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About labor as educational principle for Critical Environmental Education: Historical-Critical Pedagogy as theoretical and methodological possibility in school Education

Do trabalho como princípio educativo à Educação Ambiental Crítica: a Pedagogia Histórico-Crítica como possibilidade teórico-metodológica na educação escolar

Del trabajo como principio educativo a la Educación Ambiental Crítica: la Pedagogía Histórico-Crítica como posibilidad teórica y metodológica en la educación escolar

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Resumo

Este ensaio situa o contexto enfrentado pela classe trabalhadora brasileira no Brasil do tempo presente, tendo em vista duas questões específicas: por um lado, as brutais condições de precarização, flexibilização e superexploração da força de trabalho num país de capitalismo dependente e periférico, permanentemente ameaçado econômica, política, cultural e ideologicamente pelas potências imperialistas, interessadas em exportações de gêneros primários e matérias primas. Por outro, as catástrofes ambientais, que vão desde intempéries climáticas de toda ordem até os grandes desastres como o desmoronamento das barragens de usinas de minério, que fazem das camadas populares as maiores vítimas. Submetida a um modelo econômico reprodutor de profundas desigualdades sociais e a um processo de devastação da natureza com alto grau de destruição das reservas e avanço do desmatamento, surgem previsões preocupantes para o país nas próximas décadas. Neste contexto, a Pedagogia Histórico-Crítica se coloca referencial teórico-metodológico fundamental para uma educação escolar que ofereça à classe trabalhadora brasileira e aos seus filhos uma alternativa revolucionária que favorece a compreensão das principais contradições do mundo do trabalho e dos problemas ambientais no Brasil, partindo do materialismo histórico-dialético como referencial teórico-conceitual.

Palavras-chave: Escolarização; conteúdos; forma; marginalidade; colapso ambiental.

Abstract

The present essay addresses the context faced by the Brazilian working class current Brazil. It was done by taking into consideration two specific issues. The brutal workforce precariousness, flexibilization, and super-exploitation conditions in a dependent and peripheral capitalism country. This country is often economically, politically, culturally and ideologically threatened by imperialist powers added to exporting primary goods and raw materials. However, environmental catastrophes ranged from climatic adversities of all kinds to major disasters like mining dams' collapse, which turned popular classes into the greatest victims. Worrying predictions emerged for the country subjected to an economic model that reproduces profound social inequalities and to an environmental devastation process presenting reserves' high destruction degree and increasing deforestation. Accordingly, a historical critical pedagogy rises as essential school education theoretical and methodological framework offering the Brazilian working class, and their children, a revolutionary alternative fostering workers' understanding of main labor market contradictions and environmental issues in Brazil, starting from historical-dialectical materialism. as theoretical and conceptual framework.

Keywords: *Schooling; content; form; marginality; environmental collapse.*

Resumen

Este ensayo sitúa el contexto que enfrenta la clase trabajadora brasileña en el Brasil actual, considerando dos problemáticas específicas: por un lado, las brutales condiciones de precariedad, flexibilización y superexplotación de la fuerza laboral en un país de capitalismo dependiente y periférico, permanentemente amenazado económica, política, cultural e ideológicamente por potencias imperialistas interesadas en exportar bienes primarios y materias primas. Por otro lado, las catástrofes ambientales, que abarcan desde adversidades climáticas de todo tipo hasta grandes desastres como el colapso de represas mineras, que convierten a las clases populares en las principales víctimas. Sometido a un modelo económico que reproduce profundas desigualdades sociales y a un proceso de devastación ambiental con una alta destrucción de reservas y una creciente deforestación, surgen predicciones preocupantes para el país en las próximas décadas. En este contexto, la Pedagogía Histórico-Crítica se presenta como un marco teórico y metodológico fundamental para una educación escolar que ofrece a la clase trabajadora brasileña y a sus hijos una alternativa revolucionaria que fomenta la comprensión de las principales contradicciones del mundo laboral y los problemas ambientales en Brasil, basada en el materialismo histórico-dialéctico como marco teórico y conceptual.

Palabras clave: *Escolarización; contenido; forma; marginalidad; colapso ambiental.*

1. Introduction

Counter-hegemonic pedagogies have been currently discussed in Brazil to put the serious social and environmental issues that have been crossing the history and reality of this huge country (often described as having continental dimensions) at the center of the teaching-learning process. This country presents largely diverse social political and cultural realities; yet, it is submitted to a dependent and peripheral capitalism, from North to South, from East to Center-West. This process has left the working class to the worst living conditions, to hunger and to a growing social exclusion process that denies social, civil and other rights, such as education, to a large fraction of the Brazilian society. On the other hand, this ruthless and resource-devouring economic model has become a merciless environmental tormentor to the segment of the Brazilian society that suffers from the labor world. The affected population experiences the most perverse side of the environmental tragedies ravaging several Brazilian regions, which leaves a legacy of death, destruction and pain. Accordingly, the Historical-Critical Pedagogy, herein understood as educational proposal, brings a series of possibilities to the Basic Education scope, namely: schooling for working class workers' children. The aim of this process is to restore the human formation process lived by children, adolescents, youngsters, and adult and older adult students based on knowledge concepts and objects that, at the same time, allow clarifying reality aspects that open room for inequality, precarious living conditions, nature destruction and environmental devastation conditions. Consequently, it leads to catastrophic predictions, as well as highlights the prevailing dominant classes that make it impossible to overcome this reality.

The current essay introduces recent reflections on the challenges and obstacles faced by the Brazilian working class, mainly the ones related to the working class' living conditions in the country and those associated with environmental issues shrouded in worrying predictions for present and future generations, in case direct and objective interventions in the country's current socio-economic model are not achieved. According to both discussions about the labor world and environmental issues, the Historical-Critical Pedagogy makes significant contributions to the schooling process in Brazil, besides opening windows of possibilities for the political formation of the involved actors. It must be done to raise the awareness and to enhance the organization and resistance of those who are, and will be, increasingly penalized by the consequences of workers' precariousness and of the ongoing environmental destruction in the country. Thus, the education possibilities set for the working class resistance against the exploitation process it has been subjected to will be herein discussed by using the Historical-Critical Pedagogy as pedagogical theory, as well as the Brazilian current socio-economic model, which disregards the environment. Ultimately, the consequences of this process fall onto these same social actors.

2. Labor as educational principle against the entrepreneurship hegemony in Brazilian Education: historical-critical pedagogy as counterpoint

A striking aspect observed for this context lies in the current labor relationships in Brazil, and in their connection to educational reforms and hegemonic pedagogical trends. Business-oriented Education reforms have been closely associating vocational education with sense of entrepreneurship. This topic emerged as cross-sectional factor and gained prominence, over time. Currently, this is a relevant discipline matrix component factor for the New High School system. Entrepreneurship is supposedly introduced as a more attractive and interesting option for students due to its active learning methodologies and approaches, as highlighted by Duarte (2016). Technological updates have enabled workers' 'platformization', as they have been submitted to mediation focused on managing several product and service provisions amidst the working class' precariousness process in Brazil. This process has been marked by policies to make labor relationships and rights more flexible, mainly after the Covid-19 pandemic. According to Abreu (2025), a glaring contradiction has currently emerged in the labor world. Despite the intense use of technology, which

could free humans from long working hours, labor has never been so intense, and it takes mankind far from achieving the free time necessary for its full development, as envisioned by Marx (2011). Furthermore, conditions have been created to set primitive working hours as process echoing the denial of rights and the harassment posed by employers. The physical and mental illnesses degrading the lives of most working class workers is featured by self-centered, intellectually rigid, exhausted, or, somehow, unhappy individuals subjected to long and intense working hours, to time-off impoverishment and to shorter lives only to support economic functions. The fight against the 6x1 work schedule is just the tip of a broader and more complex dispute involving the huge barriers placed on their way towards philosophical awareness, rather than just workers' schooling. Education must be able to give workers the necessary knowledge and concepts to help them developing their own autonomous, critical and, somehow, revolutionary worldview, based on individual class consciousness. The reality of 68 million Brazilians who have had their right to education denied can be disclosed by addressing all these aspects. In 2024, Brazil reached 5.3% illiteracy (9.1 million individuals), according to IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics). Functional illiteracy affects approximately 29% of the population in the age group 15-64 years, according to the 2024 Functional Literacy Indicator (INAF)- this level has remained stable since 2018. In 2024, 56% of the population in the aged group over 25 years had finished Basic Education (high school), according to IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics). Data on specific primary (grades 1 and 2) and secondary education levels from 2014 were not detailed in recent articles, but it is possible noticing that 8.7 million youngsters in the age group 14-29 years had not finished high school.

On the other hand, overall, higher education courses for initial teacher's training in Brazil have been marked by emphasis on strengthening the practical dimension, despite the several propositions to update their discipline matrices. This information was provided by MEC (Ministry of Education) guidelines and CNE (National Education Council) resolutions. It is essential combining content knowledge and technical actions to enable students to build knowledge by having in mind the role of conducting the teaching-learning process at different school education spheres. However, accordingly, both training and the teaching practice have emphasized the practical dimension over the theoretical one (Souza; Costa, 2024).

Theoretical subjects' prevalence in undergraduate courses, to the detriment of practical subjects, is among the Education managerial issues, mainly when it comes to public management heading towards teachers' training, which includes supervised internships, teaching practices and other complementary non-disciplinary discipline matrix components, as well as the so-called Education fundamentals. Thus, the first challenge in addressing the initial teacher's training issue in Rio de Janeiro State, and in Brazil, emerges when the risk of separating theory from practice is ignored, and training propositions are developed without carefully considering the aspects forming the teaching capital mobilized for the exercise of the teaching profession. The tacit concept of school Education (at all levels) and modalities aims training for the labor market rather than the workers themselves. According to Mézaros (2014), these workers will act in society as human, political, philosophical, cultural and social beings who simultaneously reproduce the conditions necessary for survival, and directly and indirectly act in society by interfering with reality through their active participation in the lives lived in the world. Therefore, this is not a matter of having teachers' training in opposition to the goals of workers' training for the work itself, but of rather questioning what kind of worker one wants to train, as Catini (2020) has pointed out. In this case, it is essential understanding that school education demands rediscovering the work dimension in pedagogical practices as educational principle, from the perspective envisioned by Saviani (2007).

Therefore, if one bears in mind educational training as important part of workers' training, teachers' training results from the perspective of the human development potential opening room for a broader training provided to these same workers within the teaching-learning process. Awakening teachers concern with what they teach and, above all, with how they teach it, in other words, how they act in it, with what resources and contributions they bring to the pedagogical approaches that organize the educational *praxis*, is one of this movement's immediate effects. This scenario involves the contribution of concepts, such as creation-creativity and experience-experimentation, to educational processes. Thus, it is mandatory to revalue teachers' training from another perspective and to restate the Education

fundamentals. The context students live in, mainly those enrolled in public education institutions, must be added to these two dimensions. It is so, because they are directly or indirectly associated with class struggles in Brazil, mainly with the working class. The proposition of having innovation in initial teachers' training lies in this very possibility, which clarifies the ongoing disputes in the Brazilian Education field. On the one hand, one finds the concept of Education based on critical, socially referenced and quality training; on the other hand, there is the concept stemming from the business sector, which seeks school Education lacking a humanistic meaning linked to philosophical consciousness. This process reinforces the technical character of an Education centered on skills and competence acquisition, and it would define quality education within the dispute field, as already pointed out (Souza; Costa, 2024). From this perspective, and according to Barbosa; Kaplan; Souza (2024), not only Youth and Adult Education in Brazil is currently shaped by an educational project aimed at trapping the country in an agro-export model, but as raw material supplier to central economies by, somehow, giving up a project of autonomous and sovereign development. This model is found in CNE/CEB Opinion n. 11/2000, given the Youth and Adult Education functions listed in CNE/CEB discipline matrix guidelines (Silva, Souza and Barbosa, 2021).

After clarifying the study topic, the aims of the current analysis and the issues crossing this bibliographic study, it is possible disclosing the hypothesis that the concept of vocational Education centered on the concept of entrepreneurship is ineffective as proposition for workers' training. Therefore, in addition to being pragmatic and merely focused on the labor market, this approach ultimately targets training heading towards cheap labor, which is susceptible to over-exploitation. It happens because of the focus on skills and competence acquisition, whether in Youth and Adult Education (EJA), complies with the National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) through CNE/CEB Resolution n. 1/2021, according to Brazil (2021); or in other education or modality level aligning the Basic Education with a unilateral educational character. As Saviani (2018) pointed out, this process generalizes the values of dominant classes in the capitalist society as workers' worldview. Consequently, one finds the rejection of polytechnics and multidimensionality as categories substantiating a critical, unitary, integral and disinterested education, as defined by Nascimento and Sbardelotto (2008).

Accordingly, the historical-critical pedagogy as revolutionary pedagogy embodies the historical-dialectical materialism as theoretical-conceptual framework to take the set of contradictions observed in the Brazilian society into the teaching-learning process. It is done by questioning capitalism as social organization model starting from the concept of marginality, among other possibilities. Based on Saviani (2008), marginality is a structural condition produced by capitalist social relationships rather than an individual issue- as it is understood by the common sense. Saviani (2008, p. 59) reasoned on marginality to Education and stated that the capitalist society structurally produces segments excluded from cultural appropriation when "the dominant classes have the conditions to appropriate the elaborated culture, while the working classes are kept on the margins of this process". Therefore, this marginality stops to be seen as accident, but as logical consequence of how society organizes the production and distribution of cultural goods. This process also echoes on the problems, limits and tasks placed over Education. Saviani (2008, p. 23) criticized the pedagogical theories blaming student themselves for such a marginality by defining it as sociological prejudice- "the tendency to blame the dominated ones for the responsibility over their own social condition". Saviani (2008) went farther and emphasized that this prejudice shows up in explanations, according to which, "cultural deficiency", "disinterest" or "psychological deficiencies" feature popular-class students. As he stated, this viewpoint blurs the social marginality cases. Thus, the school can reproduce or fight marginality by reducing its role in spontaneous activities only adapted to students' immediate daily lives. This process reinforces their cultural exclusion, since it ends up denying the popular classes' access to the necessary tools to understand and transform their reality, by refusing to transfer systematized knowledge to them. Therefore, in conclusion, marginalization is fought through scientific knowledge sharing.

Thus, the Historical-Critical Pedagogy emerges as the very response to the cultural marginalization issue, since the awareness of knowledge as right of all is its starting point, and its appropriation is a crucial condition to overcome marginalization. Consequently, teaching must be intentional and systematized, and have rigor. According to Saviani (1980,

p. 88), the educational process must allow students to overcome their initial condition, as Education's main task lies in "enabling individuals to appropriate the cultural elements necessary for the development of their human capacities". Therefore, students stop being on the margins of the literate culture by appropriating the classical knowledge. Knowledge critical and intentional transfer is an essential emancipatory condition because access to systematized knowledge is the only possible way to move from a fragmented experience to the critical understanding of social reality. Thus, the organized discipline matrix cannot be seen as authoritarian, but as instrument to overcome inequalities.

From the Historical-Critical Pedagogy perspective, students aimed to the herein advocated for education are those who transcend the common sense and achieve philosophical awareness, as it was understood by Marx (2025) when he stated "if essences and appearances were confused, science would be unnecessary". Ultimately, this is about education for citizenship, an Education not merely associated with the acquisition of rights, from an individualistic perspective, but for the critical exercise of a political leadership connected to the collective ways of being and existing in the world to overcome the shallow and apparent views of reality, as it discloses itself. Flexibility, in opposition to what it promotes, far from guaranteeing more freedom for the Brazilian working class worker, makes workers work even more, and it raises questions about 'flexibility for whom'. Therefore, this questioning somehow makes them resist the commodification of all social life aspects.

2.1 Critical Environmental Education and Historical-Critical Pedagogy to fight the capitalist environmental collapse

There is several and robust evidence that mankind is going through an environmental collapse. According to Luiz Marques (2025, pp. 22-23), this "is not 'the end of the world', a catastrophic and terminal event (...) [but] a process taking place at an increasing speed, making the human project unfeasible due to decrease in the physical and biological conditions favorable to the continuity of the planetary life evolutionary dynamics". Since 1970, the demand for natural resources has exceeded the planet's carrying capacity. of the nine planetary boundaries responsible for maintaining Earth's stability had already been surpassed by 2025. In 2024, the mean global surface temperature exceeded 1.5°C the pre-industrial period for the first time and "the biosphere is losing 137 species every day as a result of deforestation" (Marques, 2025, p. 23). According to various evidence sources, this process' starting point dates back to 1750 during the Industrial Revolution. It speeded up faster in the 1950s, at the post-World War II period (Angus, 2023). These facts allow stating that environmental collapse derives from the capitalist production mode. Furthermore, environmental destruction responsibility is unevenly distributed among social classes and countries. There is also clear inequality among the social groups most affected by environmental degradation.

Assumingly, with respect to environmental issues, it is up to science to (1) properly feature the current environmental and social degradation stage by providing prognoses and predictions to help humans on their struggles, (2) develop correct and concrete claims against those responsible for environmental destruction, (3) identify and outspread alternatives to overcome the structural causes of environmental issues. Based on real-world data, one can observe the unsustainability of the capitalist production mode given its intrinsically predatory and expansionist nature stemming from the dynamics of a broad capital reproduction at global scale (Sá Barreto, 2022). This system is primarily responsible for the serious structural crisis mankind is currently experiencing, which has several dimensions, including the environmental one. Mészáros (2011, p. 54) was right when he stated that "the crisis we must face is a profound and increasingly serious structural crisis, which requires the adoption of comprehensive structural remedies in order to achieve a sustainable solution". Therefore, a dual movement is necessary to disclose and report the unsustainability of this society type, and to highlight sustainable societies and systemic alternatives to this unsustainable system. This process has been advocated for from the critical perspective of the Environmental Education field (Freire, 2000; Trein, 2012; Layrargues, 2018), whose aim is to report and outspread information on this field. According to Paulo Freire

(2000, p. 54), dealing with prophetic and utopian thoughts “implies reporting how we are living and outspreading how we could live”. According to Eunice Trein (2012, p. 297):

[...] The limits of capitalism need to be reported. However, this report must be followed by an announcement, because social processes, which are part of the real world, move in certain directions and it justifies our continued construction of utopias as social horizons worth fighting for. The limits and possibilities of these visions of the future, constructed with scientific analyses of reality, will always be verified within the context of social praxis.

Philippe Layrargues (2018, p. 43), in his turn, stated that

Announcing sustainable lifestyles while simultaneously denouncing unsustainable lifestyles is the primary task of Critical Environmental Education. It involves advocating for the alternative path of sustainability while also fighting the hegemonic path of unsustainability.

It is necessary to take into consideration the structural and conjuncture dimensions to analyze the social reality and to understand the environmental issues. These dimensions, although different from each other, are inseparable, as they are interconnected and mutually conditioning (Osorio, 2025). The social structure discloses a higher abstraction level concerning the production modes of material and social life, social classes and social relationships, as well as of the State and other relatively more stable and durable social institutions. Conjuncture is found at more concrete level and refers to a given political situation, to correlation of forces, to social struggles of a given time, to institutional decisions, among others. Structure sets the conditions for conjuncture possibilities, whereas the conjuncture can change structure aspects through collective social and political action.

It is indispensable apprehending reality determinations in the social reality analysis; it must be done based on a method capable of capturing them and of operating from the social totality perspective. Accordingly, the historical-dialectical materialist method is herein understood as the most suitable for the purpose of the hypothesis advocated for in the present research. Osorio (2025, p. 31) raised questions about this debate:

Are there elements allowing us to explain and decipher the movements of social reality? Does life in society have any principle of unity and structure? Does it have any general sense of organization? What processes unify current social reality? Is it possible to arrive at the foundations of what unifies it today, or are these [elements] beyond our comprehension?

The aforementioned author introduced three general answers to these questions and they corresponded to epistemological and political lines of thought. Some of them assert that “it is not possible to formulate substantive explanations about social reality because they consider it indeterminate, the result of mere contingencies”; thus, “any meaning or accounting for any aspect of social reality is an arbitrary exercise, in which any discourse is equally valid, given the irrationalism that constitutes it” (ibid.). Based on other lines of thought, “it is necessary to establish laws and regulations, but the very essence of social processes escapes human understanding” and “we only arrive at a partial understanding of social reality” (ibid., p. 32). According to the third line of thought, the authors of the current study are in line with, the so-called Marxist tradition, “social reality achieves a unity and [...] reason can unveil what organizes it and gives it meaning”. There are three central ideas in this line of thought:

[...] The first is that social reality has a decipherable unifying activity, which allows us to grasp the meaning of its processes and their unfolding. In short, it is necessary to think about social reality from the perspective of totality. The second is that the logic of capital is the totality that unifies the processes of social life in our times. The third is that it is within this totality that the problems occupying the various social disciplines gain intelligibility (ibidem, p. 32).

Based on these premises, one can argue that the Environmental Education, from a critical approach, needs to be grounded in the historical-dialectical materialist theoretical-methodological framework (Oliveira; Kaplan; Dawidman,

2021) and in pedagogical theory frameworks in line with the Historical-Critical Pedagogy (Agudo; Teixeira, 2020; Agudo, 2020; Loureiro; Tozoni-Reis, 2016; Maia, Teixeira; Agudo, 2015; Tozoni-Reis, 2007). It is worth noticing that, although the Environmental Education (EE) is introduced as singular in a social field, broadly speaking, it is guided by three political-pedagogical macro-trends that fight for their meanings and directions, namely: Conservationist EE, Pragmatic EE and Critical EE (Layrargues and Lima, 2014).

According to research in this field, "until the 1970s, the environmental debate was featured by lack of political, social and economic dimensions, with the prevalence of apolitical and 'biologizing' tendencies" (Oliveira; Kaplan, 2022). The first two Environmental Education (EE) trends lay on the conservative spectrum because, although they make social critiques, they leave the existing social structure untouched. The Conservationist EE focuses on awakening environmental awareness through propositions mostly centered on a liberal, individual aspect; it is done by using practices such as ecological literacy, sensory-perception activities, ecological walks, among others. The Pragmatic EE, on the other hand, proposes an environmental approach aimed at correcting system "flaws" to maintain the production mode. Waste recycling, sustainable consumption, changes in consumption habits, among others, are among the practices developed from this environmental education perspective, although they are not seen as the means but as the end (Layrargues, 1999). The Critical Environmental Education, in its turn, starts from the historical, social and political understanding of the environmental issue, and it proposes a collective confrontation of structural issues responsible for this issue.

The study can move forward by recalling the disputes within the Critical Environmental Education, which concern the meaning of criticism (what is criticized) and transformation (how can one overcome the experienced environmental crisis?; what is the best path?). Lopes (2019) identified hermeneutics, complexity theory and historical-dialectical materialism as the main theoretical-epistemological trends in the Critical Environmental Education. The critical-Marxist perspective observed for the Environmental Education disclosed the destructive character of the capitalist production mode and placed the solution of the alienation and exploitation relationship between humanity and nature on its overcoming horizon. The present authors are in line with the Marxist tradition addressed by Loureiro (2019), who understands that the Critical Environmental Education must be necessarily committed to overcoming the capitalist society, and it means the need for building a socialist society. Tozoni-Reis (2007) oriented his scientific production to the dialogue between the Critical Environmental Education and the Historical-Critical Pedagogy in the "movement to become fully human through the critical and transformative appropriation/transmission of the historical and concrete totality of human life in the environment" (ibidem, p. 218).

The Historical-Critical Pedagogy stemmed from the works by Dermeval Saviani in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, this theory was collectively produced by many authors from several knowledge field who spanned school subjects, levels and Education modalities. With respect to the Environmental Education, it is essential highlighting the works by Marília Tozoni-Reis (2004; 2007), Marcela de Moraes Agudo (Agudo; Tozoni-Reis, 2020), Lucas André Teixeira (Agudo; Teixeira, 2020), Lilian Giacomini Cruz Zucchini (2021), Jorge Sobral da Silva Maia (Maia; Teixeira, 2015), Carolina Borghi Mendes (Mendes; Maia, 2025), and by many other researchers. Saviani (2023) recently wrote an article on Historical-Critical Pedagogy contributions to the Environmental Education.

Overall, the Environmental Education relevance is herein understood from the Historical-Critical Pedagogy perspective, which stems from the defense of educational work as "the act of directly and intentionally producing, in each singular individual, the humanity that is historically and collectively produced by the whole humankind" (Saviani, 2021, p. 13). The content/form/recipient triad is indispensable to achieve this purpose. Unlike conservationist and pragmatic approaches focused on behavioral changes in ordinary individuals, Historical-Critical Pedagogy (HCP) does not dissociate individuals from the global social practice and, consequently, from the determinants to think the relationships between individual and society, society and nature, and individual agency and social structure. Historical-Critical Pedagogy (HCP) does not dissociate content from form, whereas liberal pedagogies inspired by the New School movement and/or by constructivism target forms and downplay content:

(...) The central issue in pedagogy is the problem of forms, processes, and methods; certainly not considered in themselves, since **forms only make sense when they enable the mastery of certain contents** (Saviani, 2021, p. 65, emphasis added).

The school exists, therefore, to provide the acquisition of the tools that enable access to elaborated knowledge (science), as well as access to the rudiments of that knowledge. The activities of basic education should be organized around this issue. If we call it the discipline matrix, then we can state that the elementary school discipline matrix is structured based on systematized knowledge (ibidem, p. 14).

Thus, content matters at the time to develop a Critical Environmental Education in schools and in teachers' training. There have been discussions (Peneluc; Moradillo, 2023) about the criteria to select classic content for school Environmental Education, and they have followed the guiding principles recommended to systematize the core critical school Environmental Education content based on the historical-critical pedagogy. In other words, it means thinking according to the totality category within its historical movement. *Praxis* is, then, a dialectical category gathering action and thoughts, based on the existing objective and material materiality that seeks to account for life. It is essential interpreting facts through the historical apprehension of the process to build the socio-environmental reality through the work category. Actions must be taking in a way to enable the necessary changes to achieve human emancipation. This discussion is not closed and deserves further research. However, this study type contributes to achieve pedagogical research in compliance with this perspective.

Bricio (2025) sought to identify topics addressed in schools to boost discussions about core contents from the Critical Environmental Education perspective in school contexts. She identified ecology, waste, energy, health, water, climate change, sustainability, soil, agrarian issues, vegetable gardens, environmental impacts and traditional peoples among these topics. Although it does not close the debate, this and other research supported by the same aim help thinking about the work possibilities from the Environmental Education perspective, based on the Critical Environmental Education.

Accordingly, the fruits from dialogues between the Critical Environmental Education and the Historical-Critical Pedagogy are clear, just as the diverse aspects crossing their development and allowing the sharing of the objective knowledge necessary to face the ongoing environmental collapse affecting the working class as a whole, mainly if one keeps in mind schools' social function, as highlighted by the Historical-Critical Pedagogy.

Final considerations

The current article introduced discussions about the relevance of the Historical-Critical Pedagogy as pedagogical theory based on the historical-dialectical materialism. It is currently used to face the marginal condition imposed by the logic of capital on the working class. This scenario leads to labor and education rights' precariousness and flexible profile. On the other hand, the environmental collapse results from the broadened reproduction of capital, and from the 'commodification' of both nature and labor forces.

The Historical-Critical Pedagogy starts from social practice and takes the set of contradictions observed in the Brazilian society into the teaching-learning process. It allows questioning the capitalist production mode as the only possibility amidst the hegemony of the reformulated "learning to learn" pedagogies. These pedagogies are typical of the neoliberal period and of the entrepreneurship ideology or of the competence ideology that, besides concealing the social division of classes, "does so with the peculiarity of stating that the social division takes place between the competent (experts who have scientific and technological knowledge) and incompetent ones (those who execute tasks assigned by the exerts)" (Chauí, 2025, p. 110). Furthermore, the Critical Environmental Education grounded in the Historical-Critical Pedagogy provides the opportunity to link the ongoing environmental collapse with the dominant social organization mode; in other words, capitalism, and with the perspective of its revolutionary rupture.

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