

ARTICLE

**FOR A DEMOCRATIC CURRICULUM AGENDA FOCUSED ON EDUCATIONAL
INNOVATION FOR BRAZIL****ROBERTO RAFAEL DIAS DA SILVA¹**ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6927-3435>

ABSTRACT: This essay briefly reviews Brazilian pedagogical studies published in the mid-twentieth century, with the aim of constructing benchmarks for a democratic curriculum agenda focused on educational innovation. It takes as contextual dimension the paradoxes of democracy, widely described by contemporary social theorizations, associated with the concern of elaborating pedagogical alternatives in a scenario of intensification of neoliberal and neoconservative policies in Brazil. We bet on the conceptual widening of educational innovation, juxtaposed to the frameworks of democratic school governance, entering the political struggle around its meanings. The promotion of opportunities for students, dialogicity as content and method, and the selection of relevant school knowledge are conceptual references, sought in the writings of Anísio Teixeira, Paulo Freire and Demerval Saviani, that will serve as a basis for the reconstruction of democratic curriculum practices in Brazil. Through heterogeneous theoretical traditions, these authors offer critical and creative possibilities for the reconstruction of the democratic school in our country.

Keywords: school, curriculum, educational innovation, democracy, Brazil.

**POR UMA AGENDA CURRICULAR DEMOCRÁTICA COM FOCO NA INOVAÇÃO EDUCATIVA PARA O
BRASIL**

RESUMO: O presente ensaio realiza uma breve revisão dos estudos pedagógicos brasileiros, publicados em meados do século XX, visando construir marcos referenciais para uma agenda curricular democrática com foco na inovação educativa. Tomam-se como dimensão contextual os paradoxos da democracia, amplamente descritos pelas teorizações sociais contemporâneas, associados à preocupação de elaborar alternativas pedagógicas em um cenário de intensificação das políticas neoliberais e neoconservadoras no Brasil. Aposta-se no alargamento conceitual da inovação educativa, justaposto aos marcos de uma governança escolar democrática, ingressando na luta política em torno de seus significados. A promoção de oportunidades aos estudantes, a dialogicidade como conteúdo e método e a seleção de conhecimentos escolares relevantes são referências conceituais, buscadas nos escritos de Anísio Teixeira, Paulo Freire e Demerval Saviani, que servirão de base para a reconstrução de práticas curriculares democráticas no Brasil. Por tradições teóricas heterogêneas, tais autores oferecem possibilidades críticas e criativas para a reconstrução da escola democrática em nosso país.

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Palavras-chave: escola, currículo, inovação educativa, democracia, Brasil.

POR UNA AGENDA CURRICULAR DEMOCRÁTICA ORIENTADO A LA INNOVACIÓN EDUCATIVA PARA BRASIL

RESÚMEN: Este ensayo realiza una breve revisión de los estudios pedagógicos brasileños, publicados a mediados del siglo XX, con el objetivo de construir puntos de referencia para una agenda curricular democrática con enfoque en la innovación educativa. Las paradojas de la democracia, ampliamente descritas por las teorías sociales contemporáneas, se toman como una dimensión contextual, asociada a la preocupación por desarrollar alternativas pedagógicas en un escenario de intensificación de las políticas neoliberales y neoconservadoras en Brasil. Nos enfocamos en la expansión conceptual de la innovación educativa yuxtapuesta a los hitos de la gobernabilidad escolar democrática, sumándonos a la lucha política en torno a sus significados. La promoción de oportunidades para los estudiantes, la dialogicidad como contenido y método y la selección de conocimientos escolares relevantes son referencias conceptuales, buscadas en los escritos de Anísio Teixeira, Paulo Freire y Demerval Saviani que servirán de base para la reconstrucción de prácticas curriculares democráticas en Brasil. Por tradiciones teóricas heterogéneas, estos autores ofrecen posibilidades críticas y creativas para la reconstrucción de la escuela democrática en nuestro país.

Palabras clave: escuela, curriculum, innovación educativa, democracia, Brasil.

INTRODUCTION

In a sense, the task before us is to reinvent a language for education—one that responds to the theoretical and practical challenges we face today (BIESTA, 2013, p. 30).

Judging by appearances, democracy is a fragile flower (GIDDENS, 2000, p. 90).

As we write this pedagogical essay, we experience paradoxical times: while we witness a growing decline of confidence in democratic states and ways of life, new pedagogical models proposing educational innovation are proliferating. This condition is paradoxical due to the fact that, historically, the promotion of innovative curricular arrangements has always been accompanied by the defense of democratic ways of life, as we saw in the renovation movements of the first half of the twentieth century. How can we think about innovative curricular practices in a context of declining confidence in democratic ways of life? Or yet: what references should we look for to compose a democratic curricular agenda that can lead us in the direction of educational innovation in Brazil at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

The educational literature, for quite some time, has signaled the difficulties of school institutions in moving in the search for organizational alternatives (FULLAN, 2002; SANCHO-GIL; HERNANDEZ, 2011; MARCELO, 2013). Whether the studies on school cultures (VIÑAO, 2000), or those around a grammar of schooling (TYACK; CUBAN, 2001), there is a consensus among researchers in the field that this institution has difficulty in breaking certain organizational models that have been built historically. In an ambivalent way, the argument around a decline of the school itself and its public function towards a society of lifelong learners is becoming stronger today (POPKEWITZ, 2009; BIESTA, 2014; BALL, 2016).

In this direction, in his recent studies, philosopher Gert Biesta (2013; 2016) has provoked us to think about a decline of the "language of education" in detriment of a "new language of learning." The educational models erected in Modernity, among which *Bildung* was one of its pillars, have been replaced by a perspective that gives centrality to learning processes. The emergence of new learning theories, postmodernism, the grammar of lifelong learning, and the erosion of the welfare state itself have contributed to the delineation of new ways of thinking about contemporary schooling. From their perspective, notions of democracy and citizenship, for example, tend to be distanced from public debates about the purposes of schooling and the possibilities for student learning in different countries.

According to Biesta (2013), the new language of learning becomes problematic because it "has facilitated a new description of the process of education in terms of an economic transaction" (p. 37). Thus, the student is a potential consumer who needs to have his or her needs met, while the teacher and the school need to offer the best commodity. Education as an economic transaction process suggests a framework "in which the only questions that can be meaningfully proposed are technical questions, that is, questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational process" (p. 41). As a result of this understanding, questions about educational content and objectives need to be revitalized and permanently brought into discussion.

On a broader scale, questions about the content and purpose of education are therefore fundamentally political questions. Leaving an answer to these questions to market forces—and we all know how manipulative markets can be in securing their own future—deprives us of the opportunity to have a democratic voice in the educational renewal of society (BIESTA, 2013, p. 43).

Moving forward in the composition of the present study, it is important to point out that the debates around the possibilities of a democratic education in Brazil have been constituted as a controversial and, increasingly, indispensable field. Within the scope of Curriculum Studies, studies such as those by Antônio Flávio Moreira (2012), Lucíola Santos (2007) and Alfredo Veiga-Neto (2002), through different strands, claimed the relevance and timeliness of revisiting the Brazilian curricular

thought from other perspectives. With Moreira (2012), the field felt challenged to reposition the articulations between school knowledge and broader culture, through its principles for curriculum policies and decisions. The search for new geometries and other forms of critical reaction to the dominant curricular thinking comes from a relevant study by Professor Veiga-Neto (2002). However, the most forceful criticism, within the framework of a democratic school, is found in Santos (2007) when he denounced the difficulties of the field of Curriculum Studies, since the late 1990s, in contributing to the effective demands of Brazilian public schools. The Brazilian researcher also argued that the referred field of studies, by expanding in its investigative focus and epistemological perspectives, had distanced itself from school issues.

We inscribe our perspective on curriculum work in this tradition, namely: that long critical tradition of pedagogies that produce resistance to inequalities and bet on the democratic potential of knowledge in public schooling (SILVA, 2019). It is important to emphasize, then, that we build our arguments based on three guiding assumptions, namely: a) the option for basic education as a privileged analytical object; b) the theoretical and methodological pluralism in the composition of the study, systematically dialoguing with the field of Curriculum Studies; c) the recognition of the demands for innovation and criticism of curricular models derived from neoliberalism. In such conditions, we defend the promotion of critical readings of the implementation process of contemporary school curricula, juxtaposed to a propositional approach of democratic curricular practices in varied contexts.

To compose the theoretical study, we take into consideration the intense proliferation of curriculum studies published in Brazil and Latin America in the last decade, prioritizing sociological studies on the issue. To this end, we will propose the construction of a democratic curriculum agenda that accepts the demands coming from movements that advocate educational innovation; however, we will make some historical digressions to seek references in Brazilian pedagogical writings published in the mid-twentieth century. Besides revisiting our critical tradition - rereading Anísio Teixeira, Paulo Freire, and Demerval Saviani, readings located in different argumentative itineraries - our commitment is to systematize some of their contributions to the Brazilian curricular thought that are still current and relevant to the reconstruction of our debates about democratic schools in our country.

REVISITING THE FIELD OF CURRICULUM STUDIES: SCHOOL KNOWLEDGE IN QUESTION

In order to produce an initial characterization of the field of Curriculum Studies, it is convenient to describe and analyze some challenges, both theoretical and epistemological. Through the well-known dialogue between Garcia and Moreira (2003), we can recognize that the knowledge produced in this field is not of a technical and generalizable nature; however, its identity has porous and undefined borders. In an important systematization, Pacheco defines that "the identity of curriculum studies is a simultaneous factor of weakening and consolidation" (2013, p. 449). Over the past decades, numerous divergences, controversies, and perspectives have been mobilized in this field, favoring that a disciplinary plurality has been busy examining the various traditions of curriculum thought.

Regarding the theoretical challenges for the field of Curriculum Studies, Pacheco (2013) points to the identity plurality of the field, associating the curriculum as a central device of educational activity. According to the author, this centrality can be justified "if curriculum is synonymous with knowledge, because it is not possible to talk about an education project without the inclusion of references related to a corpus of knowledge, values, socially and culturally recognized as valid" (p. 450). As a derivative of Educational Sciences, it encompasses issues related to teaching, learning, and knowledge. Broadly, Pinar (2007) defines Curriculum Studies as "the interdisciplinary study of the educational experience" (p. 18).

The structuring issue of curriculum thinking is linked to the social and epistemological dimensions of the knowledge to be taught in school. According to Forquin (1993), "contemporary pedagogical thinking cannot dodge a reflection on the question of culture and the cultural elements of different types of educational choices, otherwise it will fall into superficiality" (p. 10). The selection of

formative experiences of the school, then, materializes in knowledge, skills, beliefs, habits and values that will be transmitted to the younger generations (SILVA, 2016).

This means to say that education does not transmit culture, considered as a unitary and imperiously coherent symbolic heritage. We will not even say that it faithfully transmits a culture or cultures (in the sense of ethnologists and sociologists): it transmits, at most, something of the culture, elements of culture, among which there is not necessarily homogeneity, which may come from different sources, be from different times, obey heterogeneous principles of production and logics of development and do not use the same procedures of legitimation (FORQUIN, 1993, p. 15).

From this question, it is worth pointing out that when we propose to analyze the links between education, training and knowledge, we enter in one of the most emblematic issues of curricular thinking. We recognize, together with Pacheco (2014), that the valorization of knowledge is not a novelty of our century - "the knowledge society" -, but it is an intensification of pedagogical constructions erected in Modernity itself (DUSSEL; CARUSO, 2003). Moving away from a strictly philosophical perspective, it is important to ponder that the course of schooling "is the history of this operation around knowledge" (PACHECO, 2014, p. 7).

Given this condition, we could justify the relevance and timeliness of the critical examination of the policies that define what counts as knowledge in school.

Because the school increasingly defines the training paths that are taken, the issue of knowledge is central to the discussion of social, economic, cultural, and educational policies, and it is not possible for anyone to be oblivious, on the one hand, to the importance that educational organizations assume in the complex task of the production and transmission of knowledge and, on the other hand, the prominent place of the curriculum, understood, in the broad sense, as a training project, which translates the organization, selection and transformation of knowledge according to a given space, a given time and according to educational purposes (PACHECO, 2014, p. 7).

About this training project, it is important to emphasize that the definition of what counts as knowledge in school is always inscribed in the field of controversy (SACRISTÁN, 2013), since its validity derives from the historical conditions of its time. In other words, what counts as school knowledge "is a decision that is in permanent debate, and the existence of merely 'scientific' or technical solutions is not possible" (PACHECO, 2014, p. 8). Learning more or studying less, for example, are difficult measures to be scaled in the contingency of school actions.

The possibilities of education and training, through knowledge, are configured as unavoidable fields of reflection (GABRIEL; CASTRO, 2013). Hence the relevance of keeping the curriculum under permanent tension and move away from certain postures that seek to resume the "old" school order.

The idealized vision of the school as a guardian of universal knowledge fades and, in its place, emerges the school linked to social problems, in which knowledge is not a point of arrival, but a starting point. Hence, the different perspectives of curriculum organization are ways of conceptualizing arguments around the content of learning, with implications both in the organizational context and in the subjects, according to various discursive parameters between society, education and training (PACHECO, 2014, p. 8).

Along with Pacheco, once again, we can ponder that knowledge occupies a central position in the organization of the school and its curricula; however, it is important to recognize that it is derived from a choice and that such a process needs to be permanently revisited. It is also supposed that "school and formation are put into perspective as projects that go beyond mere instruction" (p. 9). Our interest, under such inspiration, requires a political critique of the selection processes of school knowledge, driven by a hopeful attitude of betting on the formative potential of this institution. In political terms, together with Santos, we could signal that "perhaps the originality in the field of curriculum lies in the production

of discourses whose meanings can offer alternatives to a daily life marked by the superficiality of propaganda and consumption" (2007, p. 306).

Within the framework of a critical and creative reading, two dimensions deserve further emphasis in this theoretical study. The first one refers to a conceptual broadening of educational innovation. For an entry prepared for a specialized dictionary, Sancho-Gil and Hernández (2011) argued that the twentieth century could be characterized as the "century of educational innovation, the century of the desire for change to improve, in principle, educational systems" (p. 476). However, in this early 21st century, Sancho-Gil diagnosed the constitution of an "innovation imperative" operating at the varied educational levels (2018, p. 15). His contribution, quite insightful and current, defends the relevance of educational innovation movements, certainly pointing out the limits of innovating for pedagogical fads or to follow guidelines of multinationals operating in the digital market.

The second dimension, with resonances for school knowledge, refers to an intensification of the relations between citizenship, democracy and learning (BIESTA, 2016). Even if citizenship and democracy are not in "perfect reciprocity" (BALIBAR, 2013), it would be prudent, according to Gert Biesta (2016), to resume the perspective that "democratic practices do offer important learning opportunities" (p. 33). The selection and organization of school knowledge, from this point of view, need to go beyond the effective production of learning outcomes (BIESTA, 2017) and be directed in the search for new models of "democratic school governance" (COLLET; TORT, 2016).

The combination of these dimensions - conceptual broadening of educational innovation and promotion of more democratic curricular practices - favors the engendering of new frontiers for the contemporary curriculum debate. Without disregarding the context that we are currently experiencing in which neoconservatism is in evidence in curriculum policies (VINAIO, 2016; LIMA; HYPOLITO, 2019), in the next section we will examine the interweaving between curriculum, human formation and democracy aiming to accept its modern challenges, so that we do not weaken the formative process related to the composition of a democratic school in Brazil.

THE QUESTION OF DEMOCRACY: ELEMENTS FOR A SOCIOLOGICAL DIAGNOSIS

Almost two decades ago, Giddens (2000), in his work "World out of control", signaled a set of paradoxes through which democracy would be or was being experienced at the beginning of the 21st century. His sociological concern was based on the assumption that the democratization of democracy had been assuming different contours in different countries and, even if it seemed otherwise, we could not guarantee that its development would be progressive and unquestionable. In his view, "a deepening of democracy is necessary because the old mechanisms of government do not work in a society in which citizens live in the same information environment as those who hold power over them" (p. 84).

The explanatory metaphor with which Giddens expresses the current situation of democracy is that it is a "fragile flower", an expression that we have attributed to it since the epigraph of this article. Such metaphor is justified by the argument that, "despite their diffusion, oppressive regimes abound, while human rights are routinely cheated in states all over the world" (GIDDENS, 2000, p. 90). In a more recent elaboration, Manuel Castells (2018) diagnosed a far more extreme scenario: "the breakdown of the relationship between rulers and ruled" (p. 7). The almost two decades that separate the mentioned works allow us to visualize not only a decline of democracy, but signs of its rupture. In Castells' words, "it is the gradual collapse of a political model of representation and governance: the liberal democracy that had consolidated itself over the last two centuries, at the cost of tears, sweat, and blood, against authoritarian states and institutional arbitrariness" (2018, p. 8).

The model of liberal democracy, in its variations, assumed both the primacy of collective institutions and individual rights and liberties. The possibility of choosing rulers constituted an important link in this relationship between the individual and the institution and, more than that, allowed the advancement in political guarantees through democracy, engendered in the very scope of its legitimacy. The rupture described by Castells is expressed in the disenchantment with public life and by a set of mutations in the social life of this beginning of the century.

The struggle for power in today's democratic societies involves media politics, the politics of scandal, and the communicative autonomy of citizens. On the one hand, the digitalization of all information and the modal interconnection of messages have created a media universe in which we are permanently immersed (CASTELLS, 2018, p. 26).

Without claiming a return to an imaginary democratic context, Castells describes how politics becomes mediated by other instruments, while at the same time declining its public trust. Beck (2018), in a posthumous work, warned of a "metamorphosis of the world," a context in which individuals and institutions transform their horizons of reference. From a methodological perspective, Beck points out that "to be able to understand this metamorphosis it is necessary not only to explore the dissolution of socio-political reality, but to focus on new beginnings, what is emerging, and future structures and norms" (2018, p. 31).

In other words, the recognition of the decline of liberal democracy needs to come along with a sensitivity about the ongoing metamorphosis in contemporary social life. Also, according to the sociologist, metamorphosis "challenges our way of being in the world, of imagining and doing politics" (2018, p. 36). In educational terms, we recognize the pertinence of searching for new concepts in this emerging reality and - with greater or lesser intensity - revisiting some of our analytical tools that have been engendered during the struggles for democratic schools.

The search for democratic curriculum policies and practices in Brazil, then, has come a long way, in which we could take as one of the starting points the Manifesto of the Pioneers of New Education in 1932. Inspired by the pedagogical progressivism that was spreading worldwide, the signers of this document sought alternatives for educational renewal and social reconstruction. They postulated a concern to combat the traditional forms of education, inherited from the Brazil Empire, and, concomitantly, propose a centrality of democracy, the scientific method, comprehensive training, access to public schooling and the fight against educational inequalities (SILVA, 2019). In general lines, facing the dilemmas of the 20th century and the construction of the Republic in Brazil, they postulated that "the new education cannot but be a categorical, intentional and systematic reaction against the old structure of the educational system, artificial and verbalist, set up for a defeated education" (MANIFESTO, 2010 [1932], p. 40). One of the fundamental references of that period is in the work "Democracy and Education", by the American philosopher John Dewey, originally published in 1916.

However, as we will highlight throughout this text, numerous other conceptual references brought specific contributions to the later Brazilian debate concerning the construction of a democratic school. Ambivalent (and often antagonistic) readings were outlining the critical curriculum perspective in Brazil: sometimes prioritizing students' experiences and subjectivities (Teixeira); at other times, prioritizing cultural knowledge and practices (Freire) and also defending knowledge as a tool for the effective democratization of schooling (Saviani). Pedagogical progressivism in Brazil, however, converges in at least three aspects, namely: a) in confronting the segregation of access to public schooling; b) in criticizing the inorganization of Brazilian school systems; c) in defending a single school for all as a condition for democratic life.

In curricular terms, it seems to us that this democratic agenda - still in embryonic state - was better developed by the mentioned authors during the 20th century. The concern with democratic ways of life accompanied the Brazilian pedagogical literature of that period and favored a greater attention to curricular issues crucial to the development of our proposition, such as the emphasis on citizenship, the consideration of popular knowledge, the concern with students' reality, the diffusion of listening mechanisms, the debates on learning and pedagogical constructivism, and the criteria for the selection of relevant school knowledge. Although referring to another context, Biesta (2017) points to the need to avoid the reductionism to which "the effective production of predefined learning outcomes" (p. 20) can lead us. Meirieu (2013), in turn, advocates that we resume pedagogical responsibility through three requirements, namely: transmitting emancipatory knowledge, sharing values, and training for the exercise of democracy. Objectively, throughout these sections, we have tried to describe the scenario of Curricular Studies (and the ways of selecting knowledge) in a historical context in which the democratic condition is put in check in different countries. We bet on a school that is able to innovate through the engendering of more democratic curricular practices, and, for this, we intend to search for conceptual traces in the

Brazilian pedagogy of the 20th century. In the next section, based on brief historical digressions, we will try to outline a democratic curricular agenda for the Brazilian school today.

CURRICULUM PRACTICES AND DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS IN BRAZIL

One of the concerns that guide the production of this essay lies in the ways in which contemporary curricular practices, when directed towards educational innovation, seem to neglect the question of the defense of democracy. From our perspective, the curricular debate at the beginning of the 21st century cannot abdicate the task of repositioning its horizons of reference, seeking to revitalize the democratic assumptions that were built in Brazilian pedagogy in the middle of the last century. The promotion of educational opportunities for students, dialogicity as content and method, and the option for relevant school knowledge will be the conceptual traits that we will seek to put under discussion in the present study. The educational innovation that is derived from this scenario concerns the mobilization of the school in the search for a "democratic school governance," as recently outlined by Jordi Collet and Antoni Tort (2016).

Before moving on to compose our analyses, it is important to signal the three assumptions that have guided our studies: 1) The search for democratic governance can constitute itself as a guiding device for the defense of relevant school knowledge in the school curriculum (COLLET; TORT, 2016). 2) A democratic school has an open formative agenda, constituting itself as an effective collaborative community (BEANE, 2017). 3) A just and democratic school, as an open formative agenda, gives centrality to movements of educational innovation, taking them as a process of "permanent intellectual agitation" (CARBONELL, 2017). Articulating such dimensions becomes important for this essay.

However, from a methodological point of view, we chose to examine these articulations between democratic school and educational innovation in Brazilian pedagogical writings of the mid-twentieth century. In their own way, Anísio Teixeira, Paulo Freire and Demerval Saviani contributed decisively to the delineation of pedagogical progressivism in Brazil and, through different paths and countless controversies, contributed to the defense of a democratic school in our country. Their counterpoints to the organizational model inherited from tradition included the defense of public schooling for all - secular, free and compulsory. From a curricular perspective, the one that accompanies our concerns, we will highlight in this study three principles for the curricular form derived from these thinkers, namely: the promotion of opportunities, dialogicity as content and method, and the option for socially relevant knowledge. It is important, here, a caveat: we recognize that these authors wrote their works based on the challenges of their time; thus, our intention is not linked to a direct transcription to explain the school of the 21st century - only an acknowledgment that their thinking still has significant heuristic potential. Next, we will examine each of these principles, taking them as vectors for democratic and innovative curricular practices at the beginning of this century.

Curricular practices and the promotion of opportunities for students

When we analyze the progressive pedagogical thought in Brazil, especially regarding curriculum issues, we find an important entry in the texts written by Anísio Teixeira, one of the main Brazilian intellectuals of the first half of the twentieth century who, under the influence of John Dewey's thought, spread throughout the country the theoretical basis for a democratic school. In a small manual on philosophy of education, whose first edition dates back to the end of the 1930s, Teixeira objectively exposes his perception of progressivism and, in light of the Manifesto of the Pioneers of New Education, reflects on school transformation. In terms of curricula, his concern was the centrality of the child, the reconstruction of school programs and the psychological organization of school subjects.

In the conditions of the Brazilian context, the progressivism spread by Teixeira established as a public task the defense of school for all. In his view, "the progressive school is the school where activities are carried out with the maximum of opportunities for such ascension" (TEIXEIRA, 1978, p. 23). The development of opportunities for individuals to progress was based on a stimulating

environment, on sequenced activities and on experiences that demanded effort. It deserves attention, in his theorizations, the position to be occupied by teachers, even recognizing the centrality of the child.

Inspired by American progressivism, Teixeira recognized the importance of the school adapting to social demands, especially those derived from the ongoing changes in the economy, politics and science. He advocated the need for a renewed school that sought to reposition itself in the face of these new civilizing challenges.

In this new order of constant change and permanent revision, two things stand out that profoundly alter the concept of the old traditional school:

- a) we need to prepare man to inquire and solve his problems for himself;
- b) we must build our school, not as a preparation for an unknown future, but for a strictly unpredictable future (TEIXEIRA, 1978, p. 30).

The overcoming of the traditional school presented itself as an imperative for the ways of life required by the beginning of the century. Science, industry and democracy - as requirements of the modern world in which Brazil aimed to enter - offered possibilities to transform the Brazilian school; this, according to the thinker, corresponded to broaden and qualify the discussions about the public purposes of schooling. According to Teixeira (1978), in a synthetic elaboration, the purpose of school would be "to help our young people, in a liberal social environment, to solve their problems, moral and human" (p. 41).

In terms of curricula, the first great contribution that Teixeira inherited from American progressivism and spread in Brazil is the conception of the child as the center of the school. Even recognizing some possible "excesses" in the use of this principle, the author states that the most important thing is to understand "the central tendency of school renewal: respect for children's individuality" (TEIXEIRA, 1978, p. 55). Valuing individual differences, prioritizing children's interests and educating through experiences - especially using methodologies in which children are active - are assumptions defended by the author and perceived as challenging traditional school (and its inability to respond to Brazilian dilemmas for the future).

An immediate corollary of a school of experience and life is for students to be active. Instead of the old school of listening, the new school of activity and work. It is not enough, however, that students are active. It is necessary that they choose their activities. We have seen the role that the student's intention, purpose and interest plays in learning. If one only learns what succeeds or satisfies what the child understands, in each case, as success, it is extremely important (TEIXEIRA, 1978, p. 48-49).

To change the Brazilian school in a way that corresponds to this new student profile, an important guideline highlighted by Anísio Teixeira refers to school programs. The reconstruction of the programs - taking the experiences as the structuring axis - would promote a closer relationship between school and life. Inspired by Dewey's writings, Teixeira argued that "school should be an integrated part of life itself, linking its experiences to the experiences outside school" (p. 59). Distancing himself from the curricula formalized in books and transmitted to students, the concern is located in focusing on "learning".

The school program that would be derived from these guidelines, according to Teixeira, would consist of "a series of experiences and activities in which the child will engage at school" (p. 62). The curriculum, then, would be a set of educational activities in which children would have the opportunity to progress, the contents being drawn from the experiences accumulated by humanity and selected by the child based on his or her interests.

The constituent unit of the school program is the activity accepted and planned by the student. The activities must be such that they lead the students to learn the knowledge, habits and attitudes that are indispensable to solve problems in their own lives. The role of the teacher is to awaken the problems, make them felt or conscious, give them an organized sequence and provide the necessary means for the students to solve them, according to the best method and knowledge (TEIXEIRA, 1978, p. 65).

Finally, after defending the centrality of the child and the necessary reconstruction of school programs, Teixeira proposes that the school subjects receive a psychological organization. In curricular terms, considering his reading of American progressivism for the Brazilian context, his concern was that such subjects be centered on experiences (not on results) and "focus [on] inquiry, reflection, study, in the development of a given activity" (p. 68). It follows from this point that he advocated that the school curriculum be organized in "work units" (or projects), capable of mobilizing the children's desire to learn.

To this end, Teixeira advocated a psychological organization of the knowledge to be taught, distancing himself from the "logical" models that predominated in the traditional school.

School subjects will then pass from their place of honor to that of simple servants to the growth of children, contributing to it when called upon. The logical organization will give way to personal psychological organizations of the knowledge acquired. Besides this school work, the teacher encourages extra-class activities. Give students freedom to organize their social and recreational life. Encourage them in this exercise of autonomy and responsibility (TEIXEIRA, 1978, p. 83).

Anísio Teixeira's conceptual elaborations contributed to our ability to carry out curriculum practices focused on the development of children and adolescents' capabilities. His understandings of the role of science and democracy, derived from Deweyan pragmatism, were widely disseminated in Brazil, contributing to a political critique of the bookish school that we had inherited from the imperial period. Added to this, from his Brazilian experience, is the concern with inequalities and with confronting the understanding of education as a privilege. To focus on the learner and on his or her capacity for action becomes fundamental.

Curricular practices and dialogicity as content and method

Since we have tried to describe the emergence of pedagogical progressivism in Brazil, particularly by tracing its curricular perspectives, we will direct our reflection to the 1960s, through the recognized writings of Paulo Freire. In the work "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" we can find significant curricular assumptions that had an indelible contribution in the construction of a progressive school in Brazil, in the second half of the last century. In this section, we will try to highlight some conceptual traits of Freire's thought.

In epistemological terms, Freire justifies his pedagogy of the oppressed on the basis of the possibilities of radicalization, distancing himself from what he calls an "attitude of sectarianization". In his view, committed to the progressive debates taking place in Latin America, it was necessary to reconstruct critical thinking in the direction of liberation.

The fact is that sectarianization is always castrating, because of the fanaticism it feeds on. Radicalization, on the contrary, is always creative, because of the criticality that feeds it. While sectarianization is mythical, therefore alienating, radicalization is critical, therefore liberating. Liberating because, implying the rooting of men in the option they have made, it engages them more and more in the effort to transform the concrete, objective reality (FREIRE, 1987, p. 25).

The option for criticality that the revolutionary attitude provided him was juxtaposed, within Freirean thought, to the need to bet on humanization. The anthropological hypothesis that we are inconclusive beings led him to think about the human condition in terms of the relationship between humanization and dehumanization, involving the overcoming of the contradiction between oppressors and oppressed. Under this scenario, Freire will argue that "struggling for the restoration of their humanity will be, whether men or peoples, attempting the restoration of true generosity" (p. 31). The aforementioned struggle, in search of overcoming the unjust social order, is placed on the horizon of a humanistic and critical pedagogy that is derived from Freirean writings.

In pedagogical terms, the first wager outlined in the work referred to freedom. To this end, in the context of the relationship between oppressors and oppressed, his criticism was initially found in

prescription. Every prescription, in his words, "is the imposition of the option of one consciousness on another. Hence the alienating sense of the prescriptions that transform the receiving consciousness into what we have been calling the 'host' consciousness of the oppressing consciousness" (FREIRE, 1987, p. 34). The overcoming of the prescription, in an objective way, would expand the possibilities for the oppressed to conquer freedom.

At this point, we come across some premises of Freire's thought that have significant curricular derivations. The first premise that we will highlight refers to the need for critical insertion of the oppressed in the reality of the oppressors and, consequently, their possibilities of transforming action. In the pedagogical vocabulary outlined by Freire, "praxis" is the concept that articulates the dimensions of reflection and action.

In this way, this overcoming requires the critical insertion of the oppressed into the oppressing reality, with which, by objectifying it, they simultaneously act upon it. For this reason, critical insertion and action are already the same thing. This is also why the mere recognition of a reality that does not lead to this critical insertion (action already) does not lead to any objective transformation of reality, precisely because it is not true recognition (FREIRE, 1987, p. 38).

Derived from the notion of praxis, the second premise we chose to take up is the political dimension of the pedagogy of the oppressed. The Brazilian thinker explains that the pedagogies and the ways of organizing schools have historically been based on "content narration". By distancing themselves from the life contexts of the oppressed, such school practices "tend to petrify or become something almost dead, whether values or concrete dimensions of reality" (p. 57). The narration of content serves as the basis for the well-known metaphor - "banking education". In this critique, a reaction to "narration" as the central instrument of the classroom, associated with mechanical or passive memorization by students, is consolidated.

In terms of curricula, Freire seeks to overcome the banking conception of education and the ways of organizing knowledge derived from it.

In the banking view of education, knowledge is a gift from those who think they are wise to those who think they know nothing. This donation is based on one of the instrumental manifestations of the ideology of oppression - the absolutization of ignorance, which constitutes what we call the alienation of ignorance, according to which ignorance is always found in the other. The educator, who alienates ignorance, holds fixed, invariable positions. He will always be the one who knows, while the students will always be the ones who don't know. The rigidity of these positions denies education and knowledge as processes of search (FREIRE, 1987, p. 58).

The criticism of the act of depositing, as a metaphor to explain the schooling practices, is accompanied by a set of propositions and possible alternatives towards a problematizing education. At this point, we can announce the third premise of Freirean thought for the Brazilian curriculum in the 20th century, namely: dialogicity as a principle and as a method for a renewed school. With other formative intentions, problematizing education rebuilds itself in the praxis, in the criticism of the transmissive models and connects itself to the cultures lived by the students and to the symbolic universe of their experiences.

Problem-oriented education, according to Freire, emphasizes that dialogue begins in the very search for the knowledge to be taught. Dialog, in this sense, takes as a starting point the mapping of the generating themes that will be studied collectively and is directed towards a political criticism that allows the unveiling of alternatives for transformation.

The important thing, from the point of view of a liberating education, and not a "banking" one, is that, in any case, men feel they are the subjects of their thinking, discussing their thinking, their own vision of the world, manifested implicitly or explicitly in their suggestions and in those of their companions. It is because this vision of education starts from the conviction that it cannot even present its program, but must seek it dialogically with the people, that it is inscribed as an introduction to the pedagogy of the oppressed, in whose elaboration he must participate (FREIRE, 1987, p. 120).

There are countless curricular perspectives that could be derived from Freirean thought. We chose to address the issue of dialogicity, recognizing its pedagogical potential to think about the democratic conditions for an educational innovation. A renewed school, in Freire's view, would be based on its capacity to break the dichotomous relations between subjects and objects, educators and students, and between school and life. Such curricular practices would be culturally referenced and would distance themselves from narrative approaches to knowledge - such a principle, in our view, would expand the possibilities for educational innovation driven by an open and democratic agenda.

Curricular practices and the option for socially relevant knowledge

Another strand of the pedagogical progressivism engendered in Brazil in the late 1970s produced a re-reading of critical thinking, especially the political writings of Antonio Gramsci. This perspective is in line with the previous ones through its position in favor of democracy; however, when rethinking the relations between education and society, it redefines the problem in favor of historically developed knowledge and its guarantee for the poor population. In his book "School and Democracy", one of the founding texts of this tradition (of these principles), Demerval Saviani (2009 [1983]) compiles some of the main pedagogical (and curricular) assumptions of this tradition, which we will amplify from now on.

His starting point, in dialogue with the Latin American sociology of the second half of the 20th century, is found in the debate about the "problem of marginality". Considering the large layers of the population that remained marginalized, Saviani advocated the need to think about education as "an instrument to correct these distortions" (2009, p. 4). The Brazilian author revisits the predominant pedagogical currents in Brazil - from the new school movement to the technicians - to outline new perspectives for a critical theory of education. In an exercise of synthesis, he formulates the following question, which serves as a general orientation for this perspective: "is it possible to have a theory of education that critically captures the school as an instrument capable of contributing to overcoming the problem of marginality?" (SAVIANI, 2009, p. 28).

The critical theorization that arises from this concern distances itself from the reproductive approaches, very much in vogue in the 1980s. Saviani reiterates the political potentiality of fighting against the selectivity present in the education of the popular classes.

To fight against marginality through school means engaging in the effort to guarantee workers the best quality education possible under the current historical conditions. The role of a critical theory of education is to give concrete substance to this banner of struggle in order to prevent it from being appropriated and articulated with the dominant interests (SAVIANI, 2009, p. 29).

Under such banner, still in the work "School and Democracy", the Brazilian researcher aims to distance himself from the models centered on the notion of compensatory education. In his view, such school form, in Latin America, "configures an uncritical response to educational difficulties highlighted by critical-reproductive theories" (SAVIANI, 2009, p. 30). The search for a democratic school, under this argument, would go beyond the logic of mere compensation, since its intentionality was the improvement of education offered to poor people. This improvement, according to Saviani, was materialized in the "priority to the contents" (p. 50).

To guarantee democratic practices, knowledge occupied a central place in the curriculum. According to the author's exposition, "the contents are fundamental and without relevant contents, meaningful contents, learning ceases to exist, it becomes a sketch, it becomes a farce" (SAVIANI, 2009, p. 50). More than that, the struggle for democratization of access to content is configured as a central issue in this critical approach.

Therefore, it seems fundamental to me that we understand this and that, inside the school, we act according to this maxim: the priority of contents, which is the only way to fight against the

farce of teaching. Why are these contents a priority? Precisely because the mastery of culture is an indispensable tool for political participation of the masses (SAVIANI, 2009, p. 50).

The link between the mastery of certain knowledge and the conditions for the exercise of citizenship is configured as central in this theoretical perspective. The curricular practices derived from these assumptions propose to face inequalities in access to universal knowledge, recognizing that "the importance of the transmission of knowledge, of cultural contents, a distinctive mark of the pedagogy of essence, does not lose its revolutionary character" (SAVIANI, 2009, p. 58). Beyond the dissemination of innovative methods or the cultural valorization of students, under this approach, critical pedagogy cannot abdicate the provision of intellectual tools for the understanding and transformation of the present.

This perspective also argues that the political importance of education lies in its function of socializing knowledge. Through a Gramscian inspiration, education becomes political when it promotes equality in access to certain knowledge and, in curricular terms, reinvests knowledge with democratic meanings.

For this, revolutionary pedagogy, far from making knowledge secondary by neglecting its transmission, considers the dissemination of contents, alive and updated, one of the primary tasks of the educational process in general and of the school in particular (SAVIANI, 2009, p. 59).

With Saviani's writings, we can observe the emergence of a democratic school that is concerned with access to relevant school knowledge. The critical education that is established, according to this approach, accepts the diffusion of new methods or the primacy of students' cultural references; however, he adds that without the proper intellectual tools coming from specialized knowledge, popular communities will continue in a position of subalternity. Curricular practices inspired by this tradition reconstruct educational innovation with social and political meanings aimed at the socialization of knowledge.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout this study, we have tried to map the ways in which the works of Anísio Teixeira, Paulo Freire and Demerval Saviani (still) present heuristic potential not only to interpret the contemporary school, but also to contribute to the construction of a democratic curriculum agenda focused on educational innovation. In curricular terms, the approach constructed in this essay gives centrality to a conceptual broadening of educational innovation juxtaposed to the frameworks of democratic school governance. When focusing on the issue of innovation, according to Carbonell (2017), it is important to consider that it moves between processes of institutional improvement and transformation. In his approach, it implies recognizing that we need to change the school -with different degrees of radicality-, dimensions such as "the contents of the curriculum, the ways of teaching and learning, and the participation of the different actors of the educational community" (p. 77).

Associated with this, from a curricular perspective, is our concern with the agency of different forms of "democratic school governance" (COLLET; TORT, 2016). By "repoliticizing education," the conceptual debate proposed by Spanish researchers broadens our tools for questioning, reflecting on, and practicing an education that opposes the neoliberal and neoconservative models that are predominant today (BALL, 2016; VIÑAO, 2016). At the same time, again drawing on Biesta (2017), it can allow us to denaturalize learning and reinscribe it into a political territory. The promotion of opportunities, dialogicity as content and method, and the selection of relevant knowledge, practices that we inherited from Brazilian pedagogy of the 20th century, present themselves as possible alternatives to defend another "fragile flower" - the democratic school!

* The translation of this article into English was funded by the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de Minas Gerais – FAPEMIG – through the program of supporting the publication of institutional scientific journals.

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Submitted: 02/10/2020

Approved: 05/01/2021