

**THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ANATOLI VASSILIEVITCH LUNATCHARSKI TO  
THE BRAZILIAN EDUCATION AT THE PRESENT TIME**

***AS CONTRIBUIÇÕES DE ANATOLI VASSILIEVITCH LUNATCHARSKI PARA A  
EDUCAÇÃO BRASILEIRA NA ATUALIDADE***

***LAS CONTRIBUCIONES DE ANATOLI VASSILIEVITCH LUNATCHARSKI A LA  
EDUCACIÓN BRASILEÑA ACTUAL***

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper presents the contributions of the propositions of the Russian intellectual Anatoli Vassilievitch Lunatcharski (1875-1933) for Brazilian Education at the present. In this elaboration, of bibliographic nature, we based ourselves on the presumptions of the Science of History, which highlights the relevance of paying attention to the specificity of the theme in question and establishing as a necessity the consideration of the dynamics of the capitalist society today, as well as the economic and political relations, which are inseparable from educational matters. We carried out a bibliographic review, mostly, of the academic production that affects the intellectual in the period between 2007 and 2017, we discussed the principles of the Soviet school and the proposal of Education defended by Lunatcharski. We consider essential the education of teachers, initial or continuous, supported by the classics, through continuous studies it is possible to plan and reconduct pedagogical interventions, which can favor students' learning and intellectual development, in favor of a humanizing education.

**KEYWORDS:** Lunatcharski. Science of history. Teachers' education.

**RESUMO:** Este texto apresenta as contribuições das proposições do intelectual russo Anatoli Vassilievitch Lunatcharski (1875-1933) para a Educação brasileira na atualidade. Nesta elaboração, de cunho bibliográfico, nos fundamentamos nos pressupostos da Ciência da História, que evidencia a relevância de atentarmos-nos à especificidade da temática em questão e estabelecer como necessidade considerar a dinâmica da sociedade capitalista na atualidade, assim como as relações econômicas e políticas, as quais são indissociáveis das questões educacionais. Realizamos um levantamento bibliográfico, sobretudo, da produção acadêmica afeta ao intelectual no período compreendido entre 2007 e 2017, discorremos sobre os princípios da escola soviética e a proposta de Educação defendida por

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*Lunatcharski. Consideramos fundamental a formação de professores, inicial ou contínua, amparada nos clássicos. Por meio dos estudos contínuos é possível planejarmos e reconduzirmos as intervenções pedagógicas, que podem favorecer a aprendizagem e o desenvolvimento intelectual dos estudantes, em favor de uma Educação humanizadora.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Lunatcharski. Ciência da história. Formação de professores.*

**RESUMEN:** *Este texto presenta las contribuciones de las propuestas del intelectual ruso Anatoli Vassilievitch Lunatcharski (1875-1933) para la Educación brasileña en la actualidad. En esta elaboración, de carácter bibliográfico, nos basamos en los supuestos de la Ciencia de la Historia, que destaca la relevancia de prestar atención a la especificidad del tema en cuestión y establecer como necesidad considerar la dinámica de la sociedad capitalista actual, así como las relaciones económicas y políticas, que son indisociables de las cuestiones educativas. Realizamos una investigación bibliográfica, sobre todo, de la producción académica afecta a los intelectuales en el período comprendido entre 2007 a 2017, hablamos de los principios de la escuela soviética y la propuesta de Educación defendida por Lunatcharski. Consideramos fundamental la formación de docentes, inicial o continua, apoyada en los clásicos, a través de los estudios continuos es posible planear y redireccionar las intervenciones pedagógicas, que pueden favorecer el aprendizaje y el desarrollo intelectual de los estudiantes, a favor de una Educación humanizadora.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Lunatcharski. La ciencia de la historia. Formación de docentes.*

### **Initial reflections**

This text aims to study the contributions of the propositions of the Russian intellectual Anatoli Vassilievitch Lunatcharski (1875-1933) for Brazilian Education today. In this bibliographical elaboration, we base ourselves on the assumptions of the Science of History and the Historical-Cultural Theory, in which the premise that men and their ideas are the result of their material existence is in force. The assumptions of this framework argue that Education is not an explainable phenomenon in itself, which means to assert that the phenomena are explained by the economic and political organization of society and that they are not understood in isolation: humanity and its ideas are the result of its existence material, that is, “it is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness” (MARX; ENGELS, 1993, our translation).

Paying attention to the specificity of the theme in question does not exclude, on the contrary, it establishes the need to consider the dynamics of capitalist society today. As the studies by Antunes (2009; 2017) denounce, the development of the capitalist mode of production is not synonymous with the development of objective living conditions; therefore, the human meaning or the fullness of life does not take effect, since in equal proportion we

have the expression of misery on a daily basis. In fact, they are the “dark times” touted by Arendt (2008); to the misery for the basic conditions of survival, the misery for the development of the intellectual condition is added.

Currently, in Brazil, we are witnessing an accentuated debate on Education, with speeches, proposals and official or guiding documents that reaffirm the relevance of school education and its relationship with economic and political issues. In our understanding, such discussions express a political principle and content that need to be understood.

In the last decades of the 20th century, from the Federal Constitution of 1988, studies, debates and legislation followed. We mention the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education (LDB) (Law n. 9,394/96) and the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) (BRASIL, 2017), which announces guidelines in order to guide the curricula of educational systems and networks do Brazil, as well as the pedagogical proposals of public and private schools of Child, Elementary and High School, supported by the development of skills, in order to meet the demands of the labor market, a fact that is related to the ideology and conception of current society.

Based on the assertions, we consider the economic and political scenario in which institutions and educators are inserted, as well as analyzing this situation, in which, at the beginning of the 21st century, the condition of misery is accentuated. In opposition to the logic of capital, the relevance of continuous studies, a rigorous and consistent formation of teachers, supported by the classics, can favor the reflection and renewal of educational practice, which implies bringing the function of the school and knowledge into discussion.

Lunatcharski (1988), in his article entitled “Sociological premises of Soviet Pedagogy”<sup>4</sup>, stated that Marxist writings, especially sociological premises, are significant for the analysis of society and an indispensable tool for changing it. In this way, the purpose of education is related to the current regime, “[...] of general social processes, and Marxist society can demonstrate that there is total agreement between public instruction and the social purpose for which it develops and that it serves” (LUNATCHARSKI, 1988, p. 189, our translation), that is, Education is inextricably related to economic and political issues. In this sense, we reflect below on the contributions of intellectuals to Brazilian Education today.

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<sup>4</sup> Article first published in the Pedagogical Encyclopedia, in 1927. The first Soviet Pedagogical Encyclopedia, written on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution in October 1917, was organized in three volumes, in order to analyze and systematize, in a Marxist perspective, issues of education and teaching, in which references and studies related to pedagogy, the sectors of public education and educational and cultural work were found. Lunatcharski, Krupskaja, Blonski, Chatski and other intellectuals composed the writing of the material (DNEPROV, 1988).

## **Lunatcharski and the principles of the soviet school: contributions to Brazilian education today**

Anatoli Vassilievitch Lunatcharski was an intellectual who participated significantly in the struggle for the construction of a revolutionary conscience, after the Russian Revolution of October 1917, for the building of a new society and for the formation of the new communist man. As stated by the Italian historian Manacorda (2006, p. 313, our translation), the aforementioned Revolution “[...] took to power for the first time, in a vast empire, the working class and its political party, breaking the bourgeois unity of the modern world: a fact that, whatever the judgment on him and the current success, marks a turning point in history”.

The Soviet Revolution historically meant the search for consolidating a communist society, a new economic and political regime, supported by the principle of producing and distributing socially created wealth to all. Education was one of the fundamental tasks considered by the Bolshevik leaders, which meant constituting a broad education of the working class and overcoming illiteracy (LOMBARDI, 2017).

In summary, “the history of the Brief 20th Century cannot be understood without the Russian Revolution and its direct and indirect effects [...]” (HOBSBAWN, 2011, p. 89, our translation). In agreement with Chaves (2018, p. 6, our translation), “[...] neither low temperatures nor almost absolute hunger prevented soldiers, workers and revolutionary militants from making the Soviet Socialist Republic a power in industry, in science and in culture”.

In this sense, Education was prioritized from the beginning of the Soviet regime. There was a need to create a new society, and for that an educational proposal in favor of the formation of the new communist man was fundamental. On 26 October 1917, the People's Commissars were created, among them the People's Commissariat for Public Instruction (Narkompros). Anatoli Lunatcharski was appointed by Lenin as president and responsible, along with the key role of Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaja<sup>5</sup>, for Russia's educational system.

Amidst the challenges and difficult conditions of the first years of Soviet power, with the country still in conditions of civil war and famine, Lunatcharski (1965; 1974; 1975; 1988; 2018) propagated the foundations of the new education system, elaborated the principles for the building of the communist school, created a wide network of pre-school education,

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<sup>5</sup> Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaja (1869-1939) was born in St. Petersburg on 26 February 1869. Lenin's wife, combatant, dedicated her youth and life to the Russian Revolution and elaborated educational proposals based on the defense of knowledge for human development (CHAVES, 2018; FELICIO, 2018).

secondary and higher education, as well as educational and cultural institutions. Based on the Marxist method, he discussed school education, extracurricular education, polytechnic education, instruction as the basis of culture and art (FELICIO, 2018).

It is noteworthy that, when we surveyed sources and studies elaborated on the subject in question, we verified the absence of articles, books, dissertations and theses whose main theme was the author Lunatcharski and his elaborations related to Education, especially studies on his contribution to current Brazilian Education.

We mention the article about the intellectual in question, by Zoia Prestes and Elizabeth Tunes, entitled “*Anatoli Vassilievitch Lunatcharski e os princípios da escola soviética*” (Anatoli Vassilievitch Lunatcharski and the principles of the Soviet school), published in 2017 in the *Movimento Revista de Educação*. And the book “*Lunacharski y la organización soviética de la educación y de las artes (1917-1921)*”, written by Sheila Fitzpatrick, published by *Siglo XXI de España Editores*, in 1977, translated by Antonio J. Desmonts – whose original title is “The Commissariat of Enlightenment-Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky october 1917-1921”, published in 1970 by the author in question.

In Sheila Fitzpatrick's work entitled “*Lunacharski y la organizacion soviética de la educacion y de las artes (1917-1921)*”, the author supports her studies in documents from the period (1917-1921) in Russia, in order to present, briefly, the biographical aspects of Lunatcharski and his performance as People's Commissar for Public Instruction, sometimes criticized by sectors of the Communist Party, but supported by Krupskaja, who strengthened the idea that the function of the revolution was to make culture and schools a institution of development and formation of a new communist man, and not just an institution of control and professional preparation. The author also allows us to elucidate some of the backstage of decisions affecting education that mobilized different orientations present in the early years of the Bolshevik revolution (FREITAS, 2017). In general, the research developed by Fitzpatrick has as its theme the social and cultural history of the Soviet period, particularly in the daily practices of peasants and industrial workers (FITZPATRICK, 1977; 2017).

In relation to books, we located in some works related to the history of Soviet Education mention to Lunatcharski. For example, in the work “Makarenko: the birth of socialist pedagogy” (CAPRILES, 1989), in which the author refers to Lunatcharski as the “responsible for the entire legislative transformation of the Russian school and the creator of primary, higher and professional education systems of the future socialist pedagogy” (CAPRILES, 1989, p. 29-30, our translation). We also identified works that, in addition to mentioning Lunatcharski's appointment as People's Commissar, discuss his political activities

and the proposed organization of Soviet Education (FISCHER, 1967; ORSO; MALANCHEN; CASTANHA, 2017; PRESTES, 2012).

Regarding Lunatcharski's biographical aspects, his intellectual and literary formation and his role as People's Commissar, we quote the writings of the books by Mariátegui (2012) and Trotski (2007). Also, in the work of Lenin (1968) we find articles and speeches by the author that deal with political orientations to the People's Commissariat for Public Instruction, as well as mention of its president. And we located works that have text attachments that Lunatcharski wrote (FREITAS; CALDART, 2017; GOMIDE, 2017; HAUPT; MARIE, 1972; LÊNIN, 1968; REED, 2017).

Regarding academic production, theses and dissertations, from 2007 to 2017, we searched the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes) and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD), using the terms "Lunatcharski and Soviet Education"; we then selected 10 dissertations and 04 theses, which, in general, only cite the author when dealing with Soviet and polytechnic education. That is, despite the mention of Lunatcharski, the selected works do not deal with the biographical aspects of the revolutionary, the educational proposition defended by the author for the Soviet organization and its contributions to reflect Education today.

Likewise, it is worth mentioning, according to Chaves (2018), that regarding the writings of the History of Education or Pedagogy, Lunatcharski's elaboration is practically nullified. References to Russian scholars, including Krupskaja and Anton Semionovich Makarenko (1888-1939), for example, are rare. In agreement with Chaves (2018), Lunatcharski, as well as Krupskaja (19--) and Makarenko (1981), responsible and idealizers of the political principles for Education, Psychology and Art in the USSR, supported by Marxist assumptions, are political classics of Theory Historical-Cultural, which justifies the relevance of being known and studied in initial and continuing teacher education courses. In the words of Saviani and Duarte (2010, p. 431, our translation), the classic "is defined, therefore, by the notions of permanence and reference", that is, the authors defend access to the classics as a necessary condition for human formation.

In Lunatcharski's elaborations, the intellectual gave speeches and wrote articles related to Education, particularly to the organization and structuring of Soviet Education, after the Bolshevik Revolution, in which, in general, he discusses school education, extra-school education, polytechnic education, education as the basis of culture and art. He also affirms the inseparable relationship between educational issues and the economic and political tasks of the period in question for building a new society. In his words: "the difficulties of the moment



cannot be allowed to tread on the flowers of the first hopes of the proletariat in the possibility of a harmonious development of man” (LUNATCHARSKI, 1988, p. 4, our translation).

In the years immediately following the October Socialist Revolution, congresses on public instruction played an important role in defining the development of the new school, in shaping the ideological and theoretical bases of Soviet education, and, above all, regarding formation. of teachers to compose the fundamentals of the school. We emphasize that only in 1918 there were 164 local congresses of teachers and 81 congresses of workers in public education (DNEPROV, 1988).

At the First All-Russian Congress on Public Instruction, held from 25 August to 4 September 1918 in Moscow, activities that contributed to laying the fundamental foundations of the socialist organization of public instruction were discussed. Lunatcharski (1988), when delivering his speech at the aforementioned Congress, stated that the State is faced with new challenges and is undergoing intense organizational work, such as, for example, its Constitution, which is considered provisional. The objective was to make all the riches possible for the people, so the fight for school was an essential condition. The Commissar explained:

When I was appointed Commissioner for Public Education, I could not fail to notice this enormous responsibility that the people have invested in me. **It is a question of transmitting knowledge as quickly and widely as possible to the people, of destroying the privilege of knowledge that only a tiny part of society enjoyed.** Here too, it is equally obvious that it was not about taking over the school: the school is as obsolete and useless as the State apparatus. We could not ration like the Provisional Government, saying that we were going to prescribe some modifications to the district inspectors; we had to dismantle everything; it was perfectly clear that the school must be the object of a revolutionary transformation. (LUNATCHARSKI, 1988, p. 11, authors’ highlights, our translation).

From this assertion, we understand that the new educational organization, proposed by the commissioner, needed to break away from the school of classes and knowledge only for the privileged classes. Lunatcharski (1988, p. 33, our translation), when criticizing bourgeois education, finds that, on the one hand, the school will form masters who will be able to dominate others with security and arrogance, “[...] without questioning whether they have the right to doing this and knowing how to hold oneself in that dominant position with fangs and claws at the ready; and, on the other hand, the school will form slaves, that is, docile individuals [...]”. That is, teaching in capitalist society does not impose the same goals for the education of the ruling classes and for the working class, which is considered an object and labor.

In this sense, Lunatcharski (1988) postulated that Education had an inseparable relationship with economic and political tasks, especially in the early years of the Soviet government, in which the constitution of a communist society was sought. To do so, it was necessary to consider the following elements: government, economic power and knowledge; thus, the struggle of the working class for freedom, that is, an utmost awareness would be built.

When reflecting on the concept of freedom, defended by Lunatcharski, we find that nowadays, there are values and concepts in constant discussion and in different spheres, such as in schools, media, among others. Let's think about the freedom announced in the economic sphere and explained by Antunes (2009, p. 234, our translation):

Among the different forms of flexibilization – in fact, precariousness – we can highlight, for example, the salary, timetable, functional or organizational form. Flexibility can be understood as “company freedom” to unemployed workers; without penalties, production and sales decrease; freedom, always for the company, to reduce working hours or to resort to more working hours; possibilities of paying real wages lower than labor parity requires; possibility of subdividing the working day into day and week according to the companies' convenience, changing the hours and characteristics of the work (by shift, by scale, part-time, flexible hours, etc.); among many other forms of precariousness of the workforce.

Antunes (2009) reveals, regarding economic issues, the false idea of freedom advertised by companies as flexibilization which, in effect, is the precariousness of work, and particularly favors entrepreneurs. According to the author, since work is a human need and the development of its emancipatory potential, the work that alienates must be overcome, let us briefly think about the contradictions present in this process in capitalist society: "What should be a source of humanity turns into derealization of the social being, alienation and strangeness of the men and women who work" (ANTUNES, 2009, p. 232, our translation).

In this scenario, Moraes (2001) highlights the resulting impositions of the capitalist system in all spheres. Developing countries are obliged to seek alternatives that enable them to participate in the complex globalized economic game. Such actions have an effect on social practices, and particularly on education - and are presented, significantly, in documents, plans, guidelines and in educational public policies, following the guidelines of international organizations, which, in general, ensure the centrality of basic education in current political and economic circumstances (FELICIO, 2018).

Lunatcharski (1988) states that life itself and the economic and political system in its entirety educate a new generation. The intellectual, when studying the way in which public



education is organized in bourgeois society, mentions Marx's defense of existing contradictions, as well as the illusory equality of political rights and economic inequality. In relation to the concept of freedom, Lunatcharski (1988, p. 228, our translation), supported by Engels' writings, states that the communist “during the struggle it is the enslaved humanity that pulls off its living shackles constituted by human bodies and by the living consciousness of its class enemies”, that is, the search for freedom, through knowledge.

We reiterate that the concept of freedom widely discussed today is apparently announced, a fact that we witness in the economic sphere, which underlies educational policies. According to Antunes (2009; 2017), the idea that educational reforms refer to their conception of a flexible school to meet business requirements and imperatives; a superficial formation instituted to consider the needs of the labor market. The researcher states that Education, in general, particularly in the 21st century, cannot, in this logic, develop a humanist and critical sense, that is, an emancipatory Education (FELICIO, 2018).

Chaves (2014) points out that everyday school actions are taken from elements that can favor a humanizing, full or subservient, desolating and disenchanting Education. An education of excellence, in harmony with Lunatcharski's (1988) defense, contrary to the dominant capitalist logic, does not disregard the condition of misery. In educational institutions, this economic inequality is expressed in numerous ways: in the organization of space, in the scarcity of didactic-pedagogical materials, in the devaluation of scientific knowledge and art, as well as in the fragility and weakening of the initial or continuing education and formation of teachers. These elements express the value that capitalist society attributes to children, especially those from the working class (CHAVES, 2011).

When considering the struggles to overcome the capitalist logic, Lunatcharski (1988, p. 189, our translation) highlights that the school has a double task: on the one hand, enabling all the achievements of the past in relation to science and art, and, on the other hand, overcoming the logic of the school of classes. Therefore, based on Marxist assumptions, he reaffirms the need to understand “[...] the particularly profound incompatibility that exists between the forms of public education dictated by the interests and will of the ruling classes, and the education that would respond to the interests of the exploited masses”. Thus, pedagogical sociology has the essential task of analyzing the “natural roots” of public instruction and relating pedagogical principles to the objectives of communism, opposing bourgeois theories, that is, overcoming the old and elaborating the new, “being a combatant and a creator”.

The intellectual in question, in his writings, reflected: what man do we want to form? In his conception, the subject that satisfies his needs and develops all his human capacities. To do so, he must receive a general education, become a man to whom nothing human is alien, so that he can make his choices, whether personal or professional, in favor of the collective. The school "should give the child, the adolescent, polytechnic knowledge, that is, the assimilation, with the help of examples, of the basic principles, fundamental laws, of the essential processes of perfected work, scientifically organized" (LUNATCHARSKI, 1988, p. 232, our translation).

When discussing human intellectual, technical and artistic development, Lunatcharski (1988) states that men should have their specificities and improve them, however, not limited to a specific area of knowledge; access to knowledge, science and art is necessary. Thus, the commissioner defended the organization of a Single School of Work and considered polytechnic education essential in this process. In this way, education is a process that comprises two main elements: "the uninterrupted growth of the organization of human experience [...] and the method that allows children access to each stage of this progress, making them assimilate the experience acquired over the millennia" (LUNATCHARSKI, 1988, p. 138, our translation).

When reflecting on the contributions of Lunatcharski's writings to the present, we understand that the organization of didactic-pedagogical procedures, prioritizing scientific knowledge and art, can provide learning and development that favor human emancipation (FELICIO, 2018).

From this perspective, the writings of Vigotski (2009, p. 23, our translation) are instructive: "The pedagogical conclusion that can be reached based on this consists in the affirmation of the need to expand the child's experience [...] The more the child saw, listened and experienced, more she knows and assimilated [...]". The author explains the importance of students having rich and enriching experiences in their educational process. The greater the access to human elaborations, the more possibilities they will have to learn and develop their higher psychological functions, such as memory, attention, concentration, language, imagination and creation, as well as the affective, aesthetic, collective and solidary spirit development, in favor of an emancipatory education, an argument that harmonizes with Lunatcharski's (1988) defense.

In this logic, according to Faustino (2006), education can only be emancipatory and promote autonomy if associated with scientific knowledge historically accumulated by humanity available to all, as Lunatcharski (1988) wants. Only in this way will the individual

be able to understand the condition of exploitation in which he finds himself, make political and cultural choices and verify that changes can and should occur.

### Final considerations

Lunatcharski continued in dedication to his role as a militant, developing his studies and fundamental elaborations to understand the relationship between knowledge, culture and human formation. The intellectual participated significantly in the struggle for the construction of a Russian revolutionary consciousness, specifically in the revolutions of 1905 and October 1917, for the building of a new society and the formation of a new communist man. After the Revolution of October 1917, one of the main tasks was to provide access to knowledge for the working class. The intellectual defended an Education whose function is the full development of human capacities and potential (FELICIO, 2018).

The attention given to the challenges and successes achieved in Russia, as well as the educational proposal elaborated by Lunatcharski (1988), contribute to our reflections on Brazilian Education today, especially regarding economic and political issues, establishing the need to consider the dynamics of the current capitalist society and its implications in the educational field. When considering the governmental and economic power and the knowledge of the struggle of the working class for freedom, that is, a maximum awareness, it would be built, as Lunatcharski (1988) points out.

Therefore, we reaffirm the relevance and need for teacher education, initial or continued, supported by the study of the classics, in order to understand the economic and political dynamics beyond the immediate, appearance (KOSIK, 1976). Thus, the possibility of overcoming fragmented teaching practices emptied of meaning and sense is established. We believe that, through continuous studies, it is possible to plan and conduct pedagogical interventions, prioritizing science and art, with improved resources, which mobilize intellectual development, as well as the solidary and collective spirit of students, as Lunatcharski proposed.

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