

RELATO DE EXPERIÊNCIA

FORMATION OF SCHOOL MANAGERS: THEORETICAL-PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF HISTORICAL-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

Larissa Figueiredo Salmen Seixlack Bulhões¹

Universidade Federal de Lavras (UFLA), Lavras-MG, Brazil.

Flávia da Silva Ferreira Asbahr

Universidade Estadual Paulista "Júlio de Mesquita Filho" (UNESP), Bauru-SP, Brazil.

ABSTRACT. This work reports the experience of training school managers based on the theoretical assumptions of historical-cultural psychology. The intervention took place as one of the actions of the Project Education Without Borders (PESF) - a partnership between the Municipal Secretary of Education and the psychology department of a state University of São Paulo in assisting schools that have low IDEB (Basic Education Development Index). Study meetings were held monthly with the managers of the six participating schools and with representatives of the pedagogical department of the Municipal Secretary of Education. The themes of the meetings were established based on the demand of the group, which chose as study goals: 1. understanding the production of motives and interests for the students' learning and 2. understanding how the study activity is formed and developed as a main activity at school age. As a strategy of theoretical-practical articulation, the proposition of study tasks on the themes discussed in each meeting was adopted. As a reference, the concept of study task of Davydov and Markova (1987) was used. The results point out that the application of the theoretical assumptions of historical-cultural psychology to the concrete demands of the organization of teaching in the daily school life makes it possible to overcome the traditional dichotomy between theory and practice in teacher education and promotes the construction of new guidelines for pedagogical practice.

Keywords: School psychology; teacher education; educational activity.

FORMAÇÃO DE GESTORAS ESCOLARES: CONTRIBUIÇÕES TEÓRICO-PRÁTICAS DA PSICOLOGIA HISTÓRICO-CULTURAL

RESUMO. Relata-se neste estudo a experiência de formação de gestoras escolares pautada nos pressupostos teóricos da psicologia histórico-cultural. A intervenção ocorreu como uma das ações do Projeto Educação Sem Fronteiras (PESF) - parceria entre a Secretaria Municipal da Educação e o departamento de psicologia de uma universidade estadual paulista no atendimento às escolas da rede que apresentam baixos índices de IDEB (Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica). Realizaram-se reuniões mensais de estudo com as gestoras das seis escolas participantes e com representantes do departamento pedagógico da Secretaria Municipal de Educação. As temáticas dos encontros foram estabelecidas a partir da demanda do grupo, o qual elegeu como objetivos dos estudos: 1. compreender a produção de motivos e interesses para a aprendizagem dos/as alunos/as e 2. compreender como se forma e se desenvolve a atividade de estudo como atividade principal na idade escolar. Adotou-se como estratégia de articulação teórico-prática a proposição de tarefas de estudo sobre os temas discutidos em cada encontro, tendo como referência o conceito de tarefa de estudo de Davydov e Markova (1987). Os resultados apontam que a aplicação dos pressupostos teóricos da psicologia histórico-cultural às demandas concretas de organização do ensino no cotidiano escolar possibilita a superação da tradicional dicotomia entre teoria e prática na formação docente e promove a construção de novas diretrizes para o fazer pedagógico.

¹ E-mail: larissabulhoes6@gmail.com

Palavras-chave: Psicologia escolar; formação de professores; atividade pedagógica.

FORMACIÓN DE GESTORAS ESCOLARES: CONTRIBUCIONES TEÓRICO-PRÁCTICAS DE LA PSICOLOGÍA HISTÓRICO-CULTURAL

RESUMEN. Se informa la experiencia de formación de gestoras escolares guiada por los supuestos teóricos de la psicología histórico-cultural. La intervención se llevó a cabo como una de las acciones del Proyecto Educación sin Fronteras (PESF) - una asociación entre la Secretaría Municipal de Educación y el departamento de psicología de una universidad estatal de São Paulo en la asistencia a las escuelas que tienen bajas tasas de IDEB (Índice de Desarrollo de la Educación básica). Hubo reuniones de estudio mensuales con las gestoras de las seis escuelas participantes y representantes del departamento pedagógico de la Secretaría Municipal de Educación. Los temas de las reuniones se establecieron a partir de la demanda del grupo, que ha elegido como objetivos de los estudios: 1. Comprender la producción de motivos e intereses para el aprendizaje de los estudiantes; 2. entender cómo se forma y desarrolla la actividad de estudio como actividad principal en la edad escolar. Fue adoptado como estrategia de articulación teórica y práctica la proposición de tareas de estudio sobre los temas tratados en cada reunión. Se utilizó el concepto de tarea de estudio de Davydov y Markova (1987). Los resultados muestran que la aplicación de los principios teóricos de la psicología histórico-cultural a las demandas específicas de la organización de la enseñanza en la rutina escolar permite superar la tradicional dicotomía entre la teoría y la práctica en la formación del profesorado y promueve la construcción de nuevas directrices para la práctica docente.

Palabras-clave: Psicología escolar; formación de profesores; actividad pedagógica.

Introduction

The scientific productions on the psychologists' practices on Brazilian teaching institutions have demonstrated the broadening of the acting field of that professional, announcing new goals that transcend the traditional model, which reproduces the medical logics of pathologization of educational processes (Facci & Meira, 2016; Souza, Silva & Yamamoto, 2014). Within this context, mainly from the 1990s, important advances were made in this acting field, stemming from historical efforts of critical perspectives that broke with the clinical profile view – which relocates the understanding of the educational phenomena to the individual scope – and, on the other hand, highlight the importance of placing psychology into the objective reality of schools, acting directly on concrete interpersonal relations that drive the institutional routine (Souza et al., 2014; Guzzo, Mezzalira, Moreira, Tizzei, & Silva Neto, 2010).

In this conjuncture, teacher education is pointed out as a promising field, in which great possibilities and challenges are provided for the acting of school and educational psychologists (Facci, 2015; Souza, 2015). This practice presupposes the articulation among the psychological processes and the educational actions. It can occur in diverse configurations: at courses for initial teacher's training, in contexts of continuous formation at higher education institutions, at state and city secretaries of education and/or at schools themselves.

According to Checchia (2015), psychology marks its historical insertion at teacher education in Brazil by means of psychologization of education; this approach makes use of biased psychological precepts aiming at legitimating subjective interpretations for educational phenomena originated in social, economic, and political relations. Considering this fact, in a research on the education psychology within the context of initial teacher education, the author verified that the premises of critical school education carry important contributions to overcome this conservative and adaptational perspective, in the sense of: problematizing and evidencing the ideological character of traditional theorizations about school failure that charge the individual for social-historically-originated phenomena; evidencing the reductionism of psychometric intelligence tests, which are based upon innate perspectives, and provide scientific legitimation to the excluding practices and to social disparities; deconstructing the pathologization of school complaint within the medical perspective, which results in labels and stereotypes that hamper the educational process; presenting the intersubjective relations of school reality from the materialistic and historical human conception.

Facci (2015) presents similar findings concerning the continuous teacher education, pointing out the themes of scientific knowledge at the process of teaching and learning as contributions of school psychology for a critical acting, regarding “school failure and school complaints, periodization of human development, indiscipline, playing roles at child education, violence at school, affectivity and learning, among many others already aimed at by the psychological science” (Facci, 2015, p.106, free translation). In this perspective, teacher’s education must place the psychological knowledge in favor of the teaching practice and commit to overcome the fragmentation among the theoretical assumptions provided and their implications to the pedagogical practice (Facci, 2015; Souza, 2015; Checchia, 2015).

Having this in view, the present report aims at contributing with the access to possibilities of innovative interventions of school psychology at teachers’ formation, committing to psychology scientific contributions for the construction of democratic relations at school, for the multi-determined understanding of learning difficulties and for the organization of the pedagogical planning together with the historical and social comprehension of the psychic development.

Method and intervention development

The practice report carried on refers to an intervention of a theoretical-practical formation course for principals and pedagogical coordinators of municipal public schools. It was realized as a partnership between the Municipal Secretary of Education and the psychology department of a public higher education institution of the municipality. This partnership was consolidated in 2010, from the demands of the Secretary of Education to understand the reasons for the low IDEB (Basic Education Development Index) indexes presented by some municipal network schools. It aimed at the designing of the necessary interventions to promote qualitative advances on the educational processes. In this context, in a partnership with the psychology department, a Project named “Projeto Educação Sem Fronteiras” (PESF – Brazilian Portuguese for “Education Without Borders”) was established at the nominated schools. The project, in accordance with the multi-determined comprehension of the school phenomena, implied the framing of four large action lines: formation of the teachers of the selected schools; formation of the workers of those schools who were not teachers; interventions with the students; theoretical-practical formation of the schools’ principals and coordinators and of the pedagogical team of the Municipal Secretary of Education

In this report, we expose the experience carried out in 2015, with the theoretical-practical formation of principals and pedagogical coordinators of the schools assisted by the project. The interventions were held monthly, lasting two hours and thirty minutes, comprising the twelve managers (principals and pedagogical coordinators) of the six participating schools and with the six representatives of the Municipal Secretary of Education, who integrated the PESF formation activities. In those meetings, the contributions of historical-cultural psychology for school education were studied, considering the themes that were relevant for the group’s participants. The meetings were carried out under the coordination of the two authors, who are both psychologists and professors, at a center of continuous education of municipal education servants.

Once that this configuration of formation had been established since the beginning of the Project, in 2010, the framing of the meetings’ aims was carried out based upon the demands presented by the group at the end of the study activities of the previous year. Within this context, the groups’ members requested more proximity between the theoretical assumptions studied and the concrete reality of the school routine, and elected, as aims: understanding the production of motives and interests for the students’ learning; understanding how the activity study is formed and developed as the main activity at school age.

The intervention constituted in the discussion of the themes integrated to the aims delineated by the group’s members; as a strategy to combine the theoretical studies and the school reality, the proposal of study tasks on the theme discussed at each meeting was adopted. Those tasks were carried out in the different institutional contexts in which the group’s members were inserted.

Regarding the proposal of realizing study tasks as a formation device, in our evaluation of the formation of the previous years, we noticed that the managers expressed orally the theoretical concepts that we had been discussed, but they did not necessarily integrate them to their pedagogical practices at schools, and we could not evaluate whether the participants had appropriated the conceptual links of the

theory, to beyond of its formal reproduction, i.e., whether they had developed the capacity to operate with the concepts in the sense of the formation of the theoretical thought (Davydov & Markova, 1987). The task, therefore, aimed at bringing concrete pedagogical situations in which the managers performed the capacity for theoretical-practical integration. Thus, the tasks proposal was inspired by the propositions of Davydov & Markova (1987) on the study task, which express the unit between form and content in teaching, and is organized from a learning problem². Below are described the themes and the structure of the meetings carried out, as well as the theoretical assumptions on which they are based.

Theme 1 – How to produce motives for learning? The aim of this theme was discussing on the actions that generated motives for learning in the context of the elaboration of the pedagogical planning. Discussions were carried out aiming at rescuing basic theoretical concepts previously studied, such as activity and motive (Leontiev, 1983), in a way to demonstrate the existing co-relations among the affective experiences in classroom and the generation of motives for learning (Asbahr & Souza, 2014; Martins, 2013) – i.e., the importance of planning educational activities which commit to promoting the school content affection on the student. The task proposed required that, along the following weeks, the participants tried to identify if and how this integration between affective experiences and learning happened at the place where they worked. In the following meeting, they should bring concrete examples of mediating activities of this process in classroom.

Theme 2 – The change of motives along the schooling process and the role of organization of child collectives for promoting learning. This theme was approached with the aim of discussing how the motives change process occurs along the schooling process, having as a reference the studies of Bozhovich (1985). According to the author, at the beginning of schooling process, children get to school interested, and want to do the things that the teacher requests: the child imitates what the adult does or asks for, wants to do serious things, wants to do school things or adults' things. However, around the third year of elementary school, one can notice that the interest in school and in the studies start to drop, and then the indiscipline problem begins. Bozhovich (1985) calls attention to the paradox of this phenomenon: the superior psychological functions become more complex, children have conditions (and want to) know about the explanation of the facts, but, concomitantly, there is a reduction on the interest in studying. According to the author, the causes of this phenomenon can be found in failures of the teaching organization, which breaks the logics of child psychic development. The social motivation from the teacher drops during schooling, but the role of the group of friends is increased in the development process and in the formation of motives. In this sense, it was discussed that, by means of the correct organization of the child collectives in the classroom, (Rubtsov, 1996, 2006), it is possible to construct the conditions for the full formation of psychic-moral particularities of the child's personality, considering the process of changes of motives along schooling. One of the issues mentioned to the group of managers was: how to deal with the production of motives and the organization of the study activity having the group/collective of students as a reference? As a task, the participants were required to reflect on the possibilities to organize the pedagogical practice guided by the change of motives in the schooling process, in a way that the interaction among the students performed its function of being an important ally of the study activity, subsidizing their affective-cognitive development.

Theme 3 – Conditioners for school success in classroom. The aim of this theme was approaching studies that present the elements of the pedagogical practices that favor the school success in educational processes. The text of Souza (1999) was adopted as a reference. The participants divided into sub-groups that, in light of their reading, reflected on a generating question: what elements do the text and the studies carried out in the previous meetings bring us so we think and produce pedagogical practices that produce school success in our schools? As a task, it was proposed that the participants identified, within the context of the institution where they worked, teaching actions in accordance with the elements that favored the school success in the classroom. The text aimed at rescuing and socializing

² The term "learning problem" does not refer to practical or daily problems of the subject or his/her immediate and empirical reality, but to concrete problems, given by human history in its generic dimension, It is a problem whose solution demands the reproduction of the logical-historical movement of the concept and the dominance of a general way of study action (Davydov & Markova, 1987).

the successful practices that promoted meaningful learnings already comprised in the pedagogical planning of the schools.

Theme 4 – The didactic principals of historical-cultural psychology and its relation with the teaching organization – the principle of the teaching that develops. As a reference for the discussion of this theme, the studies of Nascimento (2010) were used. The author elaborates guiding principles of the theoretical-practical principles between the assumptions of historical-cultural psychology and its didactic implications for the organization of the teaching process in the classroom. As for the principle of the teaching that develops, the author points out the existence of two ways of teachers' interventions: one that organizes the educational process towards the development of psychic functions or ways of behaving that still have not been reached by the student; and the one that is towards the broadening of the child's specific knowledge and abilities repertory. The participants divided into sub-groups to reflect on: the difference between the two intervention forms described by the author concerning the contribution to the child's development process; the practical possible examples of each intervention, considering the context of classroom; the contribution of the concepts studied for the pedagogical planning. The task proposal was taking the discussion carried out about the theme of the principle of the teaching that develops to the study meeting with the teachers of the school where they worked. In this discussion, the teachers should be required to reflect on their pedagogical planning in light of the two intervention ways described by Nascimento (2010).

Theme 5 – The principle of the object character of the study activity. Continuing the studies of Nascimento (2010), the aim of this theme is approaching the second didactic principal of historical-cultural psychology, denominated by the author as the object character of the studies activity. According to this principle, the work on a study object in the classroom must consider that this content synthesizes the essential characteristics of a certain action way, which contains the historical-social advances to solve problems regarding the human activity where the study object lies on. For the theoretical-practical discussion of the assumptions of this didactic principle, we have used the intervention experience described by Lopes, Silva, Ribeiro, Borowsky and Fraga (2010). It is the report of a pedagogical practice carried out with children of the second year of elementary school, in which a Didactic Unit about the mathematical subject of one-to-one correspondence was developed, under the perspective of the Teaching Guiding Activity (Moura, Araújo, Souza, Panossian & Moretti 2016). The participants were required to read the intervention report and to answer the following questions: what is the study object in the pedagogical intervention? What is the generalized way of action in the activity studied? In what daily situations the child is led to establish those relations? How has a specific object turned into a generic one in the intervention studied? How was the generalization of this way of action identified? The task proposed was the reproduction of the pedagogical intervention studied in the context of the institution where the participants worked, as well as the recording of the results reached.

Theme 6 – The principle of the resolution of learning problems. This theme refers to the third didactic principle delineated by Nascimento (2010); according to that, the new behavior and the new ways of action to be developed by the students by means of the study activity presuppose the elaboration of learning problems that explicit the human-generic origins synthesized in the object studied. To discuss this theme, we presented generating questions that should guide the elaboration of activities proposals for the classroom, based upon the didactic principle studied. Considering the participants' interest, the study object chosen was the theme of literacy. The generating questions presented for the creation of the pedagogical activity were: What is the generalized action way at writing? What learning problems contribute to the development of new activities on the students and explicit to them the origin of the writing concept? How to start from a real situation in a way to evidence the human-generic concepts implied in the generalized action way at writing? The task proposed was the application of an activity elaborated by the group in a classroom of the institution where each participant worked, as well as the recording of the results obtained.

The end of the activities was carried out with the synthesis of the themes approached to during the year and the evaluation of the repercussion of theoretical discussions for the pedagogical work at the schools, considering the objectives delineated.

Results and discussion

The new paradigms of school psychologist action re-direct the ways of integration between the psychological assumptions and the educational processes, based upon the constitution of human psychism in its historical and social interfaces (Facci, 2015; Facci & Meira, 2016). That was the perspective that we tried to adopt in this practice report, whose structure surpasses the conservative position of adaptational approaches at teacher education when seizing the conceptual contributions of psychology in the concrete movement of education practices.

The themes approached in the meetings highlight the possibility for the historical-cultural psychology to act as a guiding via of the pedagogical practice, demonstrating the relevance of scientific understanding at the psychic development to promote meaningful learning in the classroom. The adhesion of the participants to the realization of the tasks proposed surpassed the artificial model of teachers' formation with contents disconnected from school reality and promoted the establishment of direct co-relations between the studies carried out and their practical application. Therefore, the meetings were important experience exchanges that resulted in collective construction of guidelines for the pedagogical practice based upon the theoretical framework studied. This movement generated motives to study for the participants themselves, who expressed orally the necessity to study the themes proposed more deeply.

The group's specificity – composed by the managers and the coordinators of schools – enriched the reflections and the discussions carried out, once they stemmed from the point of view of the administration and of the pedagogical coordination of the teaching institutions. In this sense, the peculiarities of each institution involved promoted important debates, at which the setbacks turned into possibilities after being analyzed from different perspectives. This process led to the collective elaboration of multiple ways to solve the problems faced routinely at school management, generating new strategic synthesis for the pedagogical planning.

Final considerations

The experience reported confirms the integrative role of the school psychologist, once that the intervention did not provide answers previously delineated and approached precepts of historical-cultural psychology in the context of exchanges permeated by reflexive speeches and listening activity, of the knowledges already consolidated by the participants, and the concreteness of the institutional demands. This way, the interlocution between the theoretical assumptions and the practical experiences resulted in the collaborative construction of pedagogical actions together with the historic and social comprehension of human psychism.

In short, we understand that the application of the theoretical framework of historical-cultural psychology to the context of objective demands of school teaching organization is a way to transcend the theoretical-practical dichotomies imposed by the traditional understanding of education psychology in teacher education. In this sense, the intervention reported overcomes the abstract and separated character of the implicit reality in the dichotomized conceptions when placing the psychological knowledge for the specificities of various institutional contexts, allowing the joint planning of qualitative and consistent planning at the pedagogical organization of this educational space.

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Larissa Figueiredo Salmen Seixlack Bulhões: graduated in Psychology from Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho (2010); doctor in School Education from Faculdade de Ciências e Letras, UNESP, campus of Araraquara. Adjunct professor at the Education Department of Universidade Federal de Lavras. Experience in the Education field, with emphasis on the Teaching-Learning process, working mainly on the following subjects: school psychology, literacy and psychic development, continuous formation of teachers and monitoring of learning difficulties. Researcher at the Center of Languages, Reading and Writing Studies - NELLE – and at the research Group Language, Reading and Written Culture of Universidade Federal de Lavras-MG. <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8388-0036>.

Flávia da Silva Ferreira Asbahr: Assistant Professor at the Psychology Department of Faculdade de Ciências, UNESP-Bauru. Doctor in Psychology from the program School and Human Development Psychology of the Psychology Institute (USP), with doctoral exchange program internship at Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. Graduated in Psychology from Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho (2000) and Master in School and Human Development Psychology from Universidade de São Paulo (2005). Experience in the Psychology field, with emphasis on School Psychology, working mainly on the following subjects: historical-cultural psychology, activity theory, pedagogical activity, political-pedagogical project, teacher's formation and relation sense and meaning at the constitution of human consciousness. Member of GEPAPE (Group for Studies and Research on Pedagogical Activity - FEUSP) and of LIEPPE (Interinstitutional Laboratory of Studies and Research in School Psychology - IPUSP). [http:// orcid.org/0000-0002-7338-0003](http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7338-0003).