

**FROM THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH TO THE RELATIVISM OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE: A LOOK AT THE EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**

***DA VERDADE ABSOLUTA AO RELATIVISMO DO CONHECIMENTO CIENTÍFICO: UM OLHAR PARA AS PESQUISAS EM EDUCAÇÃO***

***DE LA VERDAD ABSOLUTA AL RELATIVISMO DEL CONOCIMIENTO CIENTÍFICO: UNA MIRADA A LA INVESTIGACIÓN EDUCATIVA***

Jean Marcos FRANDALOSO<sup>1</sup>  
Maria Alzira LEITE<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The main objective of this article is to discuss the 'supposed' neutrality of the researcher, before his object of analysis, as well as to reflect on the dogmatic nature that permeates research in the sphere of education, in the light of the Principle of Non-Contradiction. The article is based on bibliographical research, of the descriptive-explanatory type, based on the concepts of Japiassu (1983, 2001); Cirne-Lima (1996), Filho (2018), among others that will be brought to the debate. Thus, it is expected, with such conclusions, to provide an opportunity for a discussion and, later, an understanding of the studies of these authors who are opposed to the idea of neutrality of the subject/researcher in the face of the results obtained and, intertwined with this, to highlight the dogmatism implicit in the educational research.

**KEYWORDS:** Educational research. Research object. Performative contradiction.

**RESUMO:** *Este artigo tem por objetivo principal discorrer sobre a 'suposta' neutralidade do pesquisador, diante do seu objeto de análise, bem como refletir sobre a natureza dogmática que permeia as pesquisas na esfera da educação, à luz do Princípio de Não-Contradição. O artigo se alicerça numa pesquisa bibliográfica, do tipo descritivo-explicativa, com base nas concepções de Japiassu (1983, 2001); Cirne-Lima (1996), Filho (2018), dentre outros que serão trazidos ao debate. Dessa forma, espera-se, com tais conclusões, oportunizar uma discussão e posterior compreensão acerca dos estudos desses autores, que se opõem à ideia de neutralidade do sujeito/pesquisador diante dos resultados obtidos e, imbricado a isso, destacar o dogmatismo implícito nas pesquisas educacionais.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Pesquisa em educação. Objeto de pesquisa. Contradição performativa.*

<sup>1</sup> Tuiuti University of Paraná (UTP) – Curitiba – PR – Brazil. Master's student in the Graduate Program in Education. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7969-2414>. E-mail: [jean.frandaloso@gmail.com](mailto:jean.frandaloso@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Tuiuti University of Paraná (UTP) – Curitiba – PR – Brazil. Professor in the Graduate Program. Doctor and Master in Letters: Linguistics and Portuguese Language (PUC Minas). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2235-4021> E-mail: [mariaalzira35@gmail.com](mailto:mariaalzira35@gmail.com)

**RESUMEN:** *El objetivo principal de este artículo es discutir la 'supuesta' neutralidad del investigador, frente a su objeto de análisis, así como reflexionar sobre el carácter dogmático que impregna la investigación en el ámbito de la educación, a la luz del Principio de No Contradicción. El artículo se basa en una investigación bibliográfica, de tipo descriptivo-explicativo, a partir de los conceptos de Japiassu (1983, 2001); Cirne-Lima (1996), Filho (2018), entre otros que serán llevados al debate. Así, se espera, con tales conclusiones, brindar una oportunidad para una discusión y, posteriormente, una comprensión de los estudios de estos autores que se oponen a la idea de neutralidad del sujeto/investigador frente a los resultados obtenidos y, entrelazado con este, resaltar el dogmatismo implícito en la investigación educativa.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Investigación en educativa. Objeto de investigación. Contradicción performativa.*

## Introduction

According to Japiassu (1983, 2001); Cirne-Lima (1996); Demo (2010) and Filho (2018), scientific research, especially in the field of education, brings with it an intentional look from the subject/researcher who, most of the time, disguises himself with the guise of neutrality and puritanical scientism, thus compromising the conclusions reached by the researcher in his/her field of study.

In this bias, based on a bibliographical investigation, of the descriptive-explanatory type, it is intended to approach the 'supposed' neutrality of the subject/researcher in the course of academic productions, taking into account the following problem: how can the scientist overcome the performative contradiction in the production of knowledge, in view of their desires and perspectives on the development of academic work?

Therefore, the main objective of this article is to discuss the 'supposed' neutrality of the researcher, before his object of analysis, as well as to reflect on the dogmatic nature that permeates research in education, in the light of the Principle of Non-Contradiction.

The idea of mastering the object of study, very often disseminated by the majority of teachers in educational establishments, also provides an opportunity to reflect on the contradiction that involves the field of education, as a key to the liberation of man from his 'sine qua non' state. As much as the subject/researcher tries hard not to influence the directions of the research, tirelessly seeking to anchor an impartial stance that justifies the scientific content of the academic production now intended, it appears that such an attempt is nothing more than a "schizophrenia" ( JAPIASSU, 1983, p. 15) intellectual, even because "[...] whoever believes in certain scientific or philosophical truths as if they were a safe haven hides, deep down, a basic fear not overcome and an unresolved anguish" (JAPIASSU, 1983, p. 13).

Now, when we talk about domain of the object, we defend the proposal of submitting something to someone. If, in the field of research in education, this interactionist relationship established between the subject/researcher and the research object is predominant and essential for the development of scientific production, then it can be inferred that education does not liberate (from the Latin *libertas*), but, on the contrary, imprisons, therefore limiting the researcher's critical sense, and even contributing to the establishment of a “pedagogy of uncertainty” (JAPIASSU, 1983, p. 13) in an epistemological context of the term announced. If there is a relationship of submission between the researcher and the research object, then the discourse that circulates in education that knowledge frees man is nothing more than “thought and said nonsense”. (CIRNE-LIMA, 1996, p. 66).

As if the “[...] myth [...]” (FILHO, 2018, p. 103) of the 'supposed' neutrality of the researcher in his field of study were not enough, which in itself would already represent “[... ] a logic of failure” (FLICKINGER, 2010, p. 18), it is observed that research, in general, is not guided by the proposition of an “[...] absolute truth [...]” (CIRNE -LIMA, 1996, p. 74), which, at first, does not contrast with any violation of a semantic, literal and/or objective nature.

In the field of education, for example, it is a matter of pacified reasoning, even because “[...] any pedagogy that tries to instill in them the illusion of truth constitutes an attack against the process of intellectual maturation of the students”. (JAPIASSU, 1983, p. 18-19). Despite the rejection of the cult of the 'absolute truth', its justification by the idea of approximation to the 'supposed' truth inaugurates, in the philosophical bias, the performative contradiction of its peers.

If, on the one hand, the proposal of an 'absolute truth' regarding the knowledge that can emerge from research in education is denied, on the other hand, when sustaining the argument that the subject/researcher, at most, will approach of such truth, taking into account the object of study, dogmatism will have been consummated by the denial of the initial premise.

Aiming to illustrate the panorama raised in this article, referring to the performative contradiction, Cirne-Lima (1996, p. 67) exemplifies the fact through the existence and non-existence of a certain object:

We say of this table, which is there and to which we point with our finger, two things. We say, first, that this table, being contingent, can either exist or, equally, not exist; although it does exist, it may not. We say, on the other hand, that this table, while it is and exists, cannot not exist. We affirm from this same table, on the one hand, that it cannot exist, on the other hand, that it cannot not exist.

This table may not exist = contingency

This table cannot not exist = existence

To the same subject the same predicate is attributed and not attributed; of the same subject the same predicate is said and is not said. That, exactly that, is a contradiction. Isn't this complete nonsense? Certainly, and whoever asserts this without further explaining enters the realm of the absurd and fundamentally denies the very possibility of thinking and speaking.

According to what was observed in the excerpt above, the perceived contradiction between 'what can exist' and 'what cannot not exist' is notorious. The aforementioned contradiction focuses on the same subject, 'this table'. In this case, it is concluded that the pretension around the construction of totally true knowledge in research in education is nothing more than an intellectual utopia, and that the projection of this approximation of truth, equally, reinforces the performative contradiction by the denial of this same knowledge, in its entirety.

, this rejection of the concept of an 'absolute truth', embedded in the premise that knowledge can only be constructed in a relative perspective, obviously consolidates dogmatism in its denied version, which is nonetheless a committed research of the scientific point of view. In this tune, Japiassu (1983, p. 21) states that:

[...] a knowledge that is completely true, completely finished and reassuring, endowed with absolute parameters, can only constitute a myth. In certain respects, myth and science perform an identical function: they provide the human spirit with a certain representation of the world and the forces that animate it.

That said, either through the denial of the 'absolute truth' in research in education or through the acceptance of the relativity of this knowledge in such research, the performative contradiction will be inserted in the construction of this scientific knowledge, which is why there is room for (re) ) to think about the use of the method in the elaboration of research, in the origin of the results obtained, in the course of scientific investigation, as well as in the scientism itself that permeates academic productions.

It is worth noting that establishing a concept of truth can represent a universe of countless ontological possibilities, strained by a plurality of social, cultural, political and religious factors that, arguably, can interfere with the understanding of what is understood by 'truth'. In the same line of reasoning, Japiassu and Marcondes (2001, p. 187) emphasize that “there are, however, several definitions of truth and several theories that intend to explain the nature of truth”. In order to shed light on the proposed theme, Abbagnano (1998, p. 993-994) conceptualizes the term 'truth' as a:

Validity or effectiveness of cognitive procedures. In general, V is understood to be the quality by virtue of which any cognitive procedure becomes effective or succeeds. This characterization can be applied both to conceptions according to which knowledge is a mental process and to those that consider it a linguistic or semiotic process. Furthermore, it has the advantage of dispensing with the distinction between definition of V. and criterion of V. This distinction is not always made, nor is it frequent; when made, it represents only the admission of two definitions of V. E.g., when making the distinction between correspondence theory and criterion of V., this is defined as evidence using the concept of V. as revelation, and the theory of V. as conformity to a rule, presented by Kant as a formal criterion alongside the concept of V. as correspondence, then becomes a definition of V itself.

In the opposite direction to Abbagnano (1998), Japiassu and Marcondes (2001, p. 187) understand that the classic concept of truth (from the Latin “*veritas*”) can be understood as being “[...] . It can be said, therefore, that truth is a property of judgments, which can be true or false, depending on the correspondence between what they affirm or deny and the reality of which they speak. Despite the need to establish the concept of 'truth' with which we intend to work in this article, as well as the ontological understanding that involves that expression, we chose to adopt the definition listed in the theory of truth.

Therefore, the concept of truth must be envisaged in a perspective of coherent proposition, in the light of the Principle of Non-Contradiction, given that it is a value judgment that does not include, in its evaluative core, any form of contradiction.

### **The research object in an intentional perspective of the subject/researcher**

Scientific research does not always reveal what one wants to know, either because the researched object did not allow for greater observation angles and, therefore, greater clarification of the layers of what was investigated, or because the problematization around the research question fertilizes the aridity of the world of the impossible, even because, in the conception of Cirne-Lima (1996, p. 63), “being impossible, in logic, means not-being-possible; what is impossible cannot be, what is impossible cannot exist.”

For a long time, the “[...] myth of the safe harbor [...]” (JAPIASSU, 1983, p. 15) was sought for the illusory appearance of scientism that permeates research in education, as a way of shielding the object of study of the investigator's interference. Sometimes, the subject/researcher is led to believe that he can control his desires and not contaminate his research with his thoughts. This illusory appearance of neutrality is not born with him, but is taught to him at school. In this regard, Japiassu (1983, p. 26) points out that:

The scientist articulates what he observes with what he imagines. Before observing a phenomenon, he already has a certain idea of what should be observed, that is, he has already decided what will be possible and he already has a certain idea of what “reality” might be. The scientist already has a certain conception of the unknown, of that domain situated beyond what logic and experience authorize him to believe. In a word, scientific research always begins with the invention of a possible world, or a fragment of the possible “real”.

As can be seen, even before the research object is analyzed by the subject/researcher, the subject/researcher, by himself, already sees it in the context of his intentions, which, obviously, is still natural, after all, it is not you may want to know something that is not even visualized in the cognitive world. For Japiassu (1983, p. 31):

If, on the other hand, we ask ourselves about the way science works, about its social role, about its way of explaining phenomena and understanding man in the world, we will easily perceive that the real conditions in which objective and rationalized are bathed in an undeniable socio-political-cultural atmosphere. It is this socio-historical framework, making science a human product, our product, that leads objective knowledge to appeal, whether they like it or not, to theoretical, philosophical, ideological or axiological assumptions that are not always made explicit. In other words, there is no “pure”, “autonomous” and “neutral” science, as if it were possible to enjoy the privilege of not-knowing-what “immaculate conception”.

In this way, the reception of the research object, in a scientific perspective, only opens with the method developed by Descartes. Therefore, Filho (2018, p. 727-728) recognizes that:

[...] we are not wrong in saying that the main reason why Descartes entered the history of thought was because he left us as a legacy, as what must constantly be thought, the question of method. From Descartes onwards, the fact of having a method becomes the criterion for achieving the scientific. For, for the philosopher, the method is what allows juxtaposing to common sense, that is, the rationality common to all human beings, the possibility of unifying the different perspectives of thought through rules that undoubtedly delimit the field of certainty, establishing the distinction between the false and the true.

The 'rancid' of scientific rationalism still appears, with great rigor, in academic research: the appearance of a puritanical science that, while fitting into an epistemological perspective, passes through the experimental stages, exempt from any intervention by the researcher. And whose fault is it? To whom should the result of these anxieties that inculcate the best thought be attributed? The answer is very simple: this rationalism is in the 'DNA' of scientism and in the institutions that reproduce it. Many scientists keep within themselves this pilgrimage

towards the neutrality arising from the empirical-formal sciences, idealizing it, in their practices, as if it were a religion.

However, it is emphasized that the tradition of modern sciences is (re)produced as an unquestionable truth in the academies, not being able to depart from it under pain of being thrown into the intellectual desert. In this conjecture of everything assent without, at least, being able to use common sense to oppose the concepts of exacerbated scientism, it is observed that all scientific discoveries are subject to the pressure of time: an emblematic mark that represents the capital production system, even because “this representation includes the aspect of knowledge of the properties of the real world (science), of valorization (ethics) and of symbolization (art)”. (DERMEVAL, 2015, p. 286).

Despite the relevance of chronological time, which conditions human actions, from a perspective of capital reproduction, and the other pressures that emerge from the way of elaboration, material and non-material, it is not intended here to deepen such studies, even because this does not is the intention raised in this article. Returning to the initial reasoning, it appears that many teachers, scientists, specialists and experts, within the scope of educational establishments, approach the mistaken understanding that the subject/researcher must master the object as a means of better appropriating the specifics of knowledge there. under study. It is basically a circular discourse that explicitly projects the scientist's intentionality in the dimensions of the object being researched.

It is important to emphasize that even taking into account the rhetoric of the eloquent discourse, fostered in the academic ranks, with regard to the neutrality of the subject/researcher, during the act of scientific investigation, as well as the scientific guise that permeates the nature of the object itself, some reflections should be considered and (re)thought in teaching and learning practices. In view of such notes, Filho (2018, p. 733) argues that:

In this way, the so-called object tends to say only what the subject wants to hear. That is why, in everyday research, we usually hear the teacher's orientation: you have to dominate your object! But do we really get to dominate our object in the practice of educational research? Is it amenable to such domination? And, if this is the case, is this what we do educational research for? After all, to dominate the human being? As we know, it may be so, it may be not.

And, based on the premise that the subject/researcher dominates his research object, is the knowledge obtained legitimate from the point of view of 'should-be'? Not always the researcher is bathed in the laurels of his discovery, not least because 'should-be' "[...] is a kind of necessity which, by its internal structure, allows and even demands that things can also be

otherwise. What 'should be' is necessary in a certain sense [...]" (CIRNE-LIMA, 1996, p. 107), but it is not always revealed on the plane of what should be.

In view of these explanations, it is necessary to understand that the methodical format instituted by Descartes and, later, subjected to the analytical rigor of many other philosophical thinkers of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, is no longer in line, or in dialogue, with the current needs of society and, as a result, with the emerging scientific thought. There is no such thing as ready and finished knowledge, since society is not static. Thought is not immutable, nor is the understanding of the object of research the same. In view of this, Japiassu (1983, p. 19) observes that

On the contrary, the pedagogy of uncertainty tries to relativize scientific production and the teaching of science. Because this is one of the conditions for students to develop their critical capacity, to assume themselves as individualized and creative personalities, capable of not living only in the shadow of teachers, of famous authors that would serve as crutches, or of a school of thought that would fit them into rigid and dogmatic mental schemes. For me, the bitter taste of uncertainty and the intimate pain of helplessness in the face of relativizing learning, incapable of absolute parameters and catechetical dogmatism, are extremely healthy. Because it is in the anguish of the uncertainty of the theories studied, in the fact that they feel lost in their process of intellectual growth, and in the sometimes disappointing discovery that there is no safe harbor in the domain of knowledge, that the students will be able to let themselves be possessed by life, if they intend to possess it.

Knowledge is a historical production and mobilizes interests of different orders, in different scenarios, which is why the results that emerge from the object of research in education should be observed from a perspective of overcoming the previous weaknesses, since the alleged intention of mastering the research object is nothing more than a "paranoia" (JAPIASSU, 1983, p. 18) disseminated in universities and other formal learning spaces.

However, the problem does not reside in the methodical use of formulas and/or in the uncertainties that occupy the thoughts of the subject/researchers, but, rather, in the reiterated practice of what has already been researched. Basically, it is a reproduction of what already exists in the world of sensible things. This excessive scientific reproduction of that which already exists only serves to reinforce apparent scientism, because "whoever, from the point of view of knowledge, can only walk on rails or supported by crutches is unprepared for life, is a victim of intellectual paraplegia. (JAPIASSU, 1983, p. 22).

The impasse lies in the insistence of this reproduction of knowledge in the student ranks, as well as in the peaceful and comfortable way of facing this situation by the subjects/researchers. In this vein, Flickinger (2010, p. 19) emphasizes that:



Ultimately, the scandal of the objectivity fetish that governs the modern-instrumental rationality of knowledge consists not so much in the illusion that objective truth must abstract from the subjective conditions of the knowing man; rather, the scandal finds its true root in the underlying motive of this fetish: through the insistence on the idea of the objectivity of the process of knowledge, the knowing subject obviously immunizes himself, in order not to feel forced to realize his own restricted competence, concerning the mastery of the process that would lead to the configuration of the meaning to be elaborated. Therefore, the risk of subjective influences that would deform the knowledge of the objective world is not so dangerous, but rather that of demanding from the knowing subject the abdication of the idea of his being-self-owner. No doubt this demand would affect his most intrinsic vanity.

On the other hand, it is verified that the determinism of the method does not compare with the rigor of the scientist who stubbornly believes that all answers will emerge from the application of ready and finished formulas. It is from this scenario of revelations that one can perceive that the subject/researcher is not neutral in the investigation of his research object, not even scientific research itself is exempt from the gaze of its conductor. Thus, "[...] if the claim of science is to describe nature and to radically distinguish dream from reality, we must not forget that men have as much need of dream as of reality". (JAPIASSU, 1983, p. 23).

Therefore, the scientist's intention of mastering the object cannot be understood as the ultimate goal in educational research and/or be anchored in the hope that the use of the method will provide the desired truth. This path must be gradually built by the subject/researcher. Thus, in the words of Filho (2018, p. 738):

For the educational researcher, there is only one way to find his object of study, and that is to go out into the world. A world which, necessarily, can only be the world as it appears to us, that is, the phenomenal world of empirics. Whose data, evidently, we cannot disregard. Quantifying the world is one of the qualities we most appreciate in ourselves. For it is this quality that gives us certainty about ourselves and opens us the possibility of controlling the quantified, of, as has already been said, dominating the object.

It is in this factual universe, in development, that the researcher needs to build the foundations for the acquisition of knowledge, certain that one cannot dominate the object of research, either because education does not imprison its participants, or because one cannot get into all the layers that circumscribe the nature of this researched object, considering that "we are not the ones who dominate things. They dominate us" (JAPIASSU, 1983, p. 19).

Moreover, if such conception of dominion over the object, in educational research, were considered as an unquestionable truth, along the lines of a religious tradition, education would

certainly be an instrument of oppression and imprisonment, not only of the physical body, but also of the soul, hindering the freedom of the human being.

Starting from the assumption that research in education should be guided by the choices of the subject/researchers, one cannot deny their intentionality in the research scenario, even because they cannot suffer any embarrassment in their critical freedom to observe their object of study. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the method used with which the scientist intends to submit the object of research, the paths taken, and the mental elucubrations necessary for the elaboration of the chapters that will integrate the scientific production.

In view of these discussions and reflections, and considering the positioning of Japiassu (1983, 2001); Cirne-Lima (1996); Demo (2010) and Filho (2018), it is possible to say that there is no neutrality on the part of the subject/researcher in educational research, much less is the research object exempt from the vitiating ideologies of the human spirit. For these authors, scientific research is produced under the 'look' of those who conduct it and, therefore, suffers the incidence of the wills, pretensions, and inculcations that guide scientists, which is why the partiality of the subjects before the results obtained is notorious.

So that "it is in letting the other be that he can reveal himself. If what we want is to really know him, and not subjugate him, obviously. Thus, researching always involves understanding a possibility of ourselves" (FILHO, 2018, p. 743), reflecting the interests and desires of the researcher.

### **The performative contradiction in educational research**

Thinking about the research object that circumscribes the field of education is to be faced with a reality of infinite possibilities that can be explored by the scientist and that implies a considerable range of epistemological (re)constructions that enable a differentiated version of what is studied, even because there is not an "[...] absolute truth [...]" (JAPIASSU, 1983, p. 34) that guides research in general. Even because, "the universal, when it does not respond adequately to the structural demands of the particular, loses its strength, abdicates its validity and, finally, breaks into pieces". (CIRNE-LIMA, 1996, p. 53).

Therefore, one always seeks a modalization of discourse in the sense of only extending, in time and space, the results now obtained in the act of examining, since "research does not undo this relativity, it only puts on the scene other arguments that deserve attention and debate, in an endless reconstructive process". (DEMO, 2010, p. 194).

Proof of this is the basic premise that is learned in early mathematics classes, for example, when the teacher argues that the order of the factors does not change the product. In this vein, the equation  $2X + 3X = 5X$  will be used to better exemplify what has been exposed so far. Reflecting on the sentence above, it can be seen, in the order in which these elements appear, that the ordinary position in which one predicate or another occupies is of little importance, since the result of the sum will remain invariable, that is,  $5x$ .

Perhaps this principle works in the mathematical sciences, where the order of the factors does not change the product, but in the area of education, can the inversion of the order of the factors change the product intended by the subject/researcher?

If there is a methodological change of approach to the object, in the same scenario, could one think of maintaining the same specificities of the knowledge that one intends to obtain? Naturally, this answer has already been clarified in the previous section, considering that there is no immutable knowledge. In this circumstance, Japiassu (1983, p. 22) stresses that

We need to recognize modestly, and once and for all, that there is no longer an absolute concept of truth. This means that the notion of truth must be introduced into human time. It cannot escape the category of temporality. It is in this sense that all human truth is made of certain verified ideas made true. A frozen truth becomes an intellectual anesthesia. Its paralyzing effect generates numerous diseases of the spirit, among which is the adult paralysis of intelligence. On the other hand, since we are condemned to live in a plural world, to coexist with a world in which different forms of discourses coexist, different ways of conceiving man and truth itself, our human knowledge must be taken as an object of research, not of revelation.

There is no pure science and/or research exempt from the interests of the subject/researcher, given that "the process of knowledge production is not only technical, methodological, it is also political, even because innovative knowledge is now recognized as a more strategic intervention in reality. (DEMO, 2010, p. 226). Undoubtedly, the nature of research is bathed in the intentionalities imbricated in the actions of those who propose to research. Considering all the above, Japiassu (1983, p. 33-34) states the following:

Now, administratively and financially, science depends on multiple official or industrial organizations. Some fields of research are strongly stimulated for reasons that have nothing to do with pure knowledge, for "reasons" that scientific reason does not know. Socially, pure science is a fiction. Behind the knowledge/applications dichotomy hides the idea that science has a status transcendent to society. It would only count on the search for Truth. Science would be autonomous, because it would give itself its own norms. It would be governed by an internal ethic. It would not be governed by an ethic imposing duties to society on researchers. Therefore, the myth of pure science founds, on the one hand, the social irresponsibility of scientists; on the other hand, it

provides the State or Power with a perfect justification for the apoliticism of research.

Regardless of the understanding that there is no 'absolute truth' in scientific research, especially in the field of education, the fact is that the indeterminacy, and subsequent relativization of the intended scientific knowledge, reveals the performative contradiction. Faced with such conclusions, Japiassu (1983, p. 20-21) states as follows:

[...] what we intend to affirm is that there can be no absolute truth in the domain of human knowledge, in the sense that it would be the point of perfection of knowledge. Because it is always a stage in a process of constant approximation. We mean, in other words, that truth is a historical reality. And it is in this sense that it is relative. For it leads us to admit the provisionality of any and all explanatory models. This has nothing to do with epistemological relativism, since a truth can very well be relative without, however, ceasing to be absolutely true. We do not absolutely deny the truth, which would be another form of dogmatism. But we introduce it into human time, the only time we know. The temporality of truth introduces a revolution in thought: it is not a matter of denying everything, repeating the systematic doubt of the skeptics or reediting the tabula rasa of methodical doubt, but of accepting everything through a thought whose fruitfulness lies precisely in its constant attempts to approach the truth. As for absolute truth, it is neither the measure nor the judge of the relativity of truths: it only constitutes the overcoming of these truths, an overcoming that is constantly enriched.

Starting from the premise that research in education is not based on a puritanical knowledge, even because "to rely on a truth, as in an absolute, is to carry out a censorship whose legitimacy we cannot substantiate" (JAPIASSU, 1983, p. 21). 21), the conception that the subject/researcher only approaches the truth does not fail to reveal the content of "[...] dogmatism [...]" (JAPIASSU, 1983, p. 26) implicit in the initial structures of the studies, thus reinforcing the incidence of performative contradiction in the course of scientific production. Corroborating the understanding of Japiassu (1983) and Filho (2018), Cirne-Lima (1996, p. 115) asserts that:

The contradiction that causes the movement of the system is, especially in Logic, the performative contradiction. I determine the plurality and richness of the presupposed world as being something indeterminate, as something that says nothing determined. The performative act of saying and determining determines everything as being something indeterminate, as the indeterminate being, which, seen from the other side, is the indeterminate nothingness. To determine something as being totally indeterminate is a performative contradiction. The act of thinking is in performative contradiction with the content thought and said, this contradiction needs to be worked out and overcome.

Taking advantage of this line of reasoning, by denying the 'absolute truth' in educational research and, concomitantly, accepting that the researcher will be able, during his studies, to reach, at most, the relative knowledge, it would be, in this way, validating a limited knowledge, in the light of the Non-Contradiction Principle and, therefore, reinforcing the performativity at the origin of scientific productions, especially those coming from the field of education. In this regard, Cirne-Lima (1996, p. 16) mentions that:

The Principle of Non-Contradiction is the sentence that states that it is impossible for a proposition to be true if and when it contradicts itself. What does this mean? Someone contradicts himself when he says something certain but simultaneously contradicts himself by asserting the truth of the opposite. Contradiction is simultaneously asserting the truth of "p" and "not-p". The "p" precludes the assertion of the truth of "not-p". An old formulation of Logic says: two contradictorily opposite propositions cannot be simultaneously true, nor simultaneously false. If one is true, the other is necessarily false.

On the other hand, if the subject/researcher, during the realization of scientific research, holds only the expectation of achieving the 'relative truth' about the researched object, then, in the same way, it can be inferred that the knowledge to be produced, relativized, dogmatized and impregnated with the intentionalities of who launches himself into the research field, is undoubtedly doomed to the "[...] logic of failure [...]" (FLICKINGER, 2010, p. 18).

In view of such observations, one notices that the Non-Contradiction Principle does not match the performative contradiction imbricated in the research embraced in education, being, before anything else and, in view of its very nature, opposition in the ontic field of should-be. The Principle of Non-Contradiction "[...] does not say that contradiction is impossible, it only says that it must not exist, that it must be avoided. The modal operator here is weaker than the traditional one, it is deontic. At the beginning of all Logics there is not an Impossible, but a Must Not" (CIRNE-LIMA, 1996, p. 126).

Relative truth becomes a dogma in educational research and puts into question the nature of knowledge produced under the logic of modern scientism. The "[...] must-be [...]" (CIRNE-LIMA, 1996, p. 60), in scientific productions, provides an opportunity for deep reflections in the field of knowledge, fostering different forms of conceptions of the object of study, which is a premise that reinforces the performative contradiction that surrounds research.

Such discussions about the 'myth' of absolute truth in educational research, in contrast to the relativized knowledge that can be expected from them, allow a reflection on the way of understanding the scientific production and, concomitantly, inaugurates the need to (re)think

the teaching and learning practices in the school environment, in a more realistic, multidisciplinary and collaborative perspective.

One does not develop scientific research with 'absolute truths', and one should not even resign oneself to the performative contradiction resulting from the acceptance of an 'approximate truth'. The nature of scientism cannot predominate in the reality of the researched object, and, therefore, it is necessary to review previous positions established in the teaching and learning process. Given the above, Demo (2010, p. 84) reinforces that:

The misstep can be characterized as criticism without a sense of self-criticism. In fact, modern science has abolished all supposedly scientific authorities, putting in their place the art of good argument. However, this criticism, largely frenetically announced and practiced, has not paid attention to the other side of the same coin: the coherence of criticism lies in self-criticism. It is a clamorous performative contradiction to criticize and not accept to be criticized, to question and not to be questioned, to evaluate and not accept to be evaluated. The so-called "post-modern" movement, among many banalities, has this strong message: science that questions well is that which questions itself, in the first place. Thus put, validity claims become only relative [...].

The discourse, meticulously architected, in defense of an approximate truth, seems to be well accepted in the academic scenario, however, one cannot lose sight of the fact that this conception of acceptance of relative knowledge is also a dogma that reflects the performative contradiction at the core of scientific research, compromising it in its origin.

Whether in the scope of a protectionism that covers such an 'absolute truth' or in the face of a 'relative knowledge' that reinforces the existence of contradiction, the fact is that it is up to the teacher to adopt a more dialectical and collaborative posture towards his audience: the students. And this implies profound changes in their teaching practices and in the way they perceive scientific knowledge. On this subject, Japiassu (1983, p. 16-17) comments that

Hence the easy temptation to present oneself to students as a safe harbor. This is a fearful illusion, since it constitutes a geometric neurosis. Instead of proposing to the "victims" only possible instruments to approach the truth, he starts "teaching" or "transmitting" to them his own truth, or the truth of an author who serves as an intellectual crutch. Because it is possible that a teacher, not being convinced of his own positions, will appeal to the protection of a famous author who will serve him as a scientific "matron", reducing his function to that of a mere repeater or, at best, a promoter of other people's ideas. From then on, it is up to the students to drink the master-author's teachings, without suspecting that they are undergoing a terrible intellectual deformation. They begin to live with the illusion of a safe harbor, the fallacy of evidence and right theories.

A considerable number of educators end up anchored in the ideas promoted in textbooks and forget that knowledge is not restricted to the mere reading of works composed by renowned authors. This conception of 'following' a certain famous writer, whether by teachers or students, makes the critical sense and autonomy in the construction of the learning process unfeasible, setting up a vicious circle of repetition of what has already been researched. Alluding to the behavior that should be adopted by the teacher in the classroom, Japiassu (1983, p. 17) warns that

If we have to teach our students something, let us teach them to think, let us teach them to learn, to construct and reconstruct themselves, to ask questions and question what is already known. Because it is the educator's task to provoke in the students psychological imbalances or needs, a desire for research, a spirit of searching, a thirst for discovery. Because educational action always presupposes the reformation of an illusion, a continuous process of rectification of lost illusions. Truth can only be reached after a true intellectual repentance. Another task of the educator is to doubt himself, to know how to create real difficulties, to eliminate false obstacles and imaginary difficulties. It is not so much up to him to lead students to acquire a scientific culture, as to collaborate and create the conditions for them to change their culture. We need to give our reasoning reasons to evolve.

It seeks, therefore, to move beyond the 'relative truth' and overcome the performative contradiction impregnated in educational research with the establishment of a distinct proposition and, linked to that, the effective appropriation of knowledge, detaching itself from the myth of the 'absolute truth', and the conditioning of a 'relative truth', which is limited in time and space.

The confrontation between the performative contradiction arising from the understanding that one can only reach the "relative truth" in educational research, and the intellectual conviction that there is no absolute and definitive knowledge, does not constitute an affront to the Principle of Non-Contradiction. Both premises do not, however, oppose the maintenance of relative truth in subject/researcher studies, as well as the non-distinction and, therefore, overcoming of the status of relativity in educational research, which may foster other contradictions internalized at the core of research.

The conception of 'relative truth', if not overcome, imposes the performative contradiction that limits the scope of studies now intended by the scientist, making it impossible to advance research, as well as the elaboration of other premises-possibilities in the regular course of eventual academic productions.

It is worth pointing out that academic research, especially in the field of education, is impregnated with relative knowledge, and this, therefore, is a form of dogmatic understanding

of the intended knowledge. Starting from the reasoning that knowledge is relative, clearly the dogmatic nature of the research will be present, and that such understanding, which portrays the relativity of knowledge, will highlight the presence of the performative contradiction.

It is at this moment that the subject/researcher must mobilize to observe the performativity of the act of reading and writing and, in light of the Non-Contradiction Principle, seek to overcome the divergence with the construction of a differentiated premise-possibility that may indicate other paths to be taken in the research.

Therefore, in the conception of Cirne-Lima (1996); Japiassu (1983, 2001); Demo (2010) and Filho (2018), it is necessary that the researcher, when confronted with his object of study, seeks to investigate as many layers as possible that contemplate the object observed, in order to overcome the performative contradiction that is established in the idea of a relative truth, without, however, becoming alienated in the false hope of puritanical scientism that pursues a non-existent absolutism.

If the contradiction is maintained, the subject/researcher should mobilize to overcome it, and so on, always seeking to explore other possibilities that may emerge in the production of knowledge. It is a work of (re)construction of what has already been researched and/or of what will be investigated in terms of academic production, aiming at the establishment of other paths and directions that aim at the re-signification of the knowledge now (re)produced in the course of scientific research.

It is a continuous exercise, which requires an effort to transpose the performative contradiction by the researcher, with a focus on locating other clues that may indicate other paths to be taken in the research, conditioning the scientist to the perception of different ways of analyzing the object.

### **Final remarks**

The purpose of this article was to discuss the 'supposed' neutrality of the scientist, with emphasis on academic productions, as well as to reflect on the dogmatic nature that tarnishes research related to the field of education. In accordance with what was glimpsed in the course of the scientific work, Cirne-Lima (1996); Japiassu (1983, 2001); Demo (2010) and Filho (2018) have positioned themselves in favor of overcoming the performative contradiction in research in education. These authors argued that scientific investigations cannot be guided by a 'supposed' absolute truth, given that the analyzed object ends up being contaminated by the intentionality of the subject/researcher.



Moreover, we sought to address the performative contradiction that permeates scientific research and meditate on the dogmatic nature that, implicitly, is inserted in studies related to the educational field, in the light of the Non-Contradiction Principle. During the development of the reasoning here intended, it was realized that scientific production is not exempt from the 'looks' and 'wishes' of those who (re)produce it.

According to what has been evidenced in this article, scientific research is not neutral, because it is influenced by the interests and expectations of the scientist. Another relevant aspect discussed during the studies and that deserves attention is that it is not possible to reach an 'absolute truth' in educational research, and that the conductor of the research, at most, can approach a relative knowledge of what he or she proposes to study. Starting from the premise that the knowledge that emerges from the object of study will always be a 'relative truth', it was verified that such a way of understanding what one proposes to examine highlights a negation that, objectively, limits the field of verification of the researched information, influencing, obviously, the subject that launches itself into academic research.

The conception that, at most, one can give prestige to a 'relative truth' in the course of educational research reveals the dogmatic nature now imposed by the limitations of the studies concerning the object of analysis, thus evidencing the performative contradiction. Moreover, it was clear that scientific research carries with it a dogmatic nature arising from the presence of the performative contradiction, in light of the Principle of Non-Contradiction, and that the overcoming of the initial circumstance is necessary from the point of view of the desired scientific advance.

Therefore, it is up to the subject/researcher to transcend the relativism impregnated in educational research and, tied to this, the performative contradiction, with the elevation of scientific investigations to a level of (re)discovery of other angles of appreciation of the study carried out, in order to inaugurate a differentiated premise/possibility to be followed in academic productions.

In attention to what was exposed in this scientific work, it is emphasized that the considerations raised here do not have the power to represent an 'absolute truth', given that knowledge and its forms of acquisition and problematization are not restricted to the notion of right or wrong. The culture of 'knowing', the incessant search for scientific proof, the experiments and their functionality in everyday life, as well as the addictive ideologies that have fed man's investigative spirit over the centuries, stems from his eagerness to explore the unknown. The desire to conquer the fertile ground of inventiveness and to prove, scientifically, the relevance of something in the cognitive world, reinforces his patrimonialist culture of ontic

'should-be' that is not limited to time and space. Man has the need to (re)state his theories as a means of understanding the universe around him.

However, the researcher's intervention in the process of proving his conjectures is an emblematic historical trait that affects the scientism of his discovery. Thus, it was observed that the scientist's posture of neutrality does not exist in educational research. Moreover, it was sought, during this scientific investigation, to provide an opportunity for detailed reflection on the pitfalls and excessive pretensions that can lead the researcher to the subjection of his own "truths", propping himself up in the clothing of the empirical-formal sciences, under the misconception that his research reflects a unique and unquestionable truth, when, in fact, it is nothing more than a false interpretation of the reality of himself.

## REFERENCES

- ABBAGNANO, N. **Dicionário de filosofia**. 2. ed. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1998.
- CIRNE-LIMA, C. R. V. **Sobre a contradição**. 2. ed. Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS, 1996.
- CIRNE-LIMA, C. R. V. **Dialética para principiantes**. Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS, 1996.
- DEMO, P. **O educador e a prática da pesquisa**. Ribeirão Preto: Alfabeta, 2010.
- FILHO, F. S. A. **Mas, afinal, para quê, então, filosofia? uma leitura do Górgias de Platão**. Chapecó: UFFS, 2018.
- FILHO, F. S. A. Para pensarmos a prática da pesquisa em Educação. **Educação e Filosofia**, Uberlândia, v. 32, n. 65, p. 725-746, maio/ago. 2018. Available at: <https://seer.ufu.br/index.php/EducacaoFilosofia/article/view/37400/26022>. Accessed on: 15 Mar. 2021.
- FLICKINGER, H-G. **A caminho de uma pedagogia hermenêutica**. Campinas: Autores Associados, 2010.
- JAPIASSU, H. **A pedagogia da incerteza**. Rio de Janeiro: Imago, 1983.
- JAPIASSU, H.; MARCONDES, D. **Dicionário básico de filosofia**. 3. ed. revista e ampliada. Rio de Janeiro: TupyKurumin, 2001.

### **How to reference this article**

FRANDALOSO, J. M.; LEITE, M. A. From the absolute truth to the relativism of scientific knowledge: A look at the educational research. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação**, Araraquara, v. 17, n. 2, p. 1426-1444, Apr./June. 2022. e-ISSN: 1982-5587. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riaee.v17i2.15825>

**Submitted:** 09/11/2021

**Revisions required:** 23/12/2021

**Approved:** 11/02/2022

**Published:** 01/04/2022

Management of translations and versions: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação

Translator: Thiago Faquim Bittencourt

Translation reviewer: Alexander Vinícius Leite da Silva