

**SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES AND SOCIALLY FAIR SCHOOL: THE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

***FINALIDADES EDUCATIVAS ESCOLARES E ESCOLA SOCIALMENTE JUSTA: A ABORDAGEM PEDAGÓGICA DA DIVERSIDADE SOCIAL E CULTURAL***

***FINALIDADES EDUCATIVAS ESCOLARES Y ESCUELA SOCIALMENTE JUSTA: EL ENFOQUE PEDAGÓGICO DE LA DIVERSIDAD SOCIAL Y CULTURAL***

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**ABSTRACT:** This article discusses the relation between different views of school educational aims in a socially fair school and the place that occupies in them the care of sociocultural diversity, aiming to bring to the discussion the implications of this care in the pedagogical-didactic plan in the school and classes. The first topic seeks to establish the relations between school educational purposes, the socially fair school and sociocultural diversity. In the second, the political and pedagogical relevance of studies on diversity is highlighted, bringing different approaches to Brazilian and some countries in Latin American researches. Finally, the third topic suggests a pedagogical diversity approach in a socially fair school in a developmental teaching perspective.

**KEYWORDS:** School educational purposes. Fair school. Sociocultural diversity. Teaching-learning process. Teaching for human development.

**RESUMO:** *O presente artigo aborda a relação entre diferentes visões de finalidades educativas escolares acerca da escola socialmente justa e o lugar que o atendimento à diversidade sociocultural ocupa nessas finalidades. O objetivo é trazer à discussão as implicações desse atendimento no plano pedagógico-didático na escola e nas salas de aulas. No primeiro tópico, busca-se estabelecer as relações entre finalidades educativas escolares, escola socialmente justa e diversidade sociocultural. No segundo, é destacada a relevância política e pedagógica dos estudos sobre diversidade, trazendo diferentes abordagens do tema em pesquisas no Brasil e em alguns países da América Latina. Finalmente, no terceiro tópico, é sugerida uma abordagem pedagógica da diversidade em uma escola socialmente justa na perspectiva do ensino voltado para o desenvolvimento humano.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Finalidades educativas escolares. Escola justa. Diversidade sociocultural. Processo de ensino-aprendizagem. Ensino para o desenvolvimento humano.*

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**RESUMEN:** *Este artículo aborda la relación entre diferentes visiones de las finalidades educativas escolares sobre la escuela socialmente justa y el lugar que la atención a la diversidad sociocultural ocupa en estas finalidades. El objetivo es traer a la discusión las implicaciones de esta atención en el plan pedagógico-didáctico en la escuela y en las aulas. En el primero tópico, se busca establecer las relaciones entre las finalidades educativas escolares, la escuela socialmente justa y la diversidad sociocultural. En el segundo, se destaca la relevancia política y pedagógica de los estudios sobre diversidad, trayendo diferentes enfoques al tema en la investigación en Brasil y en algunos países de América Latina. Finalmente, en el tercer tema, se sugiere un enfoque pedagógico a la diversidad en una escuela socialmente justa desde la perspectiva de la enseñanza orientada hacia el desarrollo humano.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Fines educativos escolares. Feria de la escuela. Diversidad sociocultural. Proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Enseñanza para el desarrollo humano.*

## Introduction

The text proposes to address the relation between different views of school educational purposes on a socially fair school and to highlight, in one of these purposes, the service to socio-cultural diversity, aiming to gather elements of analysis of its implications in the pedagogical-didactic plan at school and in classes. The presence of difference and human diversity in teaching is a classic theme of pedagogy, however, the consequences of this issue in the political and academic debate in recent decades have brought to light different ways of approaching it politically and pedagogically in school organization and at work of teachers in class. We argue that this debate has appeared in different ways in Brazil and in some Latin American countries, in which both the political and the pedagogical discourse are emphasized, but often subsuming the pedagogical in the political. Thus, the aim of this article is to highlight the relevance of the pedagogical-didactic dimension of socio-cultural diversity in a vision of a socially just school from the perspective of teaching geared towards human development, without disregarding the strongly political implications of the theme. In this sense, at first, the intention is to establish relations between school educational purposes, the socially fair school and socio-cultural diversity. The second highlights the political and pedagogical relevance of studies on diversity, bringing different approaches to the topic in academic production in Brazil and in some countries in Latin America. Finally, in the third moment, a pedagogical approach to diversity is proposed in a socially fair school from the perspective of teaching geared towards human development.

## **School educational purposes, socially fair school and socio-cultural diversity**

The discussion about a socially fair school is linked to the definitions of school educational purposes in the education systems, to the emphasis given in these definitions to the attention to socio-cultural diversity and to the ways of ensuring this attention pedagogically in schools. Some issues come up when considering these relations. What notion of educational justice is behind the stated purposes? Is the search for social justice at school resolved by placing attention on diversity as the predominant educational purpose? Or is this service to diversity subordinated to classic school functions aimed at the cultural and scientific formation of students? Can overvaluing difference lead to sacrificing service to equality? Is it possible to think of a type of teaching that ensures that all students learn what is necessary to learn as a condition of equality between human beings and, at the same time, consider the human and social diversity of these students in the teaching-learning process? Such questions show the relevance of school educational purposes and how their statements are reflected in the formulation of a socially just school concept. At the same time, they provide indications that it is not possible to design a fair school without taking into account the socio-cultural diversity and the ways of dealing with it politically and pedagogically.

The issue of school educational purposes is crucial in the current context of studies on public education, since it has other implications, including the positions on the predominant functions of schools. Studies on school educational purposes that have occupied the attention of foreign researchers (LENOIR *et al.*, 2016; LESSARD; MEIRIEU, 2005; FIALA, 2007; NODDINGS, 2007; among others) and Brazilians (EVANGELISTA, 2014; LIBÂNEO, 2014; 2016; 2019; PESSONI, 2017; LIBÂNEO; FREITAS, 2018), bring conceptual clarifications, theoretical sources and comparative studies. For Lenoir *et al.* (2016), the issue of school educational purposes is complex and controversial. Today, nations have a real interest in school, it is seen as a necessity and, sometimes, as a panacea for society's problems. However, when it comes to the discussion of purposes, different understandings of the concepts of democracy or justice and their uses emerge, as well as conceptions about the objectives, functions and ways in which schools operate.

According to the same authors, school educational purposes define the attribution of meaning and value to the educational process, indicate both explicit and implicit orientations to school systems, induce actions at the empirical and operational levels for teaching-learning practices. The purposes also reflect the notion of being “educated” in a given society according to social, cultural, political contexts and, thus, determine parameters by which educational

agents base their practices on systems management, in schools and classrooms. The elaboration of the purposes takes place at the social and political level in different institutional, governmental, business, professional, associative instances, expressing interests and power relations at the international and national levels and, at the academic level, within the framework of philosophical, sociological, psychological currents, etc., which are in force in the educational field from which theories of education arise. Especially at the academic level, it is worth mentioning the current clashes in the field of education regarding the social role of schools, from which strong disagreements about the meaning of “teaching quality” originate, making it difficult to fight politically in the face of clear goals and objectives expressed in neoliberal policies for education (LIBÂNEO, 2011, 2018). As a result, Lenoir et al. (2016), based on comparative studies in relation to several countries, point out dilemmas in the definition of school functions: instruction or socialization, opening or control, general education or professional qualification, schooling or attending to socio-cultural diversity, formation of conservative individualist values or collective values of justice, solidarity, autonomy. At present, school educational purposes are strongly linked to agendas established at the level of the global political economy through international bodies and agencies (EVANGELISTA, 2014), imposing on the educational systems the economicist view that the school would be the place destined only for formation for work, aiming at professional skills and dexterity. In opposition to this view, critical educators are confronted in the search for principles around a socially fair school focused on human emancipation.

The relation between education and social justice is a theme present in the most different conceptions of educational purposes. In search of criteria for the distribution of educational assets, in a very general formulation, social justice at school would be to guarantee to all students a common base of knowledge and skills indispensable for preparing for a professional future and achieving success in social life. However, this formulation takes on very different meanings according to philosophical, sociological, pedagogical premises of the educational purposes that support it. Three positions can be pointed out as possible responses to the pretensions of social justice at school: results education, education for diversity, education as the development of human capacities in articulation with diversity (LIBÂNEO, 2019).

The first position refers to the education of results, defined based on economic criteria, in which the school aims to provide the minimum content necessary for work and employment, expressed in instrumental skills evaluated by standardized tests, and a type of formation of attitudes and values for containing social conflicts. According to article 4 of the World Declaration on Education for all (UNESCO, 1990), “basic education must be centered on the

acquisition and effective learning results, [...] hence the need to define, in educational programs, the levels desirable knowledge acquisition and implementing performance evaluation systems”<sup>3</sup>. As already discussed in other studies (LEHER, 1998; ALGEBAILLE, 2009; EVANGELISTA; SHIROMA, 2006; EVANGELISTA, 2014; among others), results education is part of the logic of the poverty alleviation policies in which the school is placed as a State strategy to solve social and economic problems that may affect the social and political order. Garcia mentions that the terms "social inclusion" and "inclusive education" are found in the documents of international and national organizations in direct relation to educational policies aimed at reducing poverty and serving "vulnerable" groups. According to the author, “this approach contributes to the process of transforming the meaning of the expression 'collective rights' into 'individual responsibilities’”<sup>4</sup> (GARCIA, 2014, p. 109). In summary, from the perspective of results education, a fair school is the one that distributes a “minimum” curriculum to everyone, based on minimum competencies and skills for work, measured by standardized tests, in association with socio-educational actions aimed at socialization and integration Social. The individual is taken as a factor of economic production, disconnected from his social, cultural and material conditions of life, in a reductionist vision of human formation.

The second position, which places special emphasis on attention to differences between people and socio-cultural groups, was established both with the expansion of the struggle for human rights and with cultural movements that affirmed the difference between human beings and the right to difference. According to Candau (2011, p. 20), “cultural differences invade public spaces and demand their recognition and appreciation”<sup>5</sup>, for example, by accessing both educational opportunities and the job market, through representation in decision-making spaces. Attention to difference as a criterion of social justice is presented in different emphases, but its common denominator is the valorization of social and cultural practices in which the themes of plurality of cultures, cultural diversity and difference stand out. In a more extreme position, a post-critical view has as its key concepts identity and difference as elements of human subjectivity and the refusal of any criterion of universality proper to human beings.

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<sup>3</sup> “a educação básica deve estar centrada na aquisição e nos resultados efetivos da aprendizagem, [...] daí a necessidade de definir, nos programas educacionais, os níveis desejáveis de aquisição de conhecimentos e implementar sistemas de avaliação de desempenho”

<sup>4</sup> “essa abordagem contribui com o processo de transformação do significado da expressão ‘direitos coletivos’ em ‘responsabilidades individuais’”

<sup>5</sup> “as diferenças culturais invadem os espaços públicos e reivindicam seu reconhecimento e valorização”

Thus, with regard to knowledge, emphasis is placed on particular cultures and on the points of view of subjects from these cultures.

This sociological/intercultural vision of a fair school advocates a curriculum of socio-cultural experiences in which practices of sharing different values and solidarity stand out, welcoming social and cultural diversity, constituting cultural identities. However, as the social practices of current experience are valued more than the actual pedagogical practices, including access to scientific and cultural content, this view tends to dissolve the focus on knowledge and the development of intellectual capacities, a condition of autonomy and freedom to expand other human capacities, including “giving voice” to social rights. In summary, this vision understands that social justice at school happens when a diverse curriculum is offered to everyone, based on local and everyday educational experiences, focused on socio-cultural experiences, in an environment that welcomes students’ singularities and socio-cultural diversity.

The third position corresponds to the idea that the fairer school education is one that promotes and expands the development of human potential, providing the cognitive and affective means for students to achieve autonomy, freedom, participation and intervention in social reality. In this view, the school is one of the most important instances of democratizing society and promoting social inclusion, providing the means for the appropriation of socially constituted systematic knowledge, as a basis for the development of intellectual capacities and the formation of personality. Furthermore, it is considered that the school receives subjects in their social and cultural diversity and, therefore, it is necessary to link the school contents to the sociocultural and institutional practices (and their multiple relations) in which the students are inserted. The curriculum of cultural and scientific formation articulated with socio-cultural diversity arises from this vision. The social and pedagogical quality of the school begins with the commitment to social equality by seeking to reduce the difference in levels of schooling and education between social groups, since the overcoming of social inequalities is closely related to access to knowledge and school learning. This vision of educational and curriculum purposes recognizes and values the socio-cultural practices experienced in their daily lives, but these must be connected to the teaching-learning process of the contents. The reason for this is that, without appropriating the school contents that enable the strengthening of intellectual capacities, children and young people will not have secured their right to develop, to form new thinking capacities, to establish relations between the scientific concepts worked on by the school and the everyday concepts experienced in the spheres of the local, the community, the global, the planet. It is, therefore, to understand as a fair school that serves all through a

curriculum of cultural and scientific training, pedagogically articulated with socio-cultural diversity, and directly linked to the social, cultural and material conditions of students.

The last two positions commented have in common, a bet on the value of the public school. However, they represent different benchmarks of teaching quality which, in turn, influence the ways of conceiving activities within the scope of the school and the classrooms. It can be seen that the progressive positions in education place the objectives and ways of functioning of the school in a field of tensions: on the one hand, the social and democratic demand for formal schooling for all children and young people; on the other, the need for schools to organize themselves in an appropriate way to accommodate social and cultural diversity expressed by individual and social differences among students. Such polarization, however, tends to weaken the school's condition of doing social justice mainly for the poor population who have at school the chance of appropriating theoretical-conceptual knowledge and cognitive, affective and moral development. Is there a viable pedagogical way to overcome this polarization? Imbernon offers the understanding of a school capable of “helping students to grow and develop as people, making it easier for them to acquire basic skills, both cognitive and self-knowledge, personal autonomy and socialization”<sup>6</sup> and, for that, favor “the recognition of all abilities, work rhythms, expectations, cognitive and learning styles, motivations, ethnicities, cultural values of all boys, girls and adolescents”<sup>7</sup> (IMBERNÓN, 2000, p. 85). The condition of this fair school proposal is that educators accept the indispensability of content as references for the development of students' intellectual capacities and, at the same time, know how to integrate the social practices experienced by them, in which the reality of social inequality, accompanied by socio-cultural diversity.

### **Studies on diversity and its political and pedagogical relevance. Some research contributions in Brazil and Latin America**

According to Moehleckle (2009), the expression “diversity” brings with it a multiple and complex set of meanings, sometimes highlighting the heterogeneity of cultures, sometimes associated with social movements of an identity nature articulated around “policies of difference, sometimes as a synonym for multiculturalism that describes the plurality of cultures

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<sup>6</sup> “ajudar os alunos a crescerem e a se desenvolverem como pessoas, facilitando-lhes a aquisição de habilidades básicas tanto de tipo cognoscitivo como de autoconhecimento, de autonomia pessoal e de socialização”

<sup>7</sup> “o reconhecimento todas as capacidades, ritmos de trabalho, expectativas, estilos cognoscitivos e de aprendizagem, motivações, etnias, valores culturais de todos os meninos, meninas e adolescentes”

in a society or intercultural education”<sup>8</sup> (2009, p. 463-466). Studies on the topic tend to refer the term difference to human diversity, which is why the two terms are frequently used by each other. Lázaro, for example, writes that “diversity has become a political concept par excellence and different social and indemnity groups advocate the term to positively affirm their differences”<sup>9</sup> (LÁZARO, 2013, p. 265). Diversity can be understood as a set of differences, as long as they are taken historically and concretely. Sacristán helps to understand the terms difference and diversity in its relation to inequality. For him, the difference refers to the condition of human nature, the uniqueness of each human being, inseparable from any educational action. Diversity is constituted by this human condition inserted in a determined society. Diversity, in turn, can become inequality when individual or group particularities lead to deprivation of rights (SACRISTÁN, 2008). Thus, diversity is based on differences that may be natural or cultural, while social inequalities are historical.

The application of these concepts in politics and education has produced a lot of controversy due to different understandings about the relation between equality, difference, inequality, and between universality and particularity, generating consequences both for the planning of social and educational policies and for academic research. Barros (2016) writes that the notion of “equality” contrasts with two other notions: on the one hand, “equality” is opposed to “difference”, on the other, it contradicts itself with “inequality”. Studies in the field of post-structuralism, in turn, have praised the attention to difference as an orientation for political and social struggles, in opposition to the universalist principle produced in modernity. The affirmation of the right to difference and the recognition of multicultures and multiple cultural identities would be the basis of social guidelines for human emancipation, refusing any character of universality in the human being. According to Bueno:

Anti-universalism denies the existence of universal ethical norms and principles in the name of valuing the particularities and differences between cultures, communities and peoples. The moral and cultural norms and rules are always that of a specific people or community and any value judgment, comparison or hierarchy are previously rejected (BUENO, 2012, p. 95).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “políticas de diferença, ora como sinônimo de multiculturalismo que descreve a pluralidade de culturas numa sociedade ou de educação intercultural”

<sup>9</sup> “diversidade tornou-se um conceito político por excelência e distintos grupos sociais e indenitários advogam o termo para afirmar, positivamente, suas diferenças”

<sup>10</sup> O anti-universalismo nega a existência de normas e princípios éticos universais em nome da valorização das particularidades e diferenças entre culturas, comunidades e povos. As normas e regras morais e culturais são sempre a de um povo ou comunidade específica e qualquer juízo de valor, comparação ou hierarquia são previamente rejeitados (BUENO, 2012, p. 95).



This author, however, argues that valuing difference is compatible with universality. Only through universality can the particular exist. The acceptance of difference means the possibility of establishing the distance between the particular being in its contingency and what the subject can be towards the universality of the human being (BUENO, 2012). A similar position is taken by Santos (2006), who defends the dialectical relationship between difference and equality. He writes:

We have the right to be equal when our difference makes us inferior; and we have the right to be different when our equality de-characterizes us. Hence the need for equality that recognizes differences and a difference that does not produce, feed or reproduce inequalities (2006, p. 470).<sup>11</sup>

The problem pointed out in relation to the understanding of the terms equality, difference, inequality, manifests itself both in the formulation of public policies for diversity and in that of educational and political policies for schools. They also influence academic research and teacher educators, generating different conceptions and practices with regard to ways of dealing, pedagogically and didactically, with the social and cultural diversity existing in schools. Thus, for the purposes of this article, a necessary distinction is made between political and pedagogical discourse, since the pedagogical relevance of attention to socio-cultural diversity cannot be restricted to its political dimension. Socio-political actions formulated and implemented within the scope of public policies in relation to diversity are no substitute for pedagogical and didactic actions carried out in schools and classrooms. These two instances may have a common purpose in ethical and political terms, but the ways in which this purpose is achieved are different, as Saviani clarifies when arguing that education and politics are inseparable phenomena, however, effectively different from each other (SAVIANI, 2007). What is being argued here is that the two social practices each have their specificity. Although socio-political actions and pedagogical-didactic actions must be articulated with each other, they do not identify with each other, as their nature is different.

The political relevance of diversity can be explained, in large part, by the appearance of social phenomena involving international conflicts, the expansion of economic globalization, migration, the affirmation of identities (RODRIGUES; ABRAMOWICZ, 2013), events that emerged in the end from the 1990s. According to Gomes (2017), it is at the beginning of the 21st century that the term diversity begins to be the subject of public policies and some

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<sup>11</sup> Temos o direito a ser iguais quando a nossa diferença nos inferioriza; e temos o direito a ser diferentes quando a nossa igualdade nos descaracteriza. Daí a necessidade de uma igualdade que reconheça as diferenças e de uma diferença que não produza, alimente ou reproduza desigualdades (2006, p. 470).

academic research, together with the strengthening of social movements of an emancipatory character. The author highlights technological changes, the approximation of borders via the virtual world, immigration, inequality, capitalist globalization, fundamentalisms as characteristics of this historical moment. Alongside this, social struggles for equal rights expressed in forms of resistance to capitalist exploitation, racism, machismo, xenophobia, LGBTphobia, political and religious fundamentalism, religious intolerance arise. She writes:

The relation between public policy and diversity is at the heart of the world's changes. [...] The issue of policies for diversity assumes a place of social and political responsibility not only for ordinary citizens, but for governments and public policies. And it has been increasingly stressing not only the public sector, but also the market and the private world (GOMES, 2017, p. 10).<sup>12</sup>

For the author, the role of the State in relation to inequalities and differences cannot be restricted to policies to combat poverty, hunger and unemployment, but to turn more to situations of inequality of certain social groups. Thus, the protagonism of emancipatory social movements stands out, mainly of race, age, rural/city relationship, disability. That is why it is necessary to re-educate the State and governments for diversity, in order to understand that diversity is much more than the sum of differences or different people.

The pedagogical relevance of human diversity, in turn, has been present in the conceptual frameworks of pedagogy and didactics since the need to take into account in teaching the individual and social characteristics of students is recognized, for which some form of individualization of education is required in order to respect human diversity. In this way, the theme of differentiated teaching is integrated in the New Education movement in the second half of the 19th century, for example, in Claparède and Freinet, who proposed a "tailor-made" school for the student. When postulating a student-centered education, this view continues with Dewey, and other thinkers in some way linked to New Education. Critical Marxist-inspired pedagogy, in Brazil in the 1980s, introduced the concern with the social conditions of origin of students in teaching, in order to be met in the process of achieving learning objectives by all students.

The presence of human difference and diversity in politics and education in recent decades has brought up the political and academic debate around different ways of approaching it pedagogically in school organization and in the work of teachers. To form an overview of the

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<sup>12</sup> A relação entre políticas públicas e diversidade está no cerne das mudanças do mundo. [...] A questão das políticas para a diversidade assume um lugar de responsabilidade social e política não somente das cidadãs e cidadãos comuns, mas dos governos e das políticas públicas. E ela vem tencionando cada vez mais não só o setor público, mas, também, o mercado e o mundo privado (GOMES, 2017, p. 10).

relation between socio-cultural diversity and school and teaching practices carried out at school and in the classroom, some researches in some Brazilian and Latin American journals were selected for analysis. The bibliographic survey was carried out through a narrative, non-systematic review, considering the last 10 years of production, considering the following keywords: pedagogical approach to diversity; student culture, learning and school; difference in school; diversity and school; diversity in the classroom; diversity, difference and inequality; socio-cultural diversity; socio-cultural diversity and educational policies; cultural difference and interculturalities; school educational purposes and educational policies. The gathering of researches in Brazil was carried out in three databases involving productions available through the CAPES dissertations and theses portal; articles in journals available on the Google Scholar Portal and the Scielo Portal. Provided by the narrative review, articles produced before the period delimited by the time frame were included in the survey. Concerning the countries of Latin America, we resorted to fellow foreign researchers who, in their opinion, indicated the most representative journals of educational research in their countries. We proceeded to survey articles from the following magazines: Instituto de Investigaciones em Ciencias de la Educación y Archivo para las Ciencias del Hombre (Argentina), Colombiana de Educación, Pedagogía y Saberes and Educación y Pedagogía (Colombia) and Perfiles Educativos and Mexicana de Investigación Educativa (Mexico).

In relation to Brazil, the selected authors (CANEN, 2001; FLEURI, 2003; ORTIZ, 2007; CANDAU, 2012; KATO, 2015; SILVA; REBOLO, 2017) are unanimous in stating that the terms multiculturalism and sociocultural diversity are polysemic, and its approach gains national and international prominence linked to other themes such as difference and inequality. Candau (2012) defends interculturality (interactive multiculturalism) for considering it “more adequate for the construction of democratic societies that articulate policies of equality with policies of identity and recognition of different cultural groups”<sup>13</sup> (p. 243). According to the author, interculturality must be linked to human rights and mediated by the “construction of pedagogical practices committed to equity, democracy and the affirmation of the right to education and learning for every child, every teenager, every person”<sup>14</sup> (p. 237). For Canen (2001), “understanding multiculturalism and education means linking multicultural education

<sup>13</sup> “mais adequada para a construção de sociedades democráticas que articulem políticas de igualdade com políticas de identidade e reconhecimento dos diferentes grupos culturais”

<sup>14</sup> “construção de práticas pedagógicas comprometidas com a equidade, a democracia e a afirmação do direito à educação e à aprendizagem de toda criança, de todo adolescente, de toda pessoa”

to perspectives for transforming the school and overcoming the exclusionary mechanisms within its daily practices”<sup>15</sup> (p. 212).

In a different assessment in relation to Candau (2012), Kato points out that teachers understand as sociocultural diversity “different cultures, ethnicity, tongue, language, belief, religion, values, ideologies, folklore, social class, education level, how to behave and other identities”<sup>16</sup> (KATO, 2015, p. 7). She argues that when teachers relate socio-cultural diversity at school to the pedagogical work they do, they highlight only the conflicts that exist in the students' relationships with each other, between them and the teachers, the learning difficulty manifested by the students and their disinterest in studies. The author points out that, in the conception of the teachers, the socio-cultural diversity stems from “consequences of the unconventional family structure, the low level of education of the parents, their neglect of the schooling process and the lack of a positive perspective regarding the future of their children”<sup>17</sup> (P. 7). The research by Canen (2001), in turn, emphasizes that, in the view of the teachers, “the knowledge of the concrete student as a condition for the viability of transformative pedagogical practices [...] has no place in the school's daily life”<sup>18</sup> (p. 216).

In the same sense of capturing perceptions expressed by teachers about sociocultural diversity at school, Silva and Rebolo (2017) reinforce the understanding that the intercultural education proposal implies a more complex understanding of education, which extends beyond pedagogical strategies and interpersonal relationships existing in the school, for example, learning activities that include culturally different groups and the meanings elaborated by people. In summary, the review of the research allows to identify connections between the social and political context of diversity with pedagogical practices. However, despite the explicit concern of these researchers with the school and its teachers in relation to socio-cultural diversity, pedagogical mediation is either limited to references to the political-social sphere or diversity is seen in its particular manifestations.

In relation to journals from Latin American countries, the political and pedagogical approaches to socio-cultural diversity are recurrent. In the selected texts, authors such as Lerma (2012), Tapia and Valenti (2016), Flecha and Puigvert (2018), Tevez and Díaz (2019) use the

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<sup>15</sup> “entender multiculturalidade e educação significa vincular educação multicultural a perspectivas de transformação da escola e superação dos mecanismos excludentes no interior de suas práticas cotidianas”

<sup>16</sup> “as diferentes culturas, a etnia, a língua, a linguagem, a crença, a religião, os valores, as ideologias, o folclore, a classe social, o grau de escolaridade, a forma de se comportar e outros identitários”

<sup>17</sup> “consequências da estrutura familiar não convencional, da baixa escolarização dos pais, da negligência destes para com o processo de escolarização e da falta de perspectiva positiva em relação ao futuro dos filhos”

<sup>18</sup> “o conhecimento do aluno concreto como condição para a viabilização de práticas pedagógicas transformadoras [...] não tem lugar no cotidiano da escola”

expression “sociocultural diversity”, which is sometimes focused on social and political issues, sometimes anthropological, inserting multiculturalism in them. For Guzmán and Guevara, the entry of multiculturalism in education is opposed to the devaluation perpetrated by other narratives that created a homogenizing and disciplining school. “The forms that multiculturalism takes account for the dissonances in the way of seeing otherness, the representations and conceptions of culture in pedagogical projects”<sup>19</sup> (2015, p. 23). Multiculturalism becomes a proposal for education for otherness focused on the rights of others, equality and democratic opportunities that aim at respectful relations between sociocultural groups through democratic and dialogical processes.

Outros estudos relacionados com a diversidade nas perspectivas multicultural e intercultural salientam a atenção às diferenças humanas e sociais na escola, desde a inclusão de crianças com necessidades especiais, crianças indígenas e crianças pertencentes às populações pobres. Na diversidade são contemplados, igualmente, os grupos étnicos: indígenas, imigrantes e as pessoas que são vistas como minorias: a população afrodescendente e os homossexuais. Nota-se em alguns artigos a preocupação com a formação do professor para perceberem as diferenças culturais por meio da capacidade de lidar com as diversas culturas ou a interculturalidade (GUZMÁN, 2015; GUZMÁN; GUEVARA, 2015; MORA; MUÑOZ; ZAPATA, 2018).

Diversity is seen by Latin American authors, in general, to the condition of minorities, mainly blacks, indigenous people, homosexuals, immigrants and women. Bueno, Sarti and Arnoldi (2018, p. 153-154), emphasize the term “minorities” from the perspective of Social Sciences, covering “groups subjected to processes of stigmatization and discrimination that result in forms of social inequality and exclusion”<sup>20</sup>. Others, however, suggest that, from a materialist-dialectical point of view, the discrimination and stigmatization produced by the condition of poverty would be at the heart of social inequalities and injustices. For Guzmán (2015), reflecting on the relation between interculturalities and educational processes refers to ways of intensifying the participation of groups considered minorities. Thus, since the 1960s, theoretical discussions and investigative bets have highlighted the need to “give voice to those who, historically, have been marginalized and silenced in a world in which the strange and the

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<sup>19</sup> “As formas que o multiculturalismo assume respondem pelas dissonâncias no modo de ver a alteridade, as representações e concepções de cultura em projetos pedagógicos”

<sup>20</sup> “grupos submetidos a processos de estigmatização e discriminação que resultam em formas de desigualdade e exclusão sociais”

different, almost always, are placed under the magnifying glass of suspicion”<sup>21</sup> (GUZMÁN, 2015, p. 224).

One of the selected articles (JULIO-MATURANA *et al.*, 2016), reporting on research with Elementary School teachers in Chile, found the existence of a cultural and pedagogical mismatch in the classroom as an obstacle to the learning of children in poverty. The study showed that teachers characterize these children as homogeneous, needy and with limited expectations in the face of the teaching-learning process. In this way, learning difficulties can be explained by the discrepancy between teachers' expectations and the cultural contexts from which children come. Contrary to the idea that learning difficulties arise from mismatches between educational expectations and the culture of children in poverty, Mora, Muñoz and Zapata (2018) argue that the educational institution must be endowed with conditions “to guarantee the well-being among the most disadvantaged groups”<sup>22</sup> (p. 149). For Sierra (2015), it is necessary to ask the question “what is the role of schooling in relation to cultural practices that are not recognized in schooling models”<sup>23</sup> (p. 122). The author warns that the role of schooling can either repeat established patterns that make certain knowledge and certain pedagogical practices that prevail over different cultures mandatory, or propose an intercultural school that encompasses forms of knowledge specific to the knowledge system of each culture.

Bringing the issue of diversity from a political analysis, Martínez and Diez claim that cultural diversity can be seen as a historical and political-normative paradigm, “incorporated into resource management in the general prescriptions of the educational system”<sup>24</sup> (p. 16), in the perspective of institutionalizing cultural diversity. In this way, diversity wins the support of Latin American countries with the “gradual introduction of the neoliberal coordinates that had begun to be experimented in the British laboratory of the government of Margaret Thatcher”<sup>25</sup> (MARTÍNEZ; DIEZ, 2019, p. 17). For the authors, the difference is linked to the consolidation of the “recognition” paradigm in view of the fading of emancipation projects. Thus, the implantation of neoliberalism and the diversity paradigm converge, as in the case of Peru, Bolivia, Mexico, Colombia and Argentina in the 1990s, in which the discourse of diversity

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<sup>21</sup> “se dar voz aos que, historicamente, são marginalizados e silenciados em um mundo em que o estranho e o diferente, quase sempre, são postos sob a lupa da suspeita”

<sup>22</sup> “para garantir o bem-estar dos grupos mais desfavorecidos”

<sup>23</sup> “qual é o papel da escolarização em relação às práticas culturais que não são reconhecidas nos modelos de escolarização”

<sup>24</sup> “incorporado ao gerenciamento de recursos nas prescrições gerais do sistema educacional”

<sup>25</sup> “introdução paulatina das coordenadas neoliberais que haviam começado a ser experimentadas no laboratório britânico do governo de Margaret Thatcher”

assumes a conservative character as if it were a multicultural panorama of society (MARTÍNEZ; DIEZ, 2019).

The studies on socio-cultural diversity and education of Brazilian and Latin American researchers brought here are of fundamental importance for the materialization of respect for cultural diversity, reaching the diverse minorities. However, it is necessary to emphasize that few productions were concerned with the focus of diversity in the teaching-learning process in the classroom and in the formation of teachers, in order to capture ways of carrying out the pedagogical-didactic work. The review of the research shows that, in general, the approach to socio-cultural diversity is limited to the particularities of different ethnic groups, immigrants and other social, ethnic and cultural minorities, including people with special educational needs. Thus, the suspicion is reaffirmed that, in the pedagogical field, school leaders, teachers and even researchers would be understanding that dealing with social and cultural diversity at school would correspond to promoting practices of respect for the “diverse”, the “different”. Cultural diversity would be practiced at school either by calling on teachers to recognize it or by using resources such as working with art, sports and other inclusion activities, that is, in a curriculum parallel to the common curriculum and not as something integrated with contents and pedagogical-didactic work. Obviously, it is not a question of censoring teachers who do this. The socio-educational actions of respect for diversity resulting from the political approach undoubtedly represent social advancement, such as attention to people with special educational needs, addressing gender differences in their connection with social and cultural conditions, sexual education issues, attention to social, ethnic, cultural minorities. However, in the everyday reality of our public schools, the issue seems much more complex.

In fact, in our country, in the common public school, unlike European countries and North America, socio-cultural diversity appears, indeed, in minority cultures, but much more in the manifest diversity due to class origin, social inequalities, previous schooling trajectories. The population that falls into the category of "most disadvantaged groups" is not the minority, but the majority. Thus, when it comes to the public school, attending to diversity does not consist, first of all, in improving the situation of ethnic minorities in the school routine and in the classroom, but in contemplating this improvement in relation to the diversity of all students in their social, cultural, material conditions, depending on access to knowledge, including those belonging to ethnic and cultural minorities. There are, in our schools, social, ethnic, cultural minorities, but above all, we have a poor majority whose basic need is material survival, subject to all the consequences resulting from social inequality and, therefore, in need of be attended to in their rights to school education and, of course, to difference. Thus, we propose a

pedagogical approach to socio-cultural diversity at school that is distinguished from others that are restricted to offering a curriculum exclusively tailored to cultural identities. In this way, it proposes to give intentionally positive attention to differences, while ensuring a unitary, common school that maintains or promotes “a minimum of social and cultural cohesion”<sup>26</sup> (FORQUIN, 1993, p. 137).

The proposal considered here, for a socially just school, is a type of education that ensures that all students learn what is necessary to learn as a condition of equality between human beings and, at the same time, consider the human and social diversity of these students in the teaching-learning process, providing forms of organization that ensure in the school environment and in the classrooms the necessary support for all students so that they can develop their intellectual capacities and their global personality. Thus, it is reiterated that the main purpose of the public school is not, in the first place, to attend to social and cultural diversity, but to enable cultural and scientific formation that, without being ethnocentric, welcomes everyone and, in doing so, considers the diversity, including minority social groups. It means inserting in the pedagogical work with the students the social, cultural and material situations in which they live, for example: how their parents live, what are the characteristic traits of their community, what are the religious beliefs of the families, what are their cultural traditions, what are their material, social, cultural needs, what are the pre-requisites of schooling that they bring or not to the classroom, how to introduce traditions and customs in the curriculum, what different activities are necessary for students with school difficulties due to lack of his previous education, among others.

The adoption of a common curriculum and a pedagogy that incorporates social and cultural diversity in the content and daily work of teachers presupposes an open curriculum that contemplates different cultures. Sacristán (1998) proposes a common curriculum offered as a general guideline that includes scientific criteria from each area of knowledge, but open to plurality and capable of being reinterpreted by teachers according to the context in which the school is inserted.

### **The pedagogical approach to diversity in teaching theory for human development. Opening a path to a socially fair school**

The main issue announced at the beginning of this text was to highlight the relevance of the pedagogical approach to socio-cultural diversity in a vision of a socially fair school, in the

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<sup>26</sup> “um mínimo de coesão social e cultural”



perspective of teaching geared towards human development, without disregarding the strongly political implications of the issue of diversity.

The expression “fair school” is used by Dubet (2004) in the sense of that school that can guarantee access to fundamental school goods, seeks to minimize school inequalities so that they do not further deepen social inequalities, which takes care to ensure that students are able to preserve their dignity and equality with others, without humiliating or hurting losers, who are treated as developing subjects and not just as individuals engaged in competition. Boto stresses, with regard to the right to schooling today, the requirement to recognize social diversity through an open curriculum that includes the diversity of students, their distinct trajectories and different cultural belongings. It proposes to break certain symbolic bonds of school knowledge in order to accept and live with differences, which leads to “thinking about diversity without giving up, in any way, the still necessary code of universality”<sup>27</sup> (BOTO, 2005, p. 793). Sacristán proposes a common curriculum in which differences take place, so that the universal is composed with the particular. The curriculum can thus be universal and common, open enough to accommodate multiculturalism and certain particularities existing in society: “we can aspire to a universalism that understands complexity and admits variety, but that is not relativistic”<sup>28</sup> (SACRISTÁN, 1998, p. 226). Charlot (2005) proposes that the challenge of today's school is “to build with students the relation with knowledge that gives meaning to knowledge [...] but this must be built in the very act of teaching”<sup>29</sup> (2005, p. 119). According to the author, a democratic school is one that enables young people to acquire cognitive and intellectual knowledge and skills and to develop meanings for their lives.

In this final topic, it is argued that the aspirations for a fair school expressed above by the authors can be made pedagogically viable with the principles of theory for human development by V. Davydov (1988a) and the contributions of M. Hedegaard (2004) and Hedegaard and Chaiklin (2005). Davydov developed the theory of developmental teaching based on historical and dialectical materialism and Vygotsky's thought, in which the central issue of pedagogy is the relation between education and human development. Thus, the central aspect of the teaching-learning process is that the various forms of social interaction between teacher-students and between students boost and activate internal development processes, aiming at the formation of personality. These interactions occur in study activities organized by

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<sup>27</sup> “pensar na diversidade sem abdicar, de maneira alguma, do ainda necessário código de universalidade”

<sup>28</sup> “podemos aspirar a um universalismo que compreenda a complexidade e admita a variedade, mas que não seja relativista”

<sup>29</sup> “construir com os alunos a relação com o saber que dá sentido ao saber [...] mas isso deve ser construído no próprio ato do ensino”

the teacher, which aim to mobilize students' intellectual capacities with a view to the formation of theoretical-conceptual thinking and, with that, the development of human consciousness. Conceptual thinking concerns the dialectical way of thinking, that is, understanding the objects of knowledge from their origin and historical development, in their various social nexus, which provides students with criticality and autonomy in relation to knowledge. It is the cultural and scientific formation that enables human beings to internalize historically determined and culturally organized ways of understanding reality and provides subjects with autonomy to deal with reality and with themselves. Still according to Davydov, in the organization of the study activity, the learning of contents reaches the development of personality better when there is a relation between the content and the student's reasons for learning, which implies the need to adapt the contents to the internal dispositions and interests of students (DAVÍDOV, 1988b; DAVYDOV, 1999; LIBÂNEO; FREITAS, 2013, LIBÂNEO, 2016; SILVA, 2020). The theory of developmental teaching has its centrality, therefore, in the performance of teaching in the development of human capacities.

In turn, Hedegaard elaborates a theory in which school knowledge, thought development and student participation in socio-cultural practices are interconnected, offering a pedagogical model in which cultural traditions and practices are articulated, organization of teaching activity and concrete social experiences of children . The proposal for teaching centered on the formation of theoretical-conceptual thinking closely linked to students' social, cultural and material conditions was called the radical-local teaching approach. This link requires a teaching methodology in which the mastery of scientific concepts interacts with students' everyday concepts, which is why the author highlights the role of socio-cultural practices in the organization of teaching. For her, the socio-cultural and institutional practices in which students participate in the family, in the local community, in daily life are also determinants in the appropriation of knowledge and skills, in the constitution of personal identity, and they are characterized in school as much as learning context as well as content (HEDEGAARD, 2004). This means that the development of a student's thinking that occurs in the process of appropriating scientific content needs to be articulated with the forms of knowledge in which he participates in his daily life. It is in these practices that the social and cultural diversity, the knowledge networks, the cultural particularities, the experiences that make up the subjectivity of the students are manifested. It is the pedagogical means of articulation between scientific knowledge and everyday knowledge based on which teachers carry out the double movement in teaching. For this, based on the concept of close development zone created by Vygotsky, the approach of the double movement in teaching is proposed, that is, didactic situations that enable

the teacher to interact the theoretical-conceptual knowledge with the personal knowledge experienced by students in their everyday practices in the family and in the community, and using this connection to mobilize students' motives for different subjects. In this way, the content becomes meaningful to the child and motivates them to understand both the theoretical principles of the subject and the problems of local and daily practice. Hedegaard and Chaiklin (2005) write about this:

In this form of teaching, theoretical-conceptual knowledge and local knowledge can become integrated, so that theoretical-conceptual knowledge can enrich the child's personal knowledge, using it to understand everyday local practice. In the radical-local perspective, the teacher starts from the child's understanding and guides them to tasks and problems related to the content, which thus becomes significant for the child and motivates them to understand both the theoretical principles of the subject and the problems of local and everyday practice (HEDEGAARD; CHAIKLIN, 2005, p. 81).<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, Hedegaard's contribution towards promoting the school's function of working with theoretical and conceptual knowledge in connection with cultural practices in different institutions of society is substantial.

### **Final considerations**

The content of this article brought up for discussion the theme of school educational purposes and its connection with socio-cultural diversity in view of its pedagogical approach and having a socially just school vision as a backdrop. School activity was presented as a social practice aiming at the formation and development of human beings in the dynamics of social relations, in concrete socio-cultural and institutional conditions, conceiving, therefore, as its priority and predominant purpose the development of human capacities for life in society. In turn, diversity was presented as a constitutive characteristic of human beings, therefore, inherent in what human beings have as universal. In this way, school activity implies forms of pedagogical individuation and differentiation, since educators deal with concrete, singular and unrepeatable social subjects, with their own needs, interests, reasons. So, no teacher can teach without taking human diversity into account. Thus, in this text, it was considered the

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<sup>30</sup> Nesta forma de ensino, o conhecimento teórico-conceitual e o conhecimento local podem tornar-se integrados, de modo que o conhecimento teórico-conceitual possa enriquecer os conhecimentos pessoais da criança, usando-o na compreensão da prática local cotidiana. Na perspectiva radical-local, o professor parte da compreensão da criança e a orienta para tarefas e problemas ligados ao conteúdo que, assim, torna-se significativo para a criança e motivador para a compreensão tanto dos princípios teóricos da matéria quando dos problemas da prática local e cotidiana (HEDEGAARD; CHAIKLIN, 2005, p. 81).

understanding that the ultimate goal of school education is the development of all dimensions of the human being in what he has as universal, whose realization in teaching implies considering the socio-cultural diversity of students, as a constituent a broader view of educational purposes. This consists in the consummation of purposes in relation to the socially just school. The text ends with the understanding that schools and teachers must assume the ethical and political implications of the attention to socio-cultural diversity, however, its educational effects cannot do without its pedagogical approach, that is, its insertion in the school contents and teaching methodologies.

Post-scriptum - The writing of this text was completed 70 days after the interruption of the operation of schools and higher education institutions due to the pandemic caused by the new coronavirus. Face-to-face classes have been suspended in all Brazilian states since the second half of March 2020, bringing teachers of schools at all levels and, especially, in public schools of Basic Education, a new reality, teaching in a virtual environment, and the controversy of a social and pedagogical nature around the relevance and role of online classes in an emancipatory teaching vision and focused on human development. Although it is a unique and transitory moment in the life of society, the pandemic did anticipate issues of impact in relation to school educational purposes and the pedagogical ways of implementing them. To what extent can technology be instituted as a predominant form of learning, as, incidentally, has already been happening in many private educational institutions? What are the social, psychological and pedagogical consequences of home and remote education? How is the socialization of children in virtual learning environments? What are the social, psychological and pedagogical limits of distance education, in the perspective of teaching geared towards human development? Finally, the challenging question raised in this text persists: what are schools for?

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