

The emancipation debates on education and curriculum: perspectives and meanings

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Abstract

This article presents the results of an investigation - an exploratory study - on the emancipation concept in the field domain of curriculum theories over the theoretical debates and practices of Portuguese educators. Based on a thorough literature search and on the view of some professors from the University of Minho and Porto, we sought to understand how to scale the concept of emancipation both at the theoretical level and in curriculum practices the well, that they develop in the educational institutions. Assuming that, in addition to the theoretical component, their students embodied by the experienced, we tried to question whether educational institutions are organized or not only to facilitate (consultancy), working with labor reflection, critical thinking and autonomy of students, resulting formative processes grounded on an effective their students of emancipation.

In methodological terms, the methods and theoretical research were conducted by using semi-structured interviews with educators in order to as certain how their productions offer the prospect theory, how they animate the debates the critical education and shape their practices. The results allowed us to understand that empowerment is a structural element of the critical theory, both in the discussions of the educational field and the curriculum the well, which interferes on the way they organize curriculum practices. We intend to understand how teachers work the concept of emancipation and how they do it. In this sense, while synonym of critical education, reflexive and transformative education - mediated or not by the curriculum - the emancipation has been understood and viewed the possibility to substantiate swagger and add changes in the individuals and, is consequence, in the education and society itself.

Keywords: Curriculum; Education; Emancipation.

Introduction

This text aims to present some results of an exploratory study on the concept of emancipation, performed in two Portuguese universities in the year 2012. Starting From a brief theoretical foundation on the concept, we seek to understand how it is that the teachers have seized this concept and the use in their curricular practices everyday.

The concept of emancipation began to integrate the educational debate and to influence curricular practices in Latin America, in the United States and Europe in the late 1970s. Being a structuring element of the theorising critical, this concept has been recurrently used in scientific productions, in the pedagogical proposals, in official documents, in the curricula prescribed, in speeches and in the practices of educators, projecting, in most cases, the possibility of substantiate changes in individuals and, consequently, in education and in society itself.

The text is organized into three main segments. The first in which we have the origins of emancipation in concept of Kant, in the foundations of Critical Theory and in Marxist theorising, and seek to clarify the senses and meanings that were appropriated by debate in curricular field. We are interested in, especially, understand how if expressed the category emancipation and the linkage between the curriculum and the emancipative practices. The second, in which we have carried out the analysis of semi-structured interviews that we conducted to some educators, seeking to explain how Portuguese stalwartly their theoretical productions, such as animate the discussions of scope critical in



education and how to configure their curricular practices. Or whether, as the teachers work the concept of emancipation and in what manner. The third, in which we will center our attention on the senses and meanings of emancipation in contemporary debates.

It is important to clarify that, by the limits of exposure to which this Article is subject, the thematic analysis is not limited in this reflection. Just want to contribute so humble for a debate that is still alive and well in the educational setting.

1. The concept of Emancipation in debates educational and curricular

1.1. The emancipation in Critical Theory in the School of Frankfurt, in Kant and Marx

The Frankfurt School is a title coming from the Marxist researchers from the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, founded in Germany in 1923. The intellectuals of the Frankfurt School have developed a tradition known as Critical Theory, directing their criticisms for contemporary society. Through the concepts of *industrial cultural*, *clarification*, *semi formation* and *semi culture*, dealt a sharply criticizes the processes of reification, fetishization and oppression to which men are subjugated due to capitalist social structures. Having interest in this reflection, in highlighting the genesis of emancipation in Critical Theory and the perspective in which this category is discussed by theorists Frankfurtian theories, it should be noted that the root cause of this category is developed from the concept of "*Aufklärung*" presented and discussed by Kant in 1783. But, which means "Clarification" in Illuminationist Kantian meaning?

The concept of Enlightenment, as it is presented by Kant (1784, p. 01), is defined as "the inability to serve in your own understanding without the tutelage of another", being, while emancipation process of subjectivity, obtained through the overcoming of ignorance and laziness, the indulgence that characterizes the condition of subordination of the subjects. The subordination is a condition each individuals own and consists in the absence of decision and courage to use your

Own understanding without being sustained. An important aspect is that access to the clarification cannot be only a revolutionary scenario, since it is a slow process of individual scope and history. This is very important to understand the emancipation dimension of Enlightenment in Kant. In these terms, the emancipation translates the overcoming of the condition of lower per track for a *reason enlightened*, that is, a new way of thinking and reflect, autonomous, the margin of the tutors. The condition of being emancipated not directly depends on the social conditions of production objective of life. Although they can limit it, never constitute an obstacle to Enlightenment.

In the *Frankfurtian theories*, the concept of Enlightenment appears associated with the idea of men overcome their condition of nature and expressed the level of broader progress of thought, whose goal, second Adorno and Horkheimer (1985, p. 17), "dissolve the myths and replace the imagination by knowing". Assume that the reason Enlightenment model, developed by bourgeois, had two dimensions: the emancipation and the instrumental. The criticism of the Enlightenment did touch on the double character that this manifests itself in bourgeois society: the emancipation and domination. The men released by Clarification, that is, emancipated from the condition of nature, produce, by means of social structures, conditions of regression: the domination of man by man himself. Separate from the context of the Modern Age, in which Kant posed the question of Clarification as the exercise of reason alone, limited to individual dimension, the Critical Theory, in contemporary society, proposes the connection of reason to social practice, as an instrument to fight against the dominant trend and oppressive of industrial society, and the forms of production and maintenance of instrumental rationality, through an emancipation policy. It is this linkage that resides the educational potential, and formation of critical pedagogy. For Adorno, "the social theory is in reality a formative approach, and the reflection educational constitutes a focus political-social. A political education" (Maar, 2010, p. 15).

Adorno (2010) when asking? "For where education should lead?", believes that education is not related with the idea of shaping subjects from ideal models. On the contrary, consists in the development of a conscience true, revealing this aspect a political demand for education. The political dimension becomes a dimension inherent in the educational process, because through the training it is possible to bring the men to develop a reason enlightened, autonomous, critical, that is, a true conscience. The emancipation, second Adornment, embodies a dialectical relationship that should articulate both the thinking of men as the educational practice.

Unlike the Kantian perspective and Critical Theory, the emancipation in Marx is beyond the limits of reason and presupposes the overcoming of the mode of production and of labor relations that are at the basis of sociability



governed by capital. The work, to Marx, must be organized within the logic of free work and associated with, a condition that requires the "domain conscious and collective of producers on the whole process of production, distribution and consumption" (Tonet, 2005, p. 138), resulting in the satisfaction of needs essentially human - the Kingdom of Freedom - and not the exploitation of man and the reproduction of capital. For Marx (1974, p. 942), the freedom "can only consist in that the man social, associated producers, govern rationally this your interchange material with nature, put you under your common control ... and perform with the smallest possible expenditure of forces and conditions more appropriate and more worthy of his human nature". In this sense, the real emancipation presupposes the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, that is, requires a radical change of the current social form. For this reason, the emancipation in Marxian perspective has a revolutionary character. And this radical transformation requires the development of a political consciousness and revolutionary, an ideology - subjective conditions - articulated with objective conditions, to generate effective possibilities of transformation of reality.

1.2. The emancipation in curricular field: the Curricular Theories Critical

The theorising curriculum criticism has its genesis in political and social movements that broke out in Europe, in the United States and Latin America from the mid 1950s. Such movements have produced changes in the trends of social reproduction that prevailed at the time. As a result, the curriculum field, as a mediator of educational processes, was influenced by both existing conflicts on social circumstances of years 1960, as by astute theorizing in the area of humanities and social sciences, produced in contradistinction to the *status quo needs*. In accordance with the perspective presented, emerged in curricular field a debate around what became known as "curriculum theory criticism", influenced jointly by critical marxists (and neomarxistas) the theories of Reproduction, of Correspondence and Resistance, as well as by contributions of the New Sociology of Education and the movement of reconceptualizacao.

However, what defines the curriculum theory criticism? What are the objectives that underlie it? In a general way, in the curriculum, the curriculum theories critical embrace the trends who questioned the predominance of traditional concepts in education and, in particular, within the school curriculum, unveiling the economic, political and ideological that permeated the explicit curriculum and the hidden curriculum (Jackson, 2009), as well as the relations of determination and power that underlie the intentions, to content and curricular practices. The curriculum theory refutes the critical processes of social reproduction, economic and cultural dominant, which contribute to reproduction and perpetuation of social inequality through education, whether by ideological character of the dominant culture present in curriculum content, whether by the practices and policies that favor the maintenance of hegemonic culture. In this context, we can highlight the work developed by the authors, such as Michael Apple - through its critical neo Marxist to the curriculum - and Henry Giroux - with emphasis to the curriculum as cultural policy and the radical pedagogy, in addition to contributions of Paulo Freire in the educational field in Brazil and the sociologists of the New Sociology of Education - Basil Bernstein and Michael Young.

In the opinion of Silva (2011, p. 17), the categories that structure the curriculum theorising critical are: "ideology, cultural reproduction and social power, social class, capitalism, social relations of production, awareness, emancipation and liberation, hidden curriculum, resistance". In this text we will center our attention on the concept of emancipation and its importance as a structuring element Curriculum Theory Criticism, since it makes explicit the position taken from authors whose criticisms are directed to the problems and contradictions posed by historical and political context of the capital and express propositions of struggle and of opposition to the current order, particularly in cases of (re)production of knowledge and the curriculum.

2. The prospect of emancipation in the speech of educators Portuguese

In relation to the origin and its meanings of emancipation, the educators Portuguese interviewees identify the theoretical roots of this concept in the production of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, mainly with regard to the contributions present in the work "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", text in which the author makes a critical reflection about the design of that means by "banking education", a metaphor that compares the school education to banking processes and according to which the knowledge is deposited in students - so passive and uncritical - by educators. Even in relation to the origins of emancipation, refer, also, to his connection with critical perspectives, such as the author Jürgen Habermas in his "Theory of Communicative Action" and in "Curriculum Theory Criticism".

In a general way, are not explained in the speeches of educators respondents were not a deepening, nor an accentuated concern with the bases theoretical-philosophical (ontological) concept of emancipation. The emphasis



focuses on its dimension gnosiologica, that is, as this concept is expressed, objectively, in educational praxis and in broader social contexts. In this regard, the emancipation is related, in the individual, with competence or suitability for the autonomy or self-consciousness, freedom, conscience critical and reflexive, mediated by ethical ideals and democratic. In the social field, the emancipation is identified as project collective and progressive, opposition to regulation (counter-hegemonic) and for social transformation. In short, from the perspective of educators who were interviewed, the concept of emancipation is more of educational side, a time that, in addition to assume the development of certain skills by students, such a condition should extrapolate and mediate their intervention actions in a broader social context, explaining, as well, his political character.

From among the different didactic-methodological proposals for actions in a perspective of emancipation, we can highlight the following points: a) It is necessary to take into account the trilogy "knowledge, power and wanting to", that is, to have knowledge about where you want to go, be aware of the objective conditions that enable the realization of a given task upon the power of agency and decision on the part of educators and students, and finally, whether the educators and students want a curriculum from the perspective of emancipation (want); b) It is necessary that the teachers and the students have a critical knowledge about the curriculum content, situating them so active and conscious in relation to the social, political and economic to which they belong to that, this way, To be able to perceive what is the emancipation and decide whether or not they should fight for their achievement; (c) The two points presented previously are articulated with the following settings practices in educational institution: negotiation of training curriculum, promotion of a participatory pedagogy, clash of visions and practices of education, pedagogical experimentation and critical reflection on the practice, valuation of ethical and political dimensions of vocational training and education, the development of a pedagogy of experience - promoting processes of theorization of experience and authentication of theories with a purpose manufacturing -, concern with the critical spirit, with the capacity of argument and reasoning, development of cognitive reasoning (and moral) and learning of content of critical And emancipatory.

However, even that the educators and students at locales the didactic-methodological proposals previously submitted, the necessary conditions for an effective emancipation depend on a set of processes and social, political and economic structures that establish the guidelines and educational curricula, as well as determinations in practice and of social reproduction that is extrapolated for the bosom of educational institutions . This perspective is evident in the speech of teachers interviewed, when questioned about the limits and possibilities of emancipation in current educational scene. Among the limits reported, we can highlight the historical factors, structural and policy, such as the perpetuation of breeding traditions in education, anti-democratic values in organizational management, the implementation of *top-down reforms* and universal curricula, as well as a teacher training founded on a conception of technical education. Another important aspect highlighted by some interviewees refers to the limits of their own emancipation, especially when it is hipervalorizada in individual terms and not as collective project. To deal with the emancipation as an individual project, it runs the risk of this concept be appropriate by the ideology of powers, resulting in the development and imposition of new meritocracias, that meet even more to the interests of neo-liberal policies.

As regards the possibilities of realization of emancipation, the interviewees indicated the existence of positive experiences of emancipative collective projects, such as, for example, the Movement of those Without Land in Brazil, at the School of the Bridge and the Rural Schools in Portugal, founded on democratic ideals, critics and counter-hegemonic, seeking to rebuild relations edited by social logic of capital, such as the linkage between living, learning and working. Another example mentioned lies in the proposal of the External Evaluation of Schools in Portugal that, in spite of presenting contradictory aspects in its dynamic, has a potential emancipative that grows as it streamlines the discussion as a result of the intervention of external evaluators.

In This way, the educators interviewed recognize that conditions exist for an emancipatory education in nature. Moreover, the interviewees believe that at this moment the emancipation became indispensable, in order to counteract the growing expansion of economic and instrumental rationalities that characterize the political and economic context of our society, inspiring practice counter-hegemonic. However, it is recognized that, in spite of the immense difficulties to realize an emancipatory education, it should enhance the practices of progressive nature and resistance that is foreseen in educational context. But, for which these opportunities can be potentiated is necessary, as they explain the educators interviewed, recognize the school as a place of decision curriculum and the teachers and students as agents product configurators of curriculum, establishing a curriculum in *counterflow* , or *against-curriculum* , organized from the dilution of the elements that constitute an obstacle to the emancipation. In addition, it is important to understand that the educational institutions, by their very nature, do not have conditions to give answers to all the problems that have to respond. In this regard, it is necessary to place new issues and investigate



what can be done on the basis of cognitive and relational work that characterizes the democratic potential and a posture of emancipatory education.

3. Perspectives of Emancipation: senses and meanings.

After performing this analysis on the concept of emancipation, retracing their theoretical roots in Kant, in the tradition of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, and briefly, in Marx, we realized that the meaning of emancipation if scales in different perspectives, resulting in its ownership by theoretical debates and by teaching practices and curriculum with various meanings.

We Contacted who, in kant, the emancipation is understood as a condition of full age, of enlightenment and of autonomy, attribute that restricts the reason, and his private use or public, not being related to any collective social project. The ownership of this perspective by Frankfurt School is not restricted solely to the limits imposed by reason. For the tradition of Critical Theory, the emancipation has an important role in social practice: contribute to the clarification of the social conditions that produce the barbarity. However, unlike the marxist perspective, which argues that the emancipation presupposes a full freedom of individuals, through suppression in capitalist society of social classes, for the tradition of Critical Theory, the emancipation does not have this revolutionary character, much less constitutes an ideal to atimgir, because the contradictions are treated within the capitalist society. In the area of education, the concept of emancipation was influenced by Marxist perspective, expressing themselves through progressive pedagogical trends. This concept also influenced the debate within the Curriculum Theory Criticism, presenting the criticism the same determinations, that is, the influence of trends in reproduction of the *status quo in* curricular policies.

The process of research that we have developed has allowed, even, that the theoretical debates in the curriculum, both in the context of curricular theories criticism regarding the perspective of educators interviewed, have a focus on the meaning of emancipation, both at the individual level, by seeking to develop subject informed, critical, reflective, conscious, autonomous and free, either at community level, in that the emancipation is seen as a condition of education critical, reflexive and progressive, articulated with the interests of social transformation, production of democracy and citizenship, in the sense of counter-hegemonic struggle in a broader social context. It should be noted that the issues are not spelled out, or better, was not considered the emancipation in a revolutionary perspective.

The teachers interviewed, despite recognizing the limitations and difficulties for the development of an emancipatory education, try to resist the impositions of contradictions of economic dynamism and social, which form cescente, establish new requirements for educational institutions, and the curricula prescribed, producing knowledge and pedagogical practices that oppose the settings and dictates of capitalist logic. In this regard, the interviews reveal that the dominant perspective of emancipation in discourse and practice of educators Portuguese explicit an approximation to Critical Theory and the Clarification Kants, also featuring some elements present in Marxist perspective of emancipation, especially with regard to the overcoming of political contradictions, social and economic that prevail in society.

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