

The school today – essay based on Paulo Freire and Alexander Neill¹

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ABSTRACT

This writing, of an essayistic nature, textualizes a discussion about school education. It aims to reflect on the school at the present, crediting ideas and concepts discussed by Paulo Freire and Alexander Sutherland Neill as central to the development of school educational practice, namely: human formation, dialogue and freedom. In methodological terms, it is based on bibliographic research. From this dialogue between the two thinkers, we envision a path to school education that is based on three complementary itineraries: a school that is based, perennially, on the idea of education as a humanizing social practice; a school that refers to useful knowledge for life; and a school that promotes dialogue, respects the diversity of human beings and cultivates socio-affective relationships.

KEY-WORDS: School. Humanistic formation. Dialogue. Freedom.

A escola na atualidade – ensaio a partir de Paulo

RESUMO

Este escrito, de natureza ensaística, textualiza uma discussão a respeito da educação escolar. Objetiva refletir sobre a escola na atualidade, creditando ideias e conceitos debatidos por Paulo Freire e Alexander

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Sutherland Neill como centrais para o desenvolvimento da prática educativa escolar, a saber: a formação humana, o diálogo e a liberdade. Em termos metodológicos, se funde na pesquisa bibliográfica. Desse diálogo entre os dois pensadores, vislumbramos um caminho para a educação escolar que se fundamenta em três itinerários complementares: uma escola que se alimente, perenemente, da ideia da educação como uma prática social humanizadora; uma escola que se referencie no conhecimento útil à vida; e uma escola que promova o diálogo, respeite a diversidade do ser humano e cultive as relações socioafetivas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Escola. Formação Humana. Diálogo. Liberdade.

La escuela hoy – ensayo basado en Paulo Freire y Alexander Neill

RESUMEN

Este escrito, con carácter de ensayo, textualiza una discusión sobre la educación escolar. Tiene como objetivo reflexionar sobre la escuela de hoy, acreditando ideas y conceptos debatidos por Paulo Freire y Alexander Sutherland Neill como centrales para el desarrollo de la práctica educativa escolar, a saber: formación humana, diálogo y libertad. En términos metodológicos, se basa en la investigación bibliográfica. A partir de este diálogo entre los dos pensadores, vislumbramos un camino para la educación escolar que se basa en tres itinerarios complementarios: una escuela que se alimenta, perennemente, de la idea de la educación como práctica social humanizadora; una escuela que se enfoca en conocimientos útiles para la vida; y una escuela que promueva el diálogo, respete la diversidad de los seres humanos y cultive las relaciones socio-afectivas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Escuela. Formación humana. Diálogo. Libertad.

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Introduction

This text addresses the school today, mainly considering some ideas and concepts of two educators who, in the educational field, left important theoretical considerations, demonstrating them through practice,

becoming a dense and profound epistemological legacy for us to reflect on school education. The first one refers to the Pernambuco educator Paulo Freire (1921 – 1997), considered the patron of education in the country and the Brazilian educator with the greatest influence in the international context (SAUL; SILVA, 2009; MENEZES; SANTIAGO, 2014). The second corresponds to the Scottish educator Alexander Sutherland Neill (1883 – 1973), the founder of the Summerhill School, in the county of Suffolk, England, and one of the pioneers in the development of ideas about democratic management in the school environment and Libertarian Pedagogy (FORTUNATO, 2018; LUCAS, 2018; Sobreira, 2018).

Apart from the coincidences, we are in the year 2021, the year in which the centenary of Paulo Freire's birth and the first centenary of the Summerhill School are celebrated. As a consequence, we took the time to commemorate, honor and record, through writing, lessons learned from 100 years of educational experiences of great value to (re)think the school institution itself.

The present text aims to reflect on the school today, validating some ideas and concepts debated by Freire and Neill as central to thinking about school educational practice, namely: human formation, dialogue and freedom in the school space. Under this perspective, this writing is based on bibliographic research, given that it is grounded on national and international literature in the area of Education, which deals with the subject, especially in academic productions that situate, at times, the thinking of the authors previously demarcated.

When we refer to the schooling processes in Basic Education, something that is consensual in part of the educational literature is consistent with the time we experience in the course of our lives at school: they are years of experiences and construction of experiences that, many times, mark and contribute in the identity formation of the subject. Many of us immortalize memories about the experiences lived on the school floor. Memories of conversations in hallways and schoolyards; about the moments at break, in

the school lunch line, in activities in geography classes about places, spaces and landscapes, in activities in math classes with numerical operations; dialogues with the teachers who marked us; recreational experiences in student competitions... to name a few.

The school is configured as one of the main spaces of sociability and social interaction. At school, we not only apprehend, in terms of Canário (2008), the systematized knowledge produced by humanity (which is celebrated through the school curriculum to be taught), but we learn to live together collectively, to think (critically) about it. of reality and of ourselves.

Thus, the interest in reflecting on the school located at the present moment credits, mainly, our professional experience, as teachers in Basic Education and also in the training of teachers, at the undergraduate and graduate level, in Higher Education. In the years that we have been teaching in Basic Education, we have often experienced circumstances that have led us to question the social function of the school, as well as the educational practice at school. On the one hand, questions about indiscipline, school violence, illiteracy, age-grade gap, school performance and evaluation, among others, populated our years of teaching in basic education, implying several doubts about the educational practice promoted in school institutions. In the same way, the work in the classroom with an interdisciplinary approach, the interpersonal relationships with the students and the student success on the part of some students led us to reflect, in a continuous way, about the school's contributions to the social promotion and human formation of the subject.

In Higher Education, as researchers and teachers who train in undergraduate courses and *stricto sensu* graduate programs in the areas of education and teaching, we have reflected, this time, on the school as an important device for professional training for the future teacher. Guidance/coordination work in supervised internships, in teaching initiation programs (in our case, the Pedagogical Residency Program) and in carrying out extension projects have sharpened our reflections on the school dynamics and the educational actions developed by it.

All this, added to the pandemic caused by covid-19, which has been redesigning educational practice in a global dimension, led us to reflect on the school today, as well as to raise some questions: what is the school for today? In which educational practices can we refer to human development in the school environment? What school do we need to build after the pandemic period caused by covid-19? These issues were discussed and reflected in this essay. Throughout the text, we present reflective notes in order to broaden the debate in the area of education, some of them centered on the works of Paulo Freire and Alexander Neill.

Having said these introductory words, we organize the rest of the text into three more sections: at first, we will debate about the school based on the following question: what is the school for today? In the second moment, we will talk about the school considering the ideas of Paulo Freire and Alexander Neill. In the third moment, we will allude to the school, refining the discussion to the uncertainty of changes in the post-pandemic period.

After all, what is the purpose of the school at the present?

The introductory question of this section “after all, what is the school at the present?”⁵ is an issue that we believe permeates the thinking of many teachers, school principals, pedagogical coordinators, school supervisors, educational advisors, parents of students, researchers in the field of education and society in general. This is because the school, during much time of human history, occupied (and still occupies) a central place in the sense of having the task of forming the idealized subject for a given historical time and civilizing space (BUENO, 2001).

In the current social context, marked by the wide dissemination of information on the internet and its social networks (mainly), by social

⁵ A similar issue was discussed by Young (2007), however, we saw that his considerations take as a reference, mainly, the discussions raised in the scope of the sociology of education, as well as the educational reality in England. In this section, we emphasize the debate in the area of education, in a broad way.

inequalities, by ethical and political crises among representatives of state governments, by the worsening of socio-environmental and ecological issues and, especially, by the pandemic caused by covid-19 and its most perverse effects felt since the beginning of 2020, elaborating answers about the aforementioned question is not something simple.

Thus, answering this question leads us, above all, to the understanding that the school is the legitimate space to receive and educate people during a significant part of their lives. Many parents and guardians trust the school with this mission: they place the hope of success and intellectual and financial success in it for their children. Investment in school education is considered by many to be a priority, as they strive, especially in underdeveloped countries, to keep their children in the school environment for an increasingly longer time. Thus, the school is acknowledged as being the locus of reference for training and social advancement.

We understand that the school currently provides everyone, above all, with the opportunity to (child, adolescent, youth or adult) to build knowledge that, for most people, cannot be acquired in another context, such as at home, at work or in the community in which he lives (BUENO, 2001; CANÁRIO, 2006; YOUNG, 2007).

In addition, we assess that the school will shape the new generations, as it has done over time. It is in the school that the formation of citizens and, in part, their social constitution takes place in a systematic way. Validating these aspects, we declare that the school is a privileged social space for learning, for living with differences, as well as a point of reference for the production of the identity of students, teachers and everyone who composes it (BUENO, 2001; CANÁRIO, 2006; SACRISTÁN; PÉREZ GÓMES, 2007).

If the school has had different employments throughout history, depending on the context, we must consider, with Young (2007), that from the 1970s onwards, a negative view of the school spread in educational thought. Among the main ideas disseminated, the understanding that its

elementary role, in an approach associated with the capitalist system, was to teach the working class its place in social stratification stood out. In this line of reasoning, this institution would function, almost exclusively, as a reproducer of social relations of inequality with full support for the maintenance of the status quo (ALTHUSSER, 1983; YOUNG, 2007).

Henceforth, in the 1980s and 1990s, with the expansion of postmodern and poststructuralist ideas in the educational field, the school, analyzed by the thought of the French philosopher Michel Foucault, was conceived, like hospitals and prisons, as an institution of surveillance and control that disciplined students and standardized knowledge through the school curriculum (YOUNG, 2007).

We remind you that, with these statements, we are not discrediting the potential of many critical analyzes in education, especially because our position in terms of educational practice shares the ideas of educators and thinkers with a critical, modern, postmodern, structuralist, postmodern basis structuralist, marxist, etc. We consider that such ideas disregard the school as a living space, which acquires meaning from the set of relationships that are woven in their daily lives. In these terms, we understand that the school is a sociocultural construction that, based on each context, draws meanings to the countless subjects that are part of it.

In fact, a school has aspects in common with other schools, such as the structuring of the school calendar, the working shifts, the organization of the school space, the legislation that regulates the modalities and levels of education, among others, however, "each school is a singular, unique social institution with its own characteristics, the result of its history and the social relations established there" (BUENO, 2001, p. 5). It is precisely because it is unique, because it builds a history placed in time and space, that the school has also become, in many realities, a locus of individual and collective social awareness.

At the present time, at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, we think that the school, more than ever, needs to be a locus for people's critical social awareness. In defending this idea, we highlight the

importance of ensuring the teaching of the different knowledge developed by humanity, linking them to the social reality of each one, given that school education, based on Freire (2011), is a social, political and social cultural practice that only becomes effective with meaning to the subjects who practice it when it reflects on human actions, when it becomes praxis. For Freire (2011), praxis is the human action that culminates in the transformation of people, being the result of a permanent and continuous process of the action+reflection+action triad. The education that transforms is praxis.

In our understanding, the school nowadays is a social instance that differs from all others that educate the human being, such as the family and non-school educational spaces (the church, associations, the neighborhood, the condominium, among others). The school has the task, as we noted earlier, of teaching knowledge that will not be taught by another social institution. This knowledge, when dialogued with the social and contextual practice in which the subjects live, allows their levels of critical social awareness (individual and collective) to develop gradually. We point out that when we talk about the knowledge that the school has the task of teaching the subject, we talk, above all, about a knowledge that is useful and that can help to promote new ways of thinking about the world, of conceiving reality and of perceiving oneself. This knowledge is not exclusively what derives from the sciences, despite being supported by them. It refers to the knowledge that results from reflection on scientific knowledge systematized in the school curriculum in dialogue with reality, with culture, with social practice. It is knowledge that is useful for life, which is also not the result of experience alone, it is the consequence of the dialogue established between school knowledge, potentially useful for understanding reality, and the social sphere. Thus, the school is the primordial social institution to teach it.

It is also necessary to think about the educational role of teaching to learn, teaching to research and to produce knowledge from the doubts

found in their own lived experiences. The school is not – at least it should not be – the place where the knowledge that is later demanded in large-scale external assessments is transmitted, which serve to rank the schools themselves and their people.

Therefore, the school is currently exercised as an agent of training, awareness and human emancipation. Thus, we recapitulate: in which educational practices can we refer to human development in the school environment? For answering this question, we based on the ideas of Paulo Freire and Alexander Neill.

Thinking about the school as a space for human formation – notes from Paulo Freire and Alexander Neill

In the majority of the normative documents in the area of education, based on the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education, Law n° 9.394, of December 20, 1996, it is argued that the main objective of schooling processes in Basic Education is the formation of the subjects, with a view to their qualification for the job market (and for further studies) and for the exercise of citizenship, an understanding that is attributed to the knowledge and realization of the rights and duties of the citizen prescribed in the Federal Constitution of 1988. We think that this objective needs to be addressed, however, we add, based on the works of Paulo Freire and Alexander Neill, that the promotion of human formation in the school environment deserves special attention at the present time.

By human formation, based on Freire (1992), we conceive it as one that is promoted in the permanent interaction of the subject with issues of axiological, social, economic, historical, political nature, with the local culture and with the set of experiences that allow him, as a human being, to produce his story with/in the world. The ontological dimension is also interconnected with the social environment, due to our incompleteness and incompleteness in the world (FREIRE, 1980; 1992; 1996). Human formation is, in Freire's perspective, linked to humility, sensitivity, tolerance, empathy, social justice,

respect for others, the search for freedom and social transformation, reading reality and oneself; it is self-training (FREIRE, 2011). For Paulo Freire (2005), human formation is promoted when there is a possibility for the subject's humanization.

From the point of view of thinking about human formation at school, we argue that Paulo Freire (2005) defended the radical end of banking, domesticating and alienating education, a common good in the largest fraction of the history of Brazilian education. In order to to that, he guided the liberating, problematizing and dialogic education. In his view,

[...] it is necessary that [liberating] education is – in its content, in its programs and in its methods – adapted to the aim pursued: to allow man to become a subject, to build himself up as a person, to transform the world, establish reciprocal relationships with other men, create culture and history (FREIRE, 1980, p. 39).

With this conception of education, we observe that Paulo Freire (1980) conceives the school as a space for social and human relations. His work places it far beyond the four walls of the classroom. He perceives the school extended to the community, as a multicultural community space, for struggling, resistance and hope for a better and more human world.

The school, associated with a conception of liberating education in the Freirean perspective, fundamentally aims at developing human formation through the construction of the critical consciousness of the subject (individual and collective), which is capable of perceiving the threads that weave social reality and overcome the alienation in which we are often immersed. For Menezes and Santiago (2014, p. 50), based on Paulo Freire, in the school that strives for human formation, subjects “are seen as 'conscious bodies', and there is conviction in the creative power of the human being as a subject of history – a story [...] built at every moment, whose process of knowing involves intercommunication”,

involves dialogue; teaching and learning are praxis actions, which take place through the complex relationships between people in the school and not just from teacher to student.

In Paulo Freire's view, dialogue is a theoretical-practical category for schooling processes. It is through dialogic practice that the subjects are able to communicate, interact, problematize, improving their ability to think (MENEZES; SANTIAGO, 2014). In Freire (1980, p. 82),

Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, to designate it. If, by saying their words, by calling the world, men transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way through which men find their meaning as men, dialogue is, therefore, an existential necessity.

We reinforce that, through dialogue, at school we will build educational practices articulated to human formation. It is a condition for the subject to exist humanly. As a result, human beings, in general, show solidarity, reflect and act together as beings who can/want to transform and humanize. School institutions, through dialogue, reduce bureaucracy and leave the abstract and distant condition, in circumstances, of existential life. Dialogue is also a premise for democratic coexistence at school.

In the same thought, we reinforce that exercising dialogue at school implies the absence of any authoritarianism, that is, not only during the teacher and student relationship, but during the different relationships between everyone who is in the school environment (managers, teachers, education professionals in general, students, among others). Therefore, “dialogue [...] is a democratic communication, which invalidates domination and reduces obscurity, by stating the participants’ freedom to remake their culture”, in this case, a new school culture (FREIRE; SCHOR, 2013, p. 123).

However, in the face of so many limits and challenges that we find in school educational practice today, will it be possible to exercise dialogue? An example of a dialogical school, in our view, matches the

school conceived by Alexander Neill. The Scottish educator founded the Summerhill School in 1921 in Leiston, Suffolk, northwest of London, England. The Summerhill School, also called “free school”, is an institution that develops education, especially considering the wishes and aptitudes of students. In Summerhill, “nothing is forced”. Education takes place following the time and dispositions of the students. In this school, dialogue is a fundamental premise for the development of the set of actions that the school promotes.

In the context of Summerhill, the school is conceived as a community. Assemblies are developed that decide their set of rules, what is or is not allowed, the penalties for infractions, without authoritarianism. Students, teachers and other subjects that make up the school have the same weight in decisions. Everything is decided collectively. Reviewing it, an alumnus of Summerhill School testified about the assemblies:

One of the things I always appreciated about assemblies was the lack of resentment when things didn't go the way people wanted. I remember one time I filed a case against a group of teenage boys who were making noise at night in an area of the school they weren't supposed to be in. It was the culmination of a series of occasions where I was woken up in the middle of the night and argued for a substantial fine. They were against it, arguing just as vehemently. But this time the assembly was in my favor and they were fined. When the assembly ended and they filed past me, they each gave me a big hug and apologized for waking me up. No ugly faces of resentment or tension remained, either on their part or mine (APPLETON, 2018, p. 44).

The assemblies in Summerhill are seen as spaces for dialogue, they become effective as dialogical practices that lead to human formation. In these spaces, subjects exercise group thinking, collective attitude, intersubjectivity.

Alexander Neill also defended that the school needs to have freedom, self-government and happiness as basic principles. In Summerhill, students learn what interests them, what makes sense to them (NEILL, 1984; LUCAS, 2018). Neill motivated his students to pursue their desires, a path that would lead them to happiness, “understood as a fully realized life, which is independent of any achievement or financial status or power or fame” (FORTUNATO, 2018, p. 8).

Long before starting Summerhill, Neill (1984) had realized that the school, instead of equipping the subject for life in society, repressed their potential for learning about themselves, about life in the community and about the experience of being in the world. Influenced, in part, by the psychoanalysis of Freud, Ian Suttie and Willheim Reich, he sought to produce a school environment in Summerhill in which children awakened their ideals from what was good for them and motivated them to learn. He found inspiration in Homer Lane and his work in the community for the re-socialization of “misfit” children and youth, called the Little Commonwealth, in Dorset, England. He defended a school with freedom, a free school, in which everyone learns what they want, when they think it's convenient.

Based on Neill (1984), freedom in the school environment generates happiness, autonomy, the ability to relate to others, self-confidence, critical thinking, emotional balance and self-government. We emphasize that the concept of freedom demarcated in the work of Alexander Neill is not the same one constructed by Paulo Freire.

According to Neill (1984), freedom at school is doing what you want, without interfering in anyone's life. This concept differs from permission, which is, according to the author, doing what you want without considering the consequences. At Summerhill School, students are free to participate or not in

classes, to play when they feel interested, to express their emotions or cultivate them, among others, whenever they see the need, without impositions. In Freire (2011), freedom at school is associated with the educational practice that allows the subject to unveil reality and also himself, in a permanent process of training (and self-training) and awareness, via praxis.

In any case, we believe that the perspective of freedom expressed by Alexander Neill breaks in school, as in Paulo Freire, with banking education and the school curriculum plastered and transmitted to everyone, so often without meaning to life, oppressing/repressing the subject. In our view, freedom in the school environment, for the two thinkers, is a condition for human formation.

Finally, we summarize that by underlining dialogue and freedom as central dimensions for school educational practices, based on the thinking of Paulo Freire and Alexander Neill, we believe in the potential of both dimensions for the promotion of human formation in the school context.

In this perspective, we defend a school that allows everyone to be who they are and to exercise, according to their time and moment, crediting their fullness. We defend a dialogical school that leads to freedom!

The post-pandemic school – another place for teaching and learning

As higher education professors, we have noticed in recent publications in scientific journals in the educational area, in debates at academic events and in university sectors (faculties, departments, university councils, among others), as well as in the speech coming from education secretaries (state and municipal), school managers and teachers of Basic Education, the statement that school education after the pandemic caused by covid-19 will not be the same. The social discourse is emphatic: since the pandemic, we have experienced a “new normal”.

In our view, this statement is the focus of this moment in history not only because there was a sudden change in school educational practices with

the inclusion of emergency remote teaching, new educational technologies and different virtual learning environments via videoconferencing applications, or because the school system situated in a global dimension identified that the existing school before the pandemic period does not meet the current needs.

Personally we believe that the pandemic reminded the educational community, in the worst possible way, of some important teachings, already defended in the academic environment. Let's list them: with the ephemerality of life, a school that forms sensitive and human subjects for coexistence in society is better than “well-trained” subjects with countless skills for the world of work; the teacher, as a mediator, is irreplaceable in the teaching and learning processes at school; school education is a basic social right that, regardless of circumstances, needs to be guaranteed for everyone. After these notes, we ask again: what school do we need to build after the pandemic period caused by covid-19?

For answering this question, we organize some textualized reflections from three itineraries that, given the social and educational complexity and also of the school educational practice, become possible paths that envision the improvement of the school based on human formation. Again, we will validate our understandings following the thinking of Paulo Freire and Alexander Neill.

Itinerary I: a school which perennially promotes the idea of education as a humanizing social practice

This first indicator marks the understanding that the school needs to be a space for welcoming the human being, an instance that is responsible for the social function of humanely training the subject. In this direction, the post-pandemic school needs to be a school coherent with the present time that requires, above all, sensitivity and empathy, having the reference of the past (especially the pandemic caused by covid-19) and projecting an uncertain future, but possible and livable.

Freire (1992) alerts to the fact that school education has become mechanized, lukewarm and apathetic to the subject, given that it was, and still is, detached from the human condition of each person. Developing school educational practice as a humanizing social practice is imperative for the school in the post-pandemic moment. We recover what was previously expressed (FORTUNATO, 2018), based on Alexander Neill and Edgar Morin, that school education needs to detach itself from the objective of forming subjects with “heads full” of information. Instead, it should aim to form human beings with “well-made heads”.

We know that to reach this indicative many aspects need transformations. The concept of education that permeates the Brazilian educational system, including its organization and structure, as well as the educational policy and part of its normative basis, would need radical redefinitions, among them, we mention the incorporation of a concept of education that validates the human beings, their completeness. However, we believe in the power that each school has, from the education it produces in its daily life, to become a humanizing space, which generates, in Neill's (1984) terms, happiness.

Itinerary II: a school that references useful knowledge for life

In a previous section, we pointed out to the fact that the school is the social institution responsible for teaching the knowledge produced and systematized, via science, by humanity. This characteristic is indisputable, however, we think that this knowledge, when incorporated into the school curriculum, needs to become useful knowledge for life. This means that it needs to be reflected and acquire meaning together/in the life trajectory of each person who experiences it. For this reason, we alluded that the curriculum at school has a fundamental weight.

In the arena of curriculum studies, Paulo Freire is an important reference. He did not frame his work, specifically, to the scope of the

curriculum, even so, his ideas lead us to think of it, like the school, as a sociocultural and political construction situated in time and in a context. Each school builds its curriculum(s) through the set of training experiences produced in its daily life. However, Freire (2005) criticizes the way in which official bodies often design the school curriculum.

Freire (2005) points out that the official curriculum of school institutions present in the programs (National Curriculum Guidelines for Basic Education, National Common Curricular Base, among others) and documents that guide school educational practice is almost always developed and thought of vertically, from top to bottom, by official bodies, such as the Ministry of Education, the National Council of Education, the Chambers of Basic Education and Higher Education, the Secretaries of Education, among others for the author,

The standard curriculum, the transfer curriculum is a mechanical and authoritative way of thinking about how to organize a program, which implies, above all, a tremendous lack of confidence in the creativity of the students and the ability of the teachers! Because, ultimately, when certain centers of power establish what should be done in class, their authoritarian manner denies the exercise of creativity between teachers and students. The center, above all, is commanding and manipulating, from a distance, the activities of educators and students (FREIRE, 2005, p. 91).

Based on the works of Paulo Freire and Alexander Neill, we saw that it is on the school floor that learning and the formation of the subject are constituted. The curriculum is produced in everyday school life. Hence the relevance of thinking about useful knowledge for life, through curriculum(s) in which teachers and students have autonomy to develop creativity, inventiveness, self-government, love and happiness in the teaching and learning processes.

The curriculum is something that should be managed internally in schools, through dialogue. And this is very different from what is propagated around the world, about the control of education by large-scale assessments, which tend to produce practically a single curriculum for all schools, whose project was taken over by Brazil with its National Curricular Common Base, in 2017 and 2018, which unfolded into the National Teacher Training Base (BNC-Training), in 2019.

On the other hand, we have the way of teaching adults to read, which took the nickname of the “Paulo Freire method”, which started from the meaning of life, from critical thinking and collectively the words that represented something of everyday life for people, as the classic example of the "brick". From the brick as a way of life, through discussions about the exploitation of capitalist labor, other words were found in the future by decomposing into syllables and, in a few weeks, illiterate adults became literate subjects, able to make themselves more present in the course of its own history, critically.

Contrary to the standard curriculum, we have in Summerhill the biggest affront to the formal education system and its obligation to be present in the classroom as an element of control. Alexander Neill solved this in the simplest and most possible assertive way: the student who wants to attend the curricular classes, whenever he/she wants. As a result, in Summerhill there are no noisy classes, uninterested students and teachers who need to resort to entertainment to take more attractive classes.

In essence, this itinerary regarding a school that is based on useful knowledge to life is not considered something new. However, it is a way of resistance, as official curricula have progressively become more and more generalized, far from anyone's life.

Itinerary III: a school that promotes dialogue, respects human diversity and cultivates socio-affective relationships

According to Neill's (1984) thought, we defend the idea that nowadays the school needs to be conceived as a community. In other words, a locus that organizes pedagogical work and materializes school educational practice based on dialogue and respect for human diversity (or for what is different and specific in each human being). Freire (2005) encourages us to think about dialogue in school education when he reveals a substantial truth: no one educates anyone, but we educate ourselves with the world and in the world. In other words, the dialogue in school education is a break with the arbitrariness of the official curriculum and the notion already crystallized by common sense that the role of teachers is to teach grammar, mathematical operations, capitals, dates and personalities more important, mnemonics for memorizing the periodic table, etc.

In the post-pandemic period, we consider that in the school environment, the demand to support educational actions is urgent, considering the voice of everyone who is part of the school. Thus, as a social instance, we invite the school to exercise democracy and consolidate the participation of the people who are part of it in decisions that affect everyone. Based on Paulo Freire's ideas, we also reinforce, that the school is a space for political formation. Dialogue and respect for human diversity are core dimensions for the school to effect freedom as a basic principle to be experienced in the school curriculum.

In addition to the aspects outlined in the previous paragraphs, we emphasize that the cultivation of socio-affective relationships is an indication for the school to become sensitive to human formation. As we have noted, the pandemic caused by covid-19 reinforced this teaching: one of the goals of the school today is to help in the formation of sensitive and human subjects for coexistence in society.

In other words, this itinerary is also a bet to exercise a humanizing school. It is constituted as hope to make the school environment a place that exercises happiness, a special place for the (trans)formation of humanity.

But, in essence, it is a paradoxical path, because, although it is logical, coherent and meets the aspirations of a transforming education for a more humanized, happy humanity, capable of dealing with itself, it is still not inscribed in the most diverse realities of everyday school life.

We saw this paradox when Paulo Freire was the municipal secretary of education in São Paulo, having fought for a democratic school and focused on respect for the student, but, as Franco (2014, p. 114) rightly noted, “the implementation of educational policies, carried out in São Paulo, Paulo, did not occur without resistance, conflicts and tensions”. In addition, the author emphasizes that “in several subsequent administrations [...], investment was made in dismantling the construction of implemented policies [...] several aspects were modified and many even distorted in this process” (p. 118).

In the same way, Neill (1978), through a (partially) fictional text, reported how the whole confrontation with the education authorities, with peer teachers, with families that did not agree to give their children freedom to learn what they wanted as they wished... until he managed to have the strength and resources to consolidate his school, whose triad freedom-self-government-happiness celebrates its first centenary this year 2021.

The itinerary of dialogue at school, therefore, although necessary and foundational for a more lively, sensitive, organic and even useful (to life) education, still requires many confrontations so that it can be seen and lived on the school floor.

Conclusion

In this essay we had a dialogue about the school nowadays, considering, mainly, the thought of the Pernambuco educator Paulo Freire and the Scottish educator Alexander Neill. Among the main reflections pointed out throughout the writing, we recall:

The school is a social institution that, in history, received the task of forming the subject idealized by each society. It also referred to itself as a singular instance, in the sense of teaching the knowledge produced and systematized by the humanities through the school curriculum.

In general, we conclude that the school is a locus of reference for the critical awareness (individual and collective) of the subject. With the social transformations that have taken place today, especially the pandemic caused by covid-19, we also defend human formation as its social function, based on the practice of dialogue and liberating education. In our opinion, these dimensions are fundamental for the school to promote itself as a space guided by democracy, becoming for everyone a community that teaches and learns collectively.

In addition, we reinforce the school's demand to be based on knowledge useful for life, respect for human diversity, as well as cultivate socio-affective relationships. In a unique way, this generates happiness, freedom, trust, among other characteristics relevant to the human formation of the subject.

Finally, we emphasize that this essay should not be conceived as a manuscript that understands the school as a panacea that will free humanity from the set of problems that permeate social practice. Based on our professional experience in Basic Education and Higher Education, we affirm that each school is able, through daily educational practice, to develop human formation. It is in this sense that we produce the present academic enterprise. Our main intention is to contribute, nurture, communicate, problematize and sharing with educators, undergraduates, graduate students, researchers in the field of education and readers some reflections that we see as important to the school.

This work was based on our patron of education and the oldest democratic school still in operation. Both are examples of perseverance, resistance, hope and utopia in education. Without it, we are doomed to remain the same, following the official curriculum, giving lessons, controlling attendance and measuring the progress (or lack there of) of students, etc., leaving aside self-government, critical thinking, transformation, sensitivity, humanity, happiness... Our effort goes hand in hand with Paulo Freire's utopia and Summerhill's freedom. We continue to resist and educate in dialogue.

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