentation of research, the near absence of Repkin, the weak presence of González Rey, and the tendency to reproduce already established theoretical schemes.

Of paramount importance is the observation that most studies tend to focus either on the cognitive structure of activity or on subjectivity, while only rarely attempting to articulate these two dimensions organically. It is precisely here that the authors identify the principal novelty of their own work – the construction of a theoretical and methodological bridge between Didática Desenvolvimental and the Theory of Subjectivity (PUENTES, 2020; GONZÁLEZ REY; MITJÁNS MARTÍNEZ, 2017).

At times, it appears that the emotional, subjective, and symbolic dimensions gradually begin to prevail over the logic of the concept, the structure of the study task, and the specificity of theoretical thinking itself.

Nevertheless, the authors attempt to avoid such a reduction. It is especially important that they do not abandon the conceptual nexuses, the historical-logical construction of the concept, and the idea of theoretical generalization. It is precisely this that anchors the work within the field of developmental and activity-theoretical logic, rather than allowing it to dissolve merely into a psychology of lived experiences (DAVYDOV, 1982; REPKIN; REPKINA, 2019a).

Overall, the third chapter offers an extremely strong and conceptually important theoretical foundation for the subsequent practical chapters. The most promising aspect seems to be precisely the authors' attempt to present mathematics as a human, cultural, and meaning-generating activity, to connect concept formation with creativity and subjectivity, and at the same time not to lose the structure of study activity as a specific form of the development of thinking.

5 Symbolic play, intention, and the emergence of study activity: the formation of classification criteria in primary school children

The fourth chapter creates, perhaps, the strongest impression in the entire book. Whereas the previous chapters primarily constructed the theoretical and methodological framework of the research, here the authors, for the first time, demonstrate the living process of the emergence of study activity within real interaction with children. It is precisely for this reason that the text acquires a particular psychological force and persuasiveness.

What appears most valuable is the fact that children's activity is presented not as a simple illustration of theoretical propositions, but as a complex, contradictory, and uneven process. The authors demonstrate very convincingly that the emergence of study activity cannot be reduced merely to the correct execution of a task or to the successful formation of a concept. At the center of the analysis stand the child's internal acceptance of a situation of difficulty, the emergence of intention, and the child's capacity for task appropriation (REPKIN, 2019b; BOZHOVICH, 1981).

Particularly convincing is the central idea of the Kharkiv school that a study task cannot simply be externally imposed upon the child. It must be accepted, lived through, and acquire an inner meaning. It is precisely for this reason that one and the same situation provokes entirely different levels of involvement, interest, and readiness to act in different children. In this respect, the authors establish a highly productive dialogue between the ideas of V. V. Repkin, Zaika, Dorokhina, Bozhovich, and González Rey (REPKIN, 2019c; ZAIKA; REPKIN; REPKINA, 2019; GONZÁLEZ REY, 2005).

One of the most expressive moments of the chapter is the role of symbolic play. The story of "Tião Carga Pesada," the use of Joanhina's letter, and the puppets create not merely a motivational background, but a particular space of meaning within which the child can become internally involved in the task. The authors demonstrate very convincingly that play here does not function as an auxiliary resource or as a simple "decoration" of learning. On the contrary, it is precisely through the symbolic situation that the child acquires the possibility of experiencing the task as their own and of entering into it as a subject (ELKONIN, 2009; VYGOTSKY, 2009b).

Within this context, the cases of Gustavo and Elias, who refused to accept the play situation while repeatedly saying "isso é mentira" ["that is a lie"], appear especially interesting. This observation possesses enormous theoretical potential. The authors

effectively demonstrate that learning difficulties may be connected not only with cognitive aspects, but also with the problem of the child's entry into symbolic space itself. It is precisely here that an extremely important issue of contemporary childhood emerges – the crisis of play, the transformation of forms of symbolization, and the growing difficulties children experience when entering imaginative play spaces.

Equally productive is the methodological construction that divides activity into two stages – mental activity and practical activity. The authors effectively test a fundamentally important hypothesis: whether practical manipulation is sufficient for the emergence of study activity, or whether it becomes productive only once the process of goal-formation has already taken shape. The results appear highly compelling. Practical activity, in and of itself, does not generate development; without a prior organization of meaning, it easily turns into empirical manipulation of objects. This constitutes a strong argument against simplified pragmatic models of “learning through action” and against mechanical constructivism (DAVYDOV, 1982).

In this context, it becomes especially important that the formation of a classification criterion effectively presupposes the construction of a certain model of relations between objects. It is precisely for this reason that study activity cannot be reduced either to practical manipulation or to the child's external activity alone. The decisive moment occurs when the child begins to identify, sustain, and model the relation that underlies grouping itself. In this sense, symbolic play creates a space of meaning for entering into the task, yet it is precisely modeling that moves activity into the plane of theoretical generalization and transforms it into study activity in the proper sense of the concept (DAVYDOV, 1982; REPKIN; REPKINA, 2019a).

From a psychological point of view, the case of Mario appears particularly illustrative. The authors demonstrate with great subtlety how the child's internal acceptance of the task emerges from personal experience – specifically, from the conversation about his own collection of toys and the ways of organizing them. It is precisely this affectively meaningful experience that becomes a “bridge” toward the formation of a cognitive goal. Here, the emotional dimension does not appear as an external supplement to thinking, but as a pathway into study activity itself (GONZÁLEZ REY, 2012).

Extremely important as well is the observation that learning is not transmitted mechanically through imitation. Even after collective discussion, children did not simply copy one another's ready-made forms of grouping. This strongly confirms the Repkinian idea that study activity must be internally generated by the subject itself. Listening to another person may create conditions for development, but it cannot replace the child's own semantic and activity-based movement (REPKIN, 2019a).

One of the strongest parts of the chapter is the case of Michel. The authors demonstrate, in a highly professional and at the same time profoundly humane manner, the limits of the possibilities of study activity within a concrete situation. They do not attempt artificially to "prove the success" of the experiment, but honestly show that, for Michel, symbolic play continues to remain the leading activity rather than study activity. It is precisely for this reason that the situation of classification does not become for him a fully constituted study task. Particularly important is the fact that the authors relate this not to a "deficit," but to the child's actual zone of possible development and to the necessity of taking into account the individual dynamics of development.

Especially heuristic also appears the chapter's general theoretical conclusion: the quality of collective learning and the development of subjectivity do not oppose one another, but instead constitute "two sides of the same coin." It is precisely here that the book begins most organically to articulate the structure of study activity, symbolic play, intention, goal-formation, emotional involvement, and conceptual development.

At times, it appears that subjective indicators are described in greater detail and with greater persuasiveness than the actual logic of the formation of the concept of criterion and classification itself. Nevertheless, the authors still preserve the balance, since they do not abandon the structure of study activity, the levels of goal formation, or conceptual movement (REPKIN; REPKINA, 2019a).

Overall, the fourth chapter stands out as the most compelling in the entire book. It is precisely here that theory ceases to remain abstract and begins to "work" within the living material of children's activity. The most promising aspects appear to be the problem of symbolic play, the relationship between intention and goal-formation, and the idea that without the child's internal acceptance of the task, genuine study activity does not emerge.

6. The emergence of number, measure, and study activity: the formation of the concept of number in the process of measurement

The fifth chapter creates the impression of being one of the most conceptually integrated in the entire book. It is precisely here that the authors move most consistently from the problem of subjectivity to the actual logic of the formation of the mathematical concept itself. Particularly important in this regard is the fact that number is treated not as a ready-made result of assimilation, but as a process of the gradual emergence of a new mode of action and a new way of perceiving relations between objects.

The central line of the chapter consists in the attempt to demonstrate the genesis of number not through mechanical manipulation of digits, but through the discovery of the relation between magnitude and measure. It is precisely for this reason that the authors consistently organize situations in which the child encounters the impossibility of direct comparison and becomes compelled to search for a mediated mode of coordinating actions. From the perspective of developmental instruction, this acquires particular significance, since number begins to appear not as an external sign, but as a relation between the measured magnitude and the chosen measure. It is precisely this that makes it possible to understand the emergence of number as the process of constructing a new mode of theoretical generalization (DAVYDOV, 1982; REPKIN; REPKINA, 2019a).

Of profound significance is the fact that the authors do not reduce measurement to a technical procedure. The research material allows one to observe how the child gradually discovers the internal connection between measure and the result of measurement. It is precisely for this reason that the situation of measuring begins to acquire, for the children, a problematic and meaning-laden character rather than remaining merely a practical task.

Extremely important as well is the fact that the authors consistently preserve the connection between mathematical content and the process of the emergence of subjectivity. In many episodes, it becomes possible to observe that intention, task acceptance, and goal formation emerge not separately from conceptual development, but within it. It is precisely this that allows the authors gradually to approach a problem of

particular importance for the Kharkiv school – the relationship between the development of theoretical thinking and the constitution of the subject of study activity.

Highly productive also appears the introduction of different modes of measurement – using rope, sticks, steps, and rulers. The authors effectively create a situation in which the child begins to discover the limits of direct comparison and the necessity of constructing a mediated mode of action. Within this context, it acquires fundamental importance that the standard centimeter and the ruler are not introduced as ready-made “correct instruments,” but instead gradually emerge as responses to the problem of coordinating human actions.

Special attention should also be given to the description of children’s difficulties. The authors demonstrate in a highly professional manner that errors are neither accidental nor purely individual. On the contrary, they often reflect the very process of reorganizing the mode of action itself. It is precisely for this reason that inaccuracies in measurement, attempts to “superimpose” measures upon one another, or returns to direct comparison acquire profound psychological significance. In this respect, one may perceive not a “deficit,” but rather a transitional moment from empirical action toward a new mode of generalization.

The material of the chapter also makes it possible to perceive the importance of practical activity and the sensory-motor fixation of relations. At the same time, however, the authors do not remain confined to this level alone. The research gradually leads toward the idea that practical action becomes developmental only when the child begins to sustain precisely the relation between magnitude and measure. It is precisely here that intention, task acceptance, and conceptual movement acquire special importance.

Extremely productive as well is the collective discussion among the children. The authors demonstrate with great subtlety how contradictions, clarifications, and new forms of argumentation emerge during shared discussion. At the same time, collectivity is not reduced to a mere exchange of answers. Rather, the research material makes it possible to perceive how another participant in the activity begins to function as a condition for the reorganization of one’s own mode of thinking.

From a didactic standpoint, the introduction of stories about the carpenter and the seamstress is especially illustrative. These stories create a highly natural situation requiring the coordination of measures and modes of measurement. It is precisely for this reason that the problem of standard measure begins to emerge not as an abstract mathematical demand, but as a genuine human problem of coordinating activity.

Extremely interesting as well is Elias's association between centímetro [centimeter] and sentimiento [feeling]. The authors introduce this episode with remarkable delicacy, without transforming it into a merely "curious" or accidental remark. On the contrary, the material allows one to perceive how closely intertwined, within children's thinking, linguistic experience, emotional involvement, and the process of the formation of a new concept may become. It is precisely here that the research effectively approaches the problem of symbolic-emotional unity developed by González Rey (GONZÁLEZ REY, 2012).

At the same time, the authors do not dissolve mathematical content into subjective experience. This is particularly important. Despite the considerable attention devoted to children's emotional involvement, the book nevertheless preserves the logic of the formation of the concept of number as the central line of the research. It is precisely for this reason that conceptual development does not disappear behind the description of subjectivity, but continues to remain the core of study activity.

In several episodes, one may perceive a very close approximation to the Davydovian logic of constructing the concept of number through modeling the relation "magnitude – measure – number." At the same time, however, the authors do not always make this theoretical line fully explicit. It is precisely for this reason that part of the activity-theoretical potential of the material reveals itself more through the process of interpretation than through the direct formulations of the authors themselves.

In conclusion, the fifth chapter stands out as one of the most profound in both theoretical and psychological terms. Particularly promising is the authors' attempt to demonstrate number not as a ready-made abstract object, but as the result of historically and culturally mediated human activity. Special significance is also acquired by the relationship between the formation of the concept of number, symbolic play, intention, goal formation, and the constitution of the subject of study activity.

7 Indicators of genuine collective learning: intention, emotion, and the mutual existence of subject and activity

The sixth chapter constitutes, in essence, the theoretical core of the entire book. Whereas the previous chapters gradually introduced the principal concepts and presented the empirical material, here the authors attempt to generalize the results of the

research and formulate a system of indicators of the emergence of the subject within study activity. It is precisely for this reason that the chapter appears both the most conceptually dense and, at the same time, the most polemical.

The greatest strength of the chapter lies in the fact that the authors do not reduce the problem of learning either to cognitive outcomes or to “emotional well-being.” On the contrary, they consistently seek to demonstrate how intention, emotional involvement, symbolic-emotional unity, and study activity together constitute a unified process of the emergence of the subject. In this respect, the chapter proves to be considerably deeper than the conventional oppositions between “cognitive” and “emotional” approaches.

Of fundamental importance is the introduction of three groups of indicators – the relationship between intention and action, symbolic-emotional unity, and the mutual existence of subject and activity. It is precisely through these categories that the authors seek to describe the emergence of the subject as a process that cannot be explained solely through correctness of performance, level of knowledge, or the child’s external behavior.

The interpretation of intention itself also proves to be of paramount significance. Drawing upon Bozhovich, González Rey, and Repkin, the authors present intention not as “motivation” in a narrow sense, but as an internal condition for the emergence of goal formation. Particularly compelling is the thesis that intention constitutes a condition for the very possibility of perceiving a task, rather than merely a reaction to an already proposed situation. It is precisely here that the book comes very close to one of the most important propositions of the Kharkiv school: a task becomes a study task only when the child accepts it as their own (BOZHOVICH, 1981; REPKIN, 2019c; GONZÁLEZ REY, 2005).

At the same time, the authors attempt to reinterpret this idea through the Theory of Subjectivity, emphasizing the role of affective history, fantasy, internal position, and symbolic production of meaning. The three subgroups of children described in the research are likewise highly convincing. Particularly important is the fact that the authors do not interpret difficulties as “deficits,” but instead analyze them through internal position, history of experience, forms of implication, and quality of interaction. This renders the analysis psychologically far subtler and more humanistic.

One of the strongest moments of the chapter is the case of Laura. The authors demonstrate very clearly that intention does not constitute a stable personality trait. During the

classification activity, she was almost entirely disengaged, whereas in the situation involving the ruler she suddenly began to participate actively in collective work. This demonstrates in a highly convincing manner the role of the didactic environment, the importance of affective anchoring, and the necessity of relating the task to the child's own experience.

Of profound theoretical depth is the section devoted to symbolic-emotional unity. Here the book perhaps integrates González Rey and the empirical material in the most organic way. Especially valuable is the fact that the authors do not interpret fantasy, associations, personification, or affective criteria as "errors" or "deviations" from conceptual thinking. On the contrary, they demonstrate these as genuine mechanisms through which the child enters the learning situation.

Highly illustrative are the episodes in which children say: "os animais são amigos" ["animals are friends"], "isso não presta" ["this is worthless"], relate "sentimento" [feeling] to "centímetro" [centimeter], personify the ruler, or express their own attitudes toward the task through drawings. The authors do not eliminate this subjective content in the name of the "correct criterion," but instead attempt to perceive how the subjective itself becomes a bridge toward conceptual development. This is one of the strongest aspects of the book.

Particularly interesting is the fact that the authors effectively propose a new understanding of the role of play and fantasy in learning. Play appears here not as a "preschool residue" that must be overcome, but as a condition for the emergence of subjectivity within study activity. It is precisely at this point that the book comes closest to the highly promising problematic concerning the relationship between symbolic play and conceptual development, as well as the contemporary crisis of play and symbolization (ELKONIN, 2009; VYGOTSKY, 2009b).

The category of the mutual existence of subject and activity likewise appears profoundly important. Here the authors draw directly upon one of Repkin's central ideas: the subject does not exist outside activity, just as activity does not exist outside the subject (REPKIN, 1997). Particularly powerful is the analysis of non-reproduction, the expansion of mental activity through practice, and authorship. The authors demonstrate very convincingly that collective learning does not constitute a mechanical transmission of ready-made modes of action. Even when children listen to one another, each traverses their own path of conceptual elaboration. This constitutes an extremely strong confirmation of the activity-theoretical logic of learning.

At certain moments, however, the principal methodological tension of the book becomes especially visible. Subjective production of meaning, emotional implication, fantasy, and symbolic meaning are sometimes described far more extensively than the actual logic of theoretical generalization, the structure of the study task, and conceptual movement itself. In some passages, conceptual development appears to recede into the background in comparison with descriptions of children's inner experiences and subjective meanings.

Nevertheless, the authors still attempt to preserve a balance. This becomes particularly evident where they return to goal formation, the structure of study activity, and the role of study actions. It is precisely for this reason that the chapter does not transform merely into a "psychology of experiences," but remains firmly within the field of Developmental Didactics.

Equally interesting is the final thesis that all human learning is creative. The authors effectively propose a reconsideration of the typology developed by González Rey and Mitjáns Martínez, arguing that even reproduction always contains an element of subjective recreation. This is an extremely heuristic and promising idea. At the same time, however, an important theoretical question emerges here: does the concept of "creativity" risk becoming excessively broad if all learning is understood as creative production? Yet even this polemical dimension ultimately constitutes a strength of the book, since it opens space for further theoretical dialogue.

Overall, the sixth chapter stands out as one of the strongest in the entire book. It is precisely here that the authors most consistently attempt to articulate Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and the Theory of Subjectivity, to present learning as subjective production, and at the same time to preserve the role of goal formation, conceptual development, and the structure of study activity. Particularly promising are the problems concerning the relationship between play, imagination, and study activity, the role of intention in the emergence of goal formation, as well as the attempt to conceptualize learning as a process in which cognition, emotion, and symbolic production together constitute a unified system of subject development.

8 Consequences for Developmental Didactics and the Theory of Subjectivity

The concluding chapter of the book fulfills the function of a theoretical synthesis of the entire work. The authors seek to demonstrate the implications that the obtained results hold for the Elkonin–Davydov–Repkin system, González Rey's

Theory of Subjectivity, and contemporary Mathematics Didactics. It is precisely for this reason that the chapter appears not merely as a summary of the conducted research, but also as an attempt to outline perspectives for the future expansion of developmental didactics.

The principal value of the chapter lies in its attempt to conceptualize goal formation not merely as a cognitive objective, but as an expression of subjective sense. The authors consistently emphasize that a study task becomes genuinely activity-oriented only when it acquires an internal meaning for the child. In this respect, they seek to bring closer together Repkin's Kharkiv line and González Rey's Theory of Subjectivity (REPKIN, 2019c; GONZÁLEZ REY, 2005).

Crucial to this formulation is the authors' insistence on the necessity of considering symbolic play, fantasy, emotional implication, and affective anchoring in the organization of study activity. Play is understood here not as an external motivational resource, but as a condition for the emergence of subjectivity in learning. It is precisely this idea that runs throughout the entire book and acquires its most generalized form in the concluding chapter (ELKONIN, 2009; VYGOTSKY, 2009b).

Methodologically significant is also the thesis that practical activity cannot replace goal formation. The authors convincingly demonstrate that manipulation without intention easily transforms into empiricism. It is precisely for this reason that they emphasize the priority of mental activity, dialogue, and the internal acceptance of the task. In this respect, the book consistently defends an activity-based understanding of learning, despite its considerable attention to subjectivity and the emotional dimension of development (DAVYDOV, 1982; REPKIN; REPKINA, 2019a).

One of the central theses of the chapter is the proposition that: "All genuine collective learning is creative."

This is an extremely interesting and promising idea, since the authors seek to demonstrate that even reproduction contains subjective recreation, and that learning always includes the production of meaning. It is precisely at this point that the book reaches the level of broader theoretical generalizations concerning the nature of human learning and creativity (MITJÁNS MARTÍNEZ, 2012).

At the same time, it is precisely within this chapter that the principal theoretical tension of the book becomes most visible. At certain moments, subjective production of meaning, emotions, fantasy, and symbolic content appear to predominate over the structure of study activity, conceptual movement, and the logic of theoretical generalization. In some passages, the inner experience of activity seems to move into the foreground in comparison with the analysis of the actual process of forming the theoretical concept itself.

Nevertheless, the authors still attempt to preserve a balance by constantly returning to goal formation, the study task, and the activity-based structure of learning. It is precisely this that prevents the book from becoming merely a psychology of subjective experiences and keeps it firmly within the field of Developmental Didactics (REPKIN, 2019a; REPKIN; REPKINA, 2019b).

The work further stands out for its effort to conceptualize mathematics not as a “neutral cognitive sphere,” but as a cultural, symbolic, and subjective activity. It is precisely for this reason that the authors emphasize the importance of narratives, symbolic situations, dialogue, and subjective indicators in mathematics education. This makes it possible to understand the formation of mathematical concepts not merely as the assimilation of operations, but as a process through which the child enters the cultural and meaningful space of human activity.

Overall, the concluding chapter presents itself as an attempt to formulate a new program for the development of Developmental Didactics – one in which cognition, emotion, symbolic production of meaning, and subjectivity are understood as a unified system of child development. It is precisely this attempt to integrate the logic of activity, symbolic play, emotional experience, and the dynamics of conceptual development that makes the book an important and promising contribution to contemporary international discussions concerning the nature of learning and the development of the subject.

9 Theoretical Tension as a Condition for the Development of Developmental Education

One of the most important outcomes of the book lies in the fact that it brings back to the center of contemporary didactic discussion the problem of the internal contradictions of developmental education itself. The authors do not propose a finished or fully harmonized conceptual system. On the contrary, throughout many

fragments of the volume one can clearly perceive a tension between different ways of understanding the nature of study activity, subjectivity, creativity, and development. Nevertheless, it is precisely this theoretical incompleteness that makes the research especially productive.

Throughout the entire book, one observes an effort to articulate two distinct logics of analysis. On the one hand, the authors consistently rely on the Elkonin–Davydov–Repkin tradition of study activity, for which the study task, theoretical generalization, the modeling of relations, and the structure of study activity are central. On the other hand, increasing importance is gradually assigned to the problematic of subjectivity, inner experience, fantasy, the symbolic production of meaning, and the child’s emotional involvement in the learning process.

It is precisely here that the book’s principal methodological question emerges: how are the logic of theoretical concept formation and the child’s inner subjective life related to one another? The authors convincingly demonstrate that learning cannot be explained solely through the external structure of activity or through the correctness of the execution of study actions. At the same time, the volume constantly leads the reader toward another risk – namely, the possible loss of the very logic of developmental education when subjective experience begins to be treated as a self-sufficient center of analysis.

In this respect, of fundamental significance is the fact that the authors do not abandon the concept of study activity. Despite the considerable attention devoted to emotions, play, fantasy, and subjective sense, they continue to understand learning as a specific form of organizing the development of thinking. It is precisely this that allows the monograph to remain within the field of developmental education rather than becoming merely a psychology of individual experience.

At the same time, the study opens an extremely promising direction for future investigations. In effect, the authors raise the question of whether study activity can be understood outside the analysis of subjectivity, and whether today it is possible to develop activity-based didactics without including the problematic of emotions, symbolization, play, and the internal acceptance of the task. It is precisely this formulation of the problem that appears as one of the principal theoretical merits of the research.

Of paramount value is the fact that the study does not attempt artificially to eliminate these contradictions. The authors neither conceal theoretical difficulties nor create the illusion of absolute conceptual completeness. On the contrary, the book demonstrates a vital search for a new language capable of describing the child's development in learning. In this sense, it may be regarded not merely as a study of a specific pedagogical experiment, but as an important stage in the contemporary reinterpretation of the very tradition of developmental education itself.

For this reason, the principal value of the book lies not only in the presentation of new empirical materials or methodological solutions. Its significance is considerably broader: it opens space for a new theoretical dialogue between the activity tradition, the Theory of Subjectivity, and contemporary humanistic approaches to education. And although many of the questions raised by the authors remain open, it is precisely this openness that makes the work an important event within current international discussions concerning the nature of learning, development, and the constitution of the subject.

10 Conclusions

The book *Muito além do cognitivo: articulando aprendizagem, didática e subjetividade* [Beyond the Cognitive: Articulating Learning, Didactics, and Subjectivity] creates the impression of a conceptually coherent, profound, and at the same time remarkably bold study that opens a new space for dialogue between Developmental Didactics and the Theory of Subjectivity. Its significance lies not only in the presentation of original empirical material, but also in the attempt to rethink the very nature of study activity, creativity, and the constitution of the subject within the process of collective learning.

One of the principal merits of the monograph consists in restoring the concrete child to the center of the analysis of learning. The authors consistently demonstrate that study activity cannot be reduced either to the correct organization of study actions or to the external success of task performance. At the center of their attention are the internal acceptance of the task, goal formation, symbolic-emotional unity, intention, fantasy, play, and the subjective sense of activity. It is precisely this that makes the book particularly important within the context of contemporary

education, where learning increasingly becomes transformed into a standardized system for the control of skills and results.

Of particular importance is the fact that the authors do not limit themselves to purely theoretical declarations, but instead demonstrate the living process through which study activity emerges in the real interaction among children. The most compelling parts of the book are precisely those fragments in which symbolic play, intention, emotional involvement, and conceptual development begin to be understood as interrelated processes in the constitution of the subject. In this sense, the volume effectively proposes a new way of understanding mathematics education – not as a neutral cognitive sphere, but as a cultural, symbolic, and subjective activity.

At the same time, one of the book's most important contributions lies in the fact that, throughout the course of the theoretical dialogue, the authors gradually move away from a simplified understanding of developmental education as a predominantly cognitive model. The monograph convincingly demonstrates that, within the Kharkiv tradition, intention, emotion, need, and goal formation were understood not as external "additions" to activity, but as internal moments of activity itself (REPKIN, 2019c; REPKIN; REPKINA, 2019b). It is precisely this that creates far more productive conditions for dialogue between Developmental Didactics and the Theory of Subjectivity than the simple opposition between "cognitive" and "emotional" approaches.

On the other hand, the book also reveals important theoretical tensions. At certain moments, one gains the impression that the subjective production of meaning, symbolic content, fantasy, and emotional involvement gradually begin to predominate over the structure of study activity, the logic of theoretical generalization, and conceptual movement. Yet it is precisely this tension that makes the work especially productive. The authors do not destroy the activity-based logic of learning; rather, they seek to expand it through the inclusion of the problematic of subjectivity, symbolic play, and emotional experience. For this reason, the book does not present itself as a completed "system," but instead opens a new space for future investigations and theoretical dialogue.

The most promising directions for such dialogue appear to be the relationship between symbolic play and conceptual development, the role of intention in the emergence of goal formation, the problem of the constitution of subjectivity within study

activity, as well as the question of how cognition, emotion, imagination, and the symbolic production of meaning form a unified system of child development.

Overall, the present work by Roberto Valdés Puentes and Flávia Pimenta de Souza Carcanholo constitutes an important contribution to contemporary international discussions concerning the nature of developmental education. Its principal value lies in the attempt to restore the living child to the center of education – with their experiences, fantasies, difficulties, intentions, and singular ways of entering into activity. It is precisely this attention to the concrete subject that makes the book not only a significant theoretical investigation, but also an important humanistic project within contemporary developmental education.

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