

CULTURAL-HISTORICAL PSYCHOLOGY IN BAURU'S CURRICULUM: IN-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION¹

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ABSTRACT. This article aims to present the experience in-service teacher education developed by trainees of School Psychology in the administration of two editions of the course 'Theoretical Foundations of Historic-Cultural Psychology and the Common Curriculum of Bauru'. The course was systematized from the understanding of the form-content-recipient triad of the pedagogical activity, which implied defining the content essential to the teaching and the form of organization most adequate to its comprehension and appropriation by the participants who, in turn, were considered in the collective and particular dynamics of each group. The main methodological strategies used by the trainees were: theoretical and dialogical expositions, screenings and discussions mediated by videos, collective readings, group dynamics for the preparation of posters and activities to verify the appropriation of contents. The qualitative leap in the appropriation and mastery of the Historic-Cultural Theory by the participants was clear in both classes, with emphasis on: the advance in the understanding of the centrality of the teacher to the pedagogical organization and practice, the prevalence of social determination in human development, understanding the importance of the affective bond of the child with the school for its development and the deepening in the appropriation of the central concepts of Historic-Cultural Psychology.

Keywords: Teacher education; curriculum; historic-cultural psychology.

PSICOLOGIA HISTÓRICO-CULTURAL NO CURRÍCULO DE BAURU: FORMAÇÃO DOCENTE CONTINUADA

RESUMO. Este artigo tem por objetivo apresentar a experiência em formação continuada de professores desenvolvida por estagiários de psicologia escolar na ministração de duas edições do curso 'Fundamentos teóricos da Psicologia Histórico-Cultural e o Currículo Comum de Bauru'. O curso foi sistematizado a partir da compreensão da tríade forma-conteúdo-destinatário da atividade pedagógica, o que implicou definir os conteúdos essenciais ao ensino e à forma de organização mais adequada à sua compreensão e à apropriação pelos participantes que, por sua vez, foram considerados na dinâmica coletiva e particular de cada grupo. As principais estratégias metodológicas utilizadas pelos

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estagiários foram: exposições teóricas e dialogadas, exposições e discussões mediadas por vídeos, leituras coletivas, dinâmicas grupais para elaboração de cartazes e atividades de verificação da apropriação dos conteúdos. O salto qualitativo na apropriação e domínio da teoria histórico-cultural pelos participantes foi nítido em ambas as turmas, com destaque para o avanço na compreensão da centralidade do professor para a organização e para a prática pedagógica, a prevalência da determinação social no desenvolvimento humano, a compreensão da importância do vínculo afetivo da criança com a escola para seu desenvolvimento e o aprofundamento na apropriação dos conceitos centrais da psicologia histórico-cultural.

Palavras-chave: Formação de professores; currículo; psicologia histórico-cultural.

PSICOLOGÍA HISTÓRICO-CULTURAL EN EL CURRÍCULO DE BAURU: FORMACIÓN CONTINUA DEL PROFESORADO

RESUMEN. Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar la experiencia en formación continua del profesorado desarrollada por practicante de Psicología Escolar en la impartición de dos ediciones del curso 'Fundamentos Teóricos de la Psicología Histórico-Cultural y el Currículo Común de Bauru'. El curso se sistematizó a partir de la comprensión de la tríada forma-contenido-receptor de la actividad pedagógica, lo que implicó definir los contenidos esenciales para la enseñanza y la forma de organización más adecuada para su comprensión y apropiación por parte de los participantes, quienes, a su vez, fueron considerados en la dinámica colectiva y particular de cada grupo. Las principales estrategias metodológicas utilizadas por los pasantes fueron: exposiciones teóricas y dialogadas, exposiciones y discusiones mediadas por videos, lecturas colectivas, dinámicas de grupo para la elaboración de carteles y actividades para verificar la apropiación de los contenidos. El salto cualitativo en la apropiación y dominio de la Teoría Histórico-Cultural por parte de los participantes fue claro en ambas clases, con énfasis en: el avance en la comprensión de la centralidad del docente para la organización y práctica pedagógica, el predominio de la determinación social en el desarrollo humano, la comprensión la importancia del vínculo emocional del niño con la escuela para su desarrollo y la profundización en la apropiación de los conceptos centrales de la Psicología Histórico-Cultural.

Palabras clave: Formación de profesores; currículo; psicología histórico-cultural.

Introduction

Continuing education and the Municipal Elementary School Curriculum of Bauru, state of São Paulo

The professional experience reported here concerns the two editions of the continuing teacher education course, 'Theoretical Foundations of Cultural-Historical Psychology and the

Common Curriculum of Bauru,' which was taught by psychology interns as part of a supervised internship in school psychology at a public university in the state of São Paulo.

Continuing education, an important and current topic of study in cultural-historical psychology (Franco & Longarezi, 2011; Camargo et al., 2016; De Marco & Lima, 2017; Santos, 2020; among others), is understood as the ongoing process of professional development—through short- or long-term courses, specializations, and other programs—carried out after initial teacher training. These training courses provide spaces for collective reflection on pedagogical practice, fostering teacher autonomy and active participation in their learning and development processes.

Franco and Longarezi (2011) emphasize the centrality of activity in the teacher training process, pointing out that continuing education enables an understanding of school phenomena through the mediation of thought, or an understanding of school reality in its concrete form and movement. The authors also note that continuing education is often viewed as disconnected from pedagogical practice. Teachers tend to underestimate its value, reducing it to a mere means of increasing their professional qualifications and salaries while meeting market pressures for teacher productivity (Franco & Longarezi, 2011).

Martins (2009, p. 455) summarizes the importance of continuing education, defending it as “[...] a structuring pathway for essential affective-cognitive resources so that future teachers can understand with due rigor, scientificity, and criticality [...] the historical-social conditions in which this exercise will occur and which need to be transformed.” Thus, authors of cultural-historical psychology understand continuing education as an important instrument of resistance to alienation and teacher burnout because it has the potential to articulate the actions of the activity internally and transform motive-stimuli into motives that generate meaning .

The training sessions reported here were based on the initial chapters of the Common Curriculum for Municipal Elementary Education in Bauru (Mesquita et al., 2016). This document was revised and rewritten in light of the theoretical and methodological assumptions of cultural-historical psychology and historical-critical pedagogy and implemented at the end of 2016 . We consider the Elementary Education Curriculum in Bauru as an essential instrument for mediating pedagogical practice since it defines the specific content of each subject to be taught throughout elementary school, provides theoretical foundations that structure schooling, and presents methodological guidelines for organizing teaching (Mesquita et al., 2016). Thus, we argue that teachers, non-teaching staff, coordinators, pedagogical staff, and principals must understand the contents of the document to guide their pedagogical activities.

After its implementation, many professionals in the municipal education system still lacked familiarity with cultural-historical psychology. Thus, the overall objective of the presented internship was to teach teachers and other municipal system professionals the central theoretical and methodological assumptions of historical-cultural theory regarding humankind, human development, and teaching/learning through continuing education courses. This would give them a better understanding of the theory and allow the new curriculum to serve as a guide for teaching practices instead of just a bureaucratic document. Furthermore, the courses aimed to equip teachers and other education professionals with conceptual and practical tools and promote the psychological development of participants through acquiring new scientific concepts.

Development: structure and organization of courses

The first and second editions of the course, “Theoretical Foundations of Cultural-Historical Psychology and the Common Curriculum in Bauru,” each consisted of 40 hours of activities. Twenty-five people participated in the first edition, and nine participated in the second. The target audience was teachers, coordinators, and administrators from elementary school, special education, and youth and adult education. The content covered was the first four chapters of the curriculum, which discuss, respectively, the epistemological foundations of cultural-historical psychology and historical-critical pedagogy, the transition from preschool to school age, school age and study activities, and adolescence and intimate personal communication.

Among the interns, the organization was as follows: most classes were led by three interns, two taught the content, and one prepared a summary report of the meeting's activities. In classes led by two interns, one or both taught the content, and one prepared the report. No class was led by a single intern. While the person leading the class taught the content, the intern responsible for the report also assisted with distributing printed materials and operating the multimedia device. Classes and activities were planned in advance with all interns, as were the supporting texts and other materials to be used. All plans were presented and discussed weekly during internship supervision. During these meetings, the interns presented their organizational ideas for the course and listened to suggestions from the supervisor and other interns. Then, they made any necessary modifications to the initial plan.

Both courses had a similar structure and organization, but they were adapted to the particular characteristics of each group. The main pedagogical strategies used included theoretical and dialogue-based presentations on the content of each chapter, video screenings with mediated discussions, collective readings of chapter summaries, group dynamics, group study activities, discussions, poster development, sharing of content, and activities to verify content appropriation.

When organizing the courses, we sought to present the content in a way that best suited the participants' understanding and appropriation, considering the collective and individual dynamics of each group. In other words, the courses were structured around an understanding of the format-content-target audience triad of pedagogical practice (Martins, 2013). According to Martins (2013, p. 297, emphasis added), “[...] the format-content-target audience triad is a primary requirement in teaching planning. As such, none of these elements, stripped of the connections that link them, can truly guide pedagogical work.”

Pasqualini and Abrantes (2013) define the elements of this triad by defining ‘format’ as the method of organizing and systematizing teaching, and ‘content’ as the objectifications essential to the development of the human race, especially scientific, artistic, and philosophical knowledge—the objects of school education. Understanding the ‘target audience,’ in turn, requires an understanding of the general laws of psychic development in each life stage so that the form of content transmission is most appropriate for promoting humanization, considering the specificities of the human-social environment relationship established at that time.

When considering the format-content-target audience triad in both editions of the course, several important points emerge. First, let us introduce the target audience, as they were central to the organization of the form and content of the instruction. Twenty-five teachers participated in the first course, many of whom held positions in the pedagogical department and the Elementary Education Department of the Bauru Municipal Department of Education (SME). Most of the students were already acquainted with each other and had extensive knowledge of the content

to be covered. Some had even participated in revising and rewriting the elementary school curriculum, and some even held master's and/or doctoral degrees in cultural-historical and/or historical-critical theories.

Of the nine participants in the second course, four were school coordinators and two were elementary school teachers. The other three were a vice-principal, a principal, and a school staff member. All of them had little or no familiarity with historical-dialectical materialism and cultural-historical psychology. Both groups were attentive and engaged throughout the course. They asked many questions, shared personal stories about their professions, and contributed answers to their colleagues' questions.

Regarding format, the first-semester course featured more theoretical presentations of the content, while the second-semester course featured more practical activities and readings from the curriculum. The content delivery format was organized this way because the first course was also the interns' first experience with continuing education. Therefore, the emphasis was placed on content at the expense of the format of mediation. Theoretical presentations are methodologically simpler to plan and implement, ensuring greater security and peace of mind for the interns. Furthermore, as explained, the participants in the first course had prior knowledge of the theory, resulting in easier appropriation of the content through theoretical presentations and less need for practical activities. In contrast, the second course prioritized non-expository formats, such as video screenings, mediated discussions, and direct readings of the covered chapters, due to the participants' lesser familiarity with cultural-historical psychology and the interns' teaching experience accumulated in the previous course. Practical activities allow students to understand the content through the mediation of the activity, making it an easier and more effective teaching strategy for theory.

In addition to the difference in theoretical knowledge between the groups, the number of participants in each course also influenced how the classes were organized. In the larger group, participants were divided into smaller groups of four to six people to create posters and complete other collective activities. In the smaller group, initial and final checks were individual, and mediated discussions took place with the entire group.

The content was dialectically similar and different in the first and second semesters: while both courses covered the first four chapters of the theoretical foundations section of the curriculum, the in-depth study of cultural-historical psychology was specific to each group. With the first group, due to their greater theoretical mastery, it was possible to go beyond the content present in the studied document, engage in discussions of considerable epistemological complexity, connect concepts with each other, and question potential gaps in the theory. With the second group, in turn, it was necessary to present the content using a wider variety of teaching strategies, prioritizing the general introduction of the theory's central concepts without delving into their theoretical-conceptual specificities. Reading the curriculum texts in class gave participants direct contact with the material, which we consider important, given that these professionals did not actively participate in the review process, as most previous course participants did.

Format, content, and target audience were considered as a unified whole to ensure quality and effective teaching of the theoretical and methodological assumptions of cultural-historical psychology in the elementary school curriculum. As demonstrated, the specificities of each group (target audience) required distinct methodological strategies (formats) for conveying scientific

concepts (content). Considering this triad was essential to ensuring that our pedagogical work contributed to each individual participant's reflection and pedagogical practice.

Main results and difficulties encountered: some notes

In the first class of both courses, participants were asked to complete an initial review activity. Those in the first course were divided into groups, while those in the second course worked individually. They were asked to answer the following questions: 'Characterize the human development process,' 'Characterize the learning process,' 'What is the role of the teacher in the education of children and youth?' and 'What is the role of the school in the education of children and youth?' In the first course, the groups discussed the questions collectively and then created posters with their answers. They shared their work with the other groups and explained their answers. In the second course, each participant responded individually and then shared their answers. For a final review, we asked the participants to repeat this activity in the last class of both courses. They were divided into their respective groups in the first course and individually in the second. They reread and evaluated their initial answers, considering the content and concepts learned throughout the classes. They modified, added, and/or removed content as they deemed necessary. The responses were shared again, highlighting the changes made. There was a clear qualitative leap in the appropriation and mastery of cultural-historical and historical-critical theories in both groups, with some specificities.

The first course emphasized advances in the understanding of human development and the teaching/learning process. It focused particularly on the centrality of teachers in organizational and pedagogical practices, the criticality of cultural-historical theory compared to more widespread theories, the prevalence of social influences in human development, and practical conditions that hinder efficiency (e.g., lack of materials and resources, poor school maintenance, and disorganized categories).

The second course, in turn, highlighted a deeper understanding of central cultural-historical psychological concepts, especially the prevalence of the social over the biological in human development, the importance of sign mediation for knowledge acquisition, instilling a desire to study in children, and the fundamental role of scientific, artistic, and philosophical knowledge in study activities and the formation of theoretical thought. It also emphasized the intentional, teleological, and systematized nature of school education, the zone of imminent development as the focus of pedagogical organization, the importance of emotional bonds between children, schools, and teachers for development, and the challenges teachers face in their work due to school conditions. Given the initial lack of familiarity of the second course participants with cultural-historical theory—and, in some cases, a complete lack of knowledge—the qualitative leap in the appropriation of concepts was even more evident in this course than in the previous one.

As the classes progressed, we noticed an improvement in the quality of the questions asked by both groups. These questions were asked with greater theoretical depth and articulation in relation to pedagogical practice. We also observed that the participants began answering each other's questions and discussing theoretical and methodological issues with greater expertise.

One of the challenges we identified in the first course was the difficulty of giving the same attention to the teaching organization as to the content. We often prioritized teaching concepts through theoretical exposition because it was methodologically simpler, given our inexperience with continuing teacher education. Furthermore, some participants' prior theoretical appropriation

of cultural-historical theory increased the level of difficulty in our practice. These teachers made comments and asked questions of great theoretical complexity, sometimes making it impossible to answer all the questions satisfactorily.

In the second edition of the course, the initial distance between the participating teachers posed a significant challenge to overcome: during the first classes, the teachers were repeatedly invited to sit closer to the front and to the interns, or to sit in a semicircle to encourage interaction and communication. However, this suggestion was poorly received, and the participants remained in their seats, farther back in the room and separated from each other. This situation underscored the importance of planning group activities, such as reading and discussing videos, which helped overcome the resistance to closeness. During the penultimate class, much to the interns' surprise, the teachers suggested a small get-together during the next class break, where each teacher could bring a dish to share with the group. Those present readily accepted the idea, and this was the case at the last meeting. At that meeting, the teachers arrived at the institution and arranged themselves in a semicircle, sitting next to each other, without being asked by the interns. During the final weeks of the course, we also observed increased interaction between the teachers during informal moments in class, such as before our presentation began and during breaks. There, the teachers shared personal and professional life events with each other and the interns. These examples demonstrate that the collective nature of the proposed activities created a need for emotional connection with the group as a whole among the participants.

A unique aspect of the second course was the high frequency with which teachers reported the challenges they faced in the classroom, primarily concerning learning difficulties and student indiscipline. These reports were less common in the first course because most participants were professionals from the Department of Education, not classroom teachers. Thus, the second-semester course can be characterized as a listening space where teachers could share the various difficulties of their daily professional lives and where they could feel welcomed and find common ground with one another.

Both editions of the course also featured interesting informal moments that fostered connections among the teachers and between the teachers and interns during coffee breaks. During these breaks, interns and teachers gathered in the kitchen for coffee and enjoyed a relaxed time discussing various topics, especially education and politics, joking around, and sharing more of their personal and professional stories.

Final considerations

Our continuing education work focused on promoting the personal, professional, ethical, and political development of each teacher, as well as consolidating the coherence between the personal meaning and social significance of educational praxis (Martins, 2009; Franco & Longarezi, 2011). Thus, the following elements were central to our systematization to achieve a critical and humanizing education: an organizational structure that prioritized the constant articulation between the theory taught and the pedagogical practice implemented by the course participants; scientific and theoretical rigor in teaching the content; and welcoming, respecting, and valuing participants and their prior knowledge.

Throughout the courses, we related the concepts taught to the practical situations experienced by the participants in their pedagogical work. We discussed the real and fictitious

examples presented by the educators in light of theory, in an attempt to understand the phenomenon in question (a student's learning difficulty, their inattention, aggressive behavior, the precarious structure of the school, among others) beyond its immediate characteristics. This revealed its less explicit determinations. We sought possible objective alternatives to overcome the situation faced in scientific knowledge.

In the final evaluations, participants from both groups reported enjoying the course and learning a great deal from us and from the exchange of knowledge within the group. The groups provided feedback, including comments that the course was thought-provoking, generating more questions than answers, and motivating teachers to further study cultural-historical theory. The content delivery convinced teachers of the theory, generating greater strength and motivation for teaching. The interns mediated the content didactically, enabling everyone to understand. Teachers repeatedly asked the interns to propose more opportunities to study cultural-historical psychology, such as internships, continuing education, or study groups. These requests demonstrate that appropriation of the provided content generated a need for continued study and deeper theoretical exploration among participants.

Despite the difficulties encountered and the undeniable potential for improvement in class planning and delivery, we generally assessed the achievement of satisfactory results in the general developmental and learning principles of cultural-historical psychology in both courses. As we observed the course's contributions to the personal and professional development of the participating teachers, we also observed and felt the courses' contributions to our own personal, professional, and academic development as interns. Continuing teacher education fostered a true connection between the purposes of our research and the motivation for our internships. It also fostered greater coherence between the social significance of pedagogical practice and the personal meaning of teaching the central principles of cultural-historical psychology to teachers.

Overall, we can summarize the contributions of this internship to our training as future psychologists as follows: a greater understanding of cultural-historical theory through the articulation of theory and practice, achieved during internship supervision and course meetings; learning how to organize classes, including planning, selecting content and texts used as references for each topic, preparing teaching resources, conducting classes, and evaluating methodological and self-assessment strategies; improving rhetoric and expository/explanatory speech; developing self-confidence; learning and concrete implementation of group and collective work; learning to respect differing opinions and the ability to yield and share ideas with colleagues; and, last but not least, forming an emotional bond with the course participants, fellow interns, and the supervisor, who welcomed and supported us in difficult times and shared in our successes and satisfactions.

In addition to teaching and learning cultural-historical theory, the course provided a space for debate and listening. Teachers and interns shared professional experiences, anxieties, difficulties, fears, joys, and emotions from their work and academic lives. They also contributed to one another's critical pedagogical thinking and practice. In times of the dismantling of public education, the devaluation of scientific knowledge, and brutal attacks on human rights—including the right to a quality education that promotes development—pedagogical work that is scientifically, ethically, and politically committed is an act of resistance and a struggle for the construction of a just and egalitarian society.

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Data availability:

The dataset supporting the results of this study is published in the article itself.

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