

A EXPERIÊNCIA DA INFÂNCIA ENTRE OS DILEMAS DA EDUCAÇÃO MODERNA E O EMPOBRECIMENTO DO TRABALHO DOCENTE

LA EXPERIENCIA DE LA INFANCIA ENTRE LOS DILEMAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN MODERNA Y EL EMPOBRECIMIENTO DEL TRABAJO DOCENTE

EXPERIENCE OF CHILDHOOD BETWEEN MODERN EDUCATION DILEMMAS AND THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE TEACHER WORK

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RESUMO: Este texto busca refletir os dilemas da educação moderna, da experiência da infância e o empobrecimento do trabalho docente à luz de Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Jean-François Lyotard, Giorgio Agamben, Fernando Barcena e Michel Foucault, entre outros. O texto se justifica uma vez que o mundo moderno transformou-se em mera atividade repetidora, incapaz de traduzir-se em experiências narráveis. O desafio é o de restituir a possibilidade da experiência reflexiva entre os saberes e práticas educacionais, a fim de contribuir para uma ação do pensar que provenha da experiência da infância e que provoque uma atitude crítica para discutir as consequências do processo de empobrecimento do trabalho docente no contexto vigente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação. Trabalho docente. Experiência da infância. Modernidade.

RESUMEN: *El texto busca reflexionar sobre los dilemas de la educación moderna, de la experiencia de la infancia y el empobrecimiento del trabajo docente a la luz de Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Jean-François Lyotard, Giorgio Agamben, Fernando Barcena y Michel Foucault, entre otros. El texto se justifica puesto que el mundo moderno se convirtió en una simple actividad repetidora, incapaz de traducirse en experiencias narrables. El reto es restituir a la posibilidad de la experiencia reflexiva entre los saberes y prácticas educacionales, con el fin de contribuir para una acción del pensar que venga de la experiencia de la infancia y que provoque una actitud crítica para discutir las consecuencias del proceso de empobrecimiento del trabajo docente en el contexto vigente.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Educación. Trabajo docente. Experiencia de la infancia. Modernidad.*

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ABSTRACT: *This text seeks to reflect the dilemmas of modern education, the experience of childhood and the impoverishment of teacher work in the light of Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Jean-François Lyotard; Giorgio Agamben, Fernando Barcena and Michel Foucault, among others. The text is justified since the modern world has turned into mere repeating activity, unable to translate into tellable experiences. The challenge is to restore the possibility of reflective experience between knowledge and educational practices, in order to contribute to a thinking action that comes from childhood experience and provokes a critical attitude to discuss the consequences of the process of impoverishment of teacher work in the current context.*

KEYWORDS: *Education. Teacher work. Experience of childhood. Modernity.*

Introduction

The paths that can be taken to talk about the relationship between the expropriation of the formative experience and its simplification in modernity are the most diverse and also complex. We chose to go for the one that somehow has more proximity, make us more secure and fascinate us: childhood and teacher training. A fascination that is accompanied by a concern that brings the sensation of an intellectual impotence that intrigues: to understand if it is still possible to seek the experience of childhood in all its meaning in the field of educational practice, in opposition to the impoverishment of teaching work.

In this choice, we find support in the theoretical perspective of contemporary philosophers such as Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Jean-François Lyotard, Giorgio Agamben, Fernando Barcena, among others who bring us, each in its own way, and within its particularities and experienced realities, converging points to think about this issue; as well as the possibility of thinking about the experience as a counterpoint to our own childhood, as a form of resistance to the instituted and the impoverishment of teaching activity. It is a reflection of pedagogical practice today, in a meeting of theoretical elements based on contemporary philosophy that allows us to reflect the expropriation of the formative experience in the process of pedagogical practice of the teacher who works with the child.

We consider it relevant to clarify that the expropriated, impoverished experience is understood by us as a way of simplifying cultural goods, of their transmission and appropriation to become mere information, meaningless reference. An expropriation that results in a simplification of the teaching activity, which, by simplifying the complex, distances itself not only from its own doing, but from its own childhood experience, teaching it without requiring any effort to understand it.

Through reading and studying the texts of the authors who accompany us in the theoretical and reflective trajectory, we can think that one of the paths that led to this impoverishment of the experience is, without a doubt, the development of technology and the propagation of the cultural industry in the modern world, which imposes an accelerated time and the interest of immediate survival. A process that obliges us to “not waste time”, “to walk fast” and as a consequence, brings the abbreviation of ourselves as humans and that pushes us to a sensation that is becoming naturalized in modern education, where only the teacher remains the role of an “explainer” of knowledge, without the need to see the child as a thinking and active being.

As much as education defends the possibility for us to have reflective and transformative thinking as a goal, we are overwhelmed by this naturalized process of contemporaneity, which dominates and expropriates our creative and reflective capacity. The challenge was to restore the possibility of formative and reflective experience between school knowledge and practices, in order to contribute to a practice of thinking that comes from childhood experience and provokes a critical attitude to discuss the consequences of the process of infantilization of doing pedagogical in today's society.

This process happens through modern discourse and the exercise of power conferred to adults, when it places the child in a position of dependency, at home and in the family with parents or guardians, and at school through the teacher-student bond. It is this barrier that separates children and adults that needs to be reviewed - because from it, networks of discourses about the children who name them are created, and they dictate their particularities for a certain type of society - if we want children who overcome the barrier of dependence and heteronomy.

Reflective and creative thinking is an inherent and driving element of pedagogical activity, but we are involved in the dazzle of the technological process and let ourselves be carried away by the degeneration of reflective thinking, threatening the ethical content of the formative process due to its social determination. We were expropriated from the possibility of experimenting and involved by a formation that favors technical knowledge over philosophical and creative knowledge of thought and critical reflection on education. Expropriated from our childhood thinking, from our own experience, we are prevented from thinking the unthinkable. And so, the teaching activity as all the activity of the modern man, becomes a mere technique or application of knowledge produced by the educational sciences, meeting the social need to increase efficiency, the demand for professional qualification and consumption patterns. Mere repeating activity, unable to translate into narrable experiences. For Benjamin (1992, p. 28), the arrival in modern times has extinguished the individual's ability to tell stories, exchange

experiences and communicate. The author's essay begins with the observation that the "Narrator" is not able to be fully effective in his experience of narrating, "it is increasingly rare to find people who know how to narrate things correctly".

These are the negative effects of a formative process based merely on a strategy of "clarifying" conscience without considering the concrete conditions of this social formation as the appropriation of technical knowledge. The formation dissolves as a formative experience silenced and emptied of contents that are exhausted in the formal relationship with knowledge, thus preventing the teacher from providing ways to reflect on the problems he faces and to find ways to solve them or translate them and narrate them as experience.

Imprisoned Childhood Experience

The modern notion of childhood that was incorporated into public policies, in educational discourses and within the walls of the school, was associated with the production of new modes of education for children, aimed at their institutionalization. These speeches, these reasonings and these new subject positions referring to children - these rationality schemes - are nothing more than systems of ideas that allowed us to think differently about what it means to be a child and, at the same time, introduced new devices for their control and regulation.

Control and regulation here understood as government within the Foucaultian idea of the possibility of "structuring the eventual field of action of others" (FOUCAULT, 1995b, p. 244), as a result of the will that some have to act on the action of others, that is, where the government of children needs to be exercised from the earliest childhood in a social landscape that, since the Industrial Revolution, consolidates new family arrangements and new demands on women and children, who turn to productive work. Thus, the creation of specific institutions for the care of children is becoming instrumental in the project of government of the populations, and the school started to exercise this new task.

Institutionalized education will constitute a privileged strategy for disciplining populations from an early age, making the connection between the individual and society. Since the early and middle stage of the modern age, it has been transformed into a dimension of what Foucault (1995a) called "the great confinement", together with the appearance of prisons and hospices for the purpose of "correction and moral coercion". Like the insane and the criminal, it was understood that the child needed to be molded, "in a docile body that can be subdued,

used, transformed and improved". This brings us to the relationships that are not found in the object, do not define its internal constitution, but through narratives, they must shape the ways of constituting the world, of understanding it and talking about it.

We need to understand that childhood historically described in practices, in speeches, in the categories that serve to circumscribe it, is born among adults and always has a reference that is centered on them as a becoming: that is, from the very negation of childhood, placing it as a passing phase to reach the supposed rational "adulthood". Thus, it becomes easy to see why children are described as immature, incomplete, unprotected and as moldable beings. The definitions of child and childhood are always related and referred to the other, the adult. Its meaning varies with time, with the authority of the speaker.

The so-called "childhood feeling" is a cultural phenomenon typical of our time. A very characteristic social product of the last three to four centuries. Therefore, the meanings attributed to childhood are the result of a process of social construction, they depend on a set of possibilities that come together at a certain moment in history, they are socially organized and supported by discourses that are not always homogeneous and in perennial transformation. They are models within power relations and represent interests manifested by the historical need of the society that generated them.

The invention of the child subject as an autonomous, free, sensitive subject, perceived mainly as a source of knowledge and moral and political action is a task that is always threatened and incomplete, where modern ideals need to be constantly reaffirmed. It is for this reason that narratives are constructed capable of reaffirming such characteristics and behaviors, and thus it is also constituted "an experience such that individuals (are) led to recognize themselves as subjects" (FOUCAULT, 1998, p. 10).

Vision as dependency, with children gradually gaining their moral autonomy, building experience; childhood as a privileged moment, which represents what is most pure and good in society, as an ideal of perfection, also constitutes the predominant orientation of common sense and appropriates the discourses present in the legislation of early childhood education. These are concepts that are in a way so ingrained and naturalized that they leave little space for us to perceive another way of thinking about childhood or reflecting on the assumptions that came to constitute it in this way.

What characterizes the pedagogical theories that are elaborated from a modern perspective is that they are directed towards a childhood taken as normal and natural and in which children are positioned as apprentices, as thinking and rational beings that need to be trained in docile and obedient subjects to socially (im)posed laws.

The idea of "natural child" has two developments that are still very present in our childhood conceptions: that of the reasoning child or cognitive subject and that of the innocent child. The first are linked to those interpretations that place the child subject in the position of apprentice, with a natural tendency to curiosity, investigation, experimentation, with a progression in his reasoning abilities that occurs in an "almost spontaneous" way, being supposed that the less interference the better. The second is associated with the idea of a threatened childhood, always on the verge of disappearing and which needs to be defended against the vicissitudes of the adult world.

The image of the teaching work was built in these terms and is still based on those who need care, treatment, laws and governance because they have a life without reason, without conscience or morals, in the unfolding of a pedagogy in which the childhood is approached as a singular experience to be corrected in the formative process, subjugated to a subjective rationality wrapped in discipline and authority made through the school under the teacher's yoke. And so, childhood, through education, leaves its inferiority trace to constitute itself as a possibility. The school and teachers should go against this observation and strive to seek, recognize and elaborate the experience, an experience in which childhood is essential.

In Search of Childhood Experience

Our proposal is to think about the possibility of childhood experience, in line with what Walter Benjamin (1986; 1987) highlights when reflecting on the way the child constructs his private universe, giving another meaning to everyday life. This philosopher allows us to penetrate the magic of childhood and discover with it and through it the mystery that emanates from the world of objects, since they are what feed the imagination, giving content and form to the secrets it reveals. Thus, the philosopher shows how much the child uses his magic using multiple metamorphoses, and that only the child has this ability to establish similarities, incorporating into their experiences a mystique that emphasizes their sensitivity for the world of objects.

The conception of the childhood experience with which we are familiar in our time is related to a chronologically predetermined stage of man's life or even characterized by the state of naivety that does not depend on the chronological age. Ideas based on the human need for emancipation in which both present childhood as a time of preparation, protection, training of autonomous or not, related to the hope of a better time or to a unique and non-transferable childhood experience.

Benjamin (1987) emphasizes the importance of games and children's play, which are loaded with symbolic and mimetic behaviors and are not limited to imitating people, but also reworking and building. Children don't just play, they transform themselves. They are not limited to the staging of being teachers, doctors, traders, mommy or daddy, but also, they turn into trains, planes, horses, cats; that is, they imitate the real being what your imagination really wants - person, animal or thing. What is preserved is language, narration and creative imagination. In the child's experience there are no strict limits between imagination and reality; the peculiar way in which the child is able to deal with the objective world allows us a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of creative activity in man. The child's imagination works subverting the established order, because driven by desire and passion, he is always ready to show another possibility of apprehending the things of the world and life.

The philosopher highlights the cinematic dimension that the child's gaze reveals and shows us, with great sensitivity and beauty, how objects become for him a realm of enigmas that can be deciphered in different directions. The sensory that is often impoverished in the experience of adults becomes for the child a reality that nullifies the difference between inanimate objects and living beings.

[...] children are particularly inclined to look for any and all places of work where activity on things are visibly taking place. They are irresistibly attracted by the residue that appears in construction, gardening or housework, sewing or carpentry. In residual products the face recognizes that the world of things returns exactly to them, and to them only. In them, they less imitate the works of adults than they put materials of a very different species, through what they prepare with them in the toy, in a new, abrupt relationship with each other. With that, the children form for themselves their world of things, a little in the big, themselves. (BENJAMIN, 1987, p. 18)⁴

Against the adult world and institutional education itself, the child seeks other allies that are easily found in the world of phenomena. They appropriate with interest and passion everything that is abandoned, thus learning to make history of history. This fragment of Benjamin makes us clear that childhood occupies a prominent place in the reestablishment of the relationship between experience and language, raising a reflection both on the limits of language and on the impoverishment of experience in the modern world. It seems to want to

⁴ [...] as crianças são inclinadas de modo especial a procurar todo e qualquer lugar de trabalho onde visivelmente transcorre a atividade sobre as coisas. Sentem-se irresistivelmente atraídas pelo resíduo que surge na construção, no trabalho de jardinagem ou doméstico, na costura ou na marcenaria. Em produtos residuais reconhecem o rosto que o mundo das coisas volta exatamente para elas, e para elas unicamente. Neles, elas menos imitam as obras dos adultos do que põem materiais de espécie muito diferente, através daquilo que com eles aprontam no brinquedo, em uma nova, brusca relação entre si. Com isso as crianças formam para si seu mundo de coisas, um pequeno no grande, elas mesmas. (BENJAMIN, 1987, p. 18)

show us that institutional education deprives itself of its function, which is the inquiry and the critical spirit to assume a fake knowledge, and that is why the child embarks on a parallel, clandestine learning, in which the playful, the creative, art, imagination, experience have a close relationship with each other.

When we refer to the question of experience, we must not forget the precautions that we must take when dealing with this word, as recommended by Larossa (2004, p. 23-26), starting with the differentiation that must be made between experience and experiment; that is, to distance it from its empirical sense, typical of experimental sciences. In the sense that we want to give, experience is not something that can be calculated or technically produced, nor should the word experience be given the connotation of dogma and claim to authority; because the connotation intended here is opposed to all dogmatism. Experience, in the sense that we want, must be thought separate from practice, from the point of view of the subject's passion and reflection about himself, as a receptive subject open and exposed to novelty.

This experience leads us to the discovery of our fragility, impotence and vulnerability, which are beyond our control and, therefore, we have to “avoid making the word experience a concept”, even when we are asked to define it in this way. Experience, therefore, is not something that everyone has to seek or stop, but to take experience as a way of inhabiting the world in time and space.

The crisis of experience has been established and it seems to have no more possibilities for reconstruction. The problem of the impoverishment of experience, the ability to think and narrate it observed today, is an important point in contemporary philosophy. Benjamin (1986) was one of the first philosophers to diagnose this problem and its consequences for human life. For the author, the “quotation of the experience has dropped”, and in a more apocalyptic analysis it brings its sentence: “A totally new misery has befallen man with this monstrous development of the technique” (BENJAMIN, 1986, p. 195). It is possible to perceive this process in the destiny of modern man who, submitted to a frantic pace and exposed to different dangers, is obliged to concentrate all his energies on the task of protecting himself against shock, thus losing his individual and collective memory. His reflex behavior expropriates him from the experience.

Adorno (1992) seems to have radicalized Benjamin's diagnosis when reporting the soldiers' return after the second war. For the German philosopher, soldiers returned without any experience to narrate, nor did they endeavor to signify or conceptualize the atrocities committed by Nazism. They made a point of forgetting them and of silencing themselves historically about this evil that befell humanity.

We were thus expropriated from the possibility of reflecting on our present. We were expropriated from the experience, as Benjamim (1986) told us, reinforced by Adorno (1992), who emphasizes that “In the previous war, the inadequacy of the human body to battles between machines made the experience itself impossible. No one would be able to narrate them, as it was still about the battles of artillery general Bonaparte” (ADORNO, 1992, p. 45). This expropriation persists and is increasingly accentuated in the present. People are no longer able to endeavor to significantly analyze the atrocities experienced or committed that are transmitted live to everyone via satellite on televisions, in their homes and, thus, comfortably on the sofa in the living room, they close their eyes. Teachers come to their classes as if the school were a world apart from the one in which our children are sometimes subjected, such as abandonment by parents, sexual abuse, violence, drugs, in short, a scenario of real disappointment, lives without rights or dreams. Thus, the teacher remains silent as a symptom of an inability to critically reflect on the reality that surrounds us, the reification of feelings and the coldness disseminated by technical rationality in modernity.

It was through Agamben (2005) that the Benjamin project seems to characterize the problem of the crumbling of experience in a way that is closer to what we experience today. The author argues that we do not need to witness any catastrophe or war to realize the interdiction of experience, in our day. For the Italian philosopher, “the peaceful daily existence in a big city” is enough (AGAMBEN, 2005, p. 21). The silence and the darkness that prevents us from looking through the veiled impotence of the submission of our critical sense, which has been lost in the face of a diffuse reality that is carried away by a wave that confuses reality itself.

Following Agamben's analysis, we can say that we, teachers, are pushed into a scenario that is becoming naturalized in modern education, where we only have the role of “explainer” of knowledge, since we are limited in the process of critical analysis of acquired knowledge. As much as education defends the possibilities for us to have reflective and transformative thinking as a goal, we are overwhelmed by this naturalizing process of modern life that dominates and expropriates our creative and reflective capacity. In this sense, it is essential to think that education must have a meaning other than the transition from minority or the absence of reason to majority and the presence of reason; but to promote emancipation.

There is no longer any possibility of experiencing modernity because we live life as if it were not ours, without understanding what is going on around us. The teacher also acts as if the pedagogical activity was not his, but manufactured outside him and, therefore, meaningless, as something that is sold on the market like any other commodity. Hence the valorization in the

editorial market of didactic and technical books in which educational devices work to give the appearance of the meaning we seek for our craft and for our own life. Our need is so great that we follow anyone who sells a little sense. The experience is destroyed, leaving a false sense of meaningless experience in its place, because we do not know what is happening to us. We are speechless because there are no more words to elaborate the experience. The words we have are insignificant, devalued and banal and, therefore, we can no longer elaborate experiences. If the experience does not acquire more meaning in relation to the life of man, this could no longer be called an experience and, for that reason, it should not be transmitted.

If we think mainly of the experience of being a teacher or of being a student, of the experience of being a child and being in a school environment or in a pedagogical space, the experience acquires a sense of “not lived” experience, because what we live in that environment has nothing to do with us. It is a strange thing for both us and the school. At the end of the school day both teachers and students leave the school speechless, having nothing to say, thus contributing to the devices that undermine the experience and infantilize their work.

Disregarding the childhood experience, as a condition of unfinished, boundary and discontinuity, is to provide elements for the materialization of the “infantilization” of teaching activity, the simplification of transmission and appropriation of cultural goods, becoming mere information, a meaningless reference, ephemeral, emptied of formative content and without any meaning or attitude that could contribute to the reflection of the meaning of its own activity in the present.

Final considerations

Our main interest was to reflect on the process of expropriation of the formative experience imposed by the contingencies of the modern world and its consequences for the impoverishment of teaching work. Thus, armed with this reflection, seek the paths that provide us with thinking about the enigmatic presence of a childhood experience that allows us to be touched by it.

That said, we return to our initial question: How to seek childhood, experience and its meaning in the field of educational practice, in opposition to the impoverishment of teaching work? One that, like the childhood experience, lets itself be taken into the unknown so that we can see it as novelty, learning and experience. Childhood experience, as an adventure that together with the philosophers we indicate in this text, we can think of it in another way, not as

a scientific rationality, but through the prism through which it has been taken by contemporary philosophy, perceived as something unique, which cannot be translated by words, but by remembrance, by what is not given, nor has a right answer, but it makes us have an attitude and compels us to an action that, many times, does not have a single answer, but takes us on different paths in search of it.

The childhood that finds the experience to break the mirror that reflects only part of the reality that prevents the realization of the true childhood experience and the understanding that the true knowledge is provided by the one who teaches us to unlearn. It is necessary to be willing to open the doors to a multiple experience of ourselves and let flow the sense of transformation, of educating, of instructing, of nurturing the spirit of discernment and forming for complexity, a situation in which man and thought are constituted in part of this complexification of knowledge and this childhood. “Thought is here, entangled in non-thought, trying to untangle the lost language of childhood” (LYOTARD, 1993, p. 123). This childhood that Lyotard (1997) understood as

[...] obedience to a debt, which can be called the debt of life, time, or the event, a debt of being there despite everything, from which only the persistent feeling, respect, can save the adult from being only a survivor, a living being with his restrained annihilation (LYOTARD, 1997, p. 69).⁵

A debt that shows us the appreciation of what we were and are as an event in the world. A unique and historical experience, which in the face of reflective and philosophical thinking, puts us before the beginning that our childhood meant, recognizing, among the mazes and mishaps, the possibilities that it left us. The childhood experience we defend is one that breaks with the supposed certainties we have about ourselves, the world and our own childhood. It is what allows us to combat the infantilization of teaching work that is devalued and that impoverishes the transmission and appropriation of cultural goods, with the didacticization of the complexity of knowledge transformed into mere information.

We are faced with an education that turns the pedagogical activity into a mere technique, or application of the knowledge produced by the educational sciences, meeting the need for the development of rational society, the demand for increased efficiency, and the demand for professional qualification. A path that places childhood as analogous to minority, denying the experience that comes from it and the possibility of taking a new look at what has already been

⁵ [...] obediência a uma dívida, que se pode chamar de dívida de vida, do tempo, ou do acontecimento, dívida de ser aí pese a tudo, da que só o sentimento persistente, o respeito, pode salvar o adulto de ser só um sobrevivente, um vivente com sua aniquilação refreada (LYOTARD, 1997, p. 69).

instituted, pushing us to replace the reflective formative character inherent in educational activity with a mechanical work that serves the market and it restricts the teacher's work to the task of adapting the right means to the given purposes, making it childish. It is an attempt at regulation higher than that required for social life, through the governance of childhood, as stated by Foucault, and by the control of the State and public policies, in order to order thought, to discipline or to shape any rebellious gesture that may threaten undoubted scientific rationality.

This implies an exercise contrary to “pedagogism”, which has, as one of its implications, the excess of infantilism in the relations between teacher and student, and in its didactics. A striking presence in our education that strives for dialogue, as a simple exchange of opinions, and allows us to witness, today, a kind of death of the desire to know. It is necessary to reflect more on this phenomenon, as it is the biggest obstacle to authentic educational action. In this sense, the legitimation of knowledge must be political while remaining philosophical, due to the game of experimentation on language, in the enunciative moves that change the rule of the game present in the process of production and transmission of knowledge.

The teaching activity through situations and narratives needs to have the function of affecting, sensitizing those involved in this experience who are willing to give it meaning. Meaning becomes effective as people learn and apprehend involved in an experience in which they are affected by it, whether by the word, the image presented, or a gesture, but who are mainly willing to go in search of understanding about themselves or your relationship with the world.

A profound experience in which the teacher affects and is affected and thus provides ways to avoid the repetition of barbarism through critical reflection and resistance to its causes and consequences in the present, in contrast to a process generated by the system that infantilizes its activity, so that both teacher and student are affected by the reflection of their limits, their finitude, their unfinished life, by a childhood constitutive of human becoming, as a form of resistance to this infantilizing process, in short, be affected by their childhood.

Even without the exact dimension of the influence it exerts on the lived reality, education shows itself as an open possibility for transformation, through the perception of its enabling force for experience. Emancipation presents itself as a sign of recognition of what should not be so, but it can be different; it therefore presents itself as a form of resistance.

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