



## **Genesis and uses of the discourses of change in the Brazilian educational field**

*Usos e gênese do discurso mudancista no campo  
educacional brasileiro*

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this study is to grasp the ways in which certain discourses emphasize the transformative potential of education, and also explain the genesis of pedagogic discourse that refers to changes. One of the sources for this research was a collection of published works found in specialized literature on the history of Brazilian education. Those, either implicitly or explicitly, give emphasis to the bias towards changes in educational discourse. Also, the articles published in *Education and Society* (the n. 1, 1978, at n. 57, 1996) and in the *Journal of ANDE* (the n. 1, 1981, at n. 21, 1995) were used as sources for this work. It is possible to notice

that the belief in the transformative potential of education is related to the emerging modern conception of man, influenced mainly by an “optimistic” way of appropriating the Marxist approach; likewise, that belief is part of a “pedagogic thinking style”, shown by intellectuals in education, aimed to emphasize the dynamics of the educational field in relation to social structure. Such style of thinking was already present in the first republic and was refreshed in the period of democratization of the country in the 1980s.

**Keywords:** Pedagogic discourse. Social transformation. Educational field.

### **Resumo**

*O objetivo do presente estudo é apreender os modos pelos quais certos discursos enfatizam o potencial transformador da educação, assim como explicitar a gênese do discurso pedagógico mudancista. Utilizam-se como fonte de investigação obras selecionadas na bibliografia especializada sobre a história da educação brasileira que, de forma implícita ou explícita, abordam a ênfase dada ao viés mudancista no discurso educacional e, ainda, os artigos publicados na Revista Educação & Sociedade (do n. 1, 1978, ao n. 57, 1996) e na Revista da ANDE (do n. 1, 1981, ao n. 21, 1995). Observa-se que a crença no potencial transformador da educação está relacionada à concepção de homem que emerge na modernidade, influenciada principalmente por uma forma “otimista” de apropriação da abordagem marxista; do mesmo modo, tal crença faz parte de um “estilo de pensamento pedagógico” dos intelectuais da educação tendente a enfatizar a dinamicidade do campo educacional em relação à estrutura social. Este estilo de pensamento faz-se presente já na Primeira República e é revigorado no período de redemocratização do país na década de 1980.*

**Palavras-chave:** Discursos pedagógicos. Transformação social. Campo educacional.

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### **Introduction**

The social world is the locus of struggles over words which owe their seriousness and sometimes their violence - to the fact that words to a great extent make things, and that changing words, and, more

generally representations [...], is already a way of changing things. Politics is, essentially, a matter of words. That's why the struggle to know reality scientifically almost always has to begin with a struggle against words (BOURDIEU, 2004, p. 71)

The scope of the following study, part of a wider work that analyzes the revolutionary instruments within the Brazilian educational field, is to understand the centrality conferred to the role of education in the resolution of social problems, such centrality created by the discourse of social transformation through education. This analysis initiates with the verification of the frequent mobilization of such discourse in Brazil, and, more specifically, of its intense use during the 1980s, especially as a part of the supply of intellectual notions of the pedagogies so called *progressivist*. Understanding the ways in which the watchwords of the subject matter and the discourses are built, consecrated and disseminated gives support to the comprehension of the lines of thought and action incorporated by institutions and agents of a determinate field, as well as allows to describe, in the different historical conjunctures, the complicity, many times unperceivable, between the objective structures of the social world and the internal structures of sensibility and intellect.

Furthermore, the examination of the genesis of the mental categories used by the agents contributes to unveil the “genesis amnesia”, that is, the social alchemy through which the involuntary and collective oblivion of the arbitral aspect of the symbolic creations gives place to the naturalization of the sense of social. Therefore, the study of the production of discourses and watchwords is helpful in the mission of giving light to the thoughtless actions that, in the daily mental routines, seem to be so clear and evident as to give the impression they have never been socially constructed and imposed.

The empiric basis of the present work is a variety of texts published in the academic magazines *Educação & Sociedade* (from the n. 1 to the n. 57, 1978–1996) and *Revista da ANDE* (from the n. 1 to the n. 21, 1978–1995), as well as works from specialized bibliography. Such

periodicals were selected due to their consolidated legitimacy, which is resulted from, mainly, the representativeness they hold within the educational field, and, consequently, from the elevated power of influence over the pedagogic discourses they dispose of. *Revista do Ande* is no longer in activity, but *Educação & Sociedade* is still regularly published, and still holds a prominent place within the most important Brazilian periodicals of its domain.

From the examination of the 21 volumes of *Revista da ANDE* and the 57 volumes of *Revista Educação & Sociedade*, 276 texts were related to the subject matter were recognized – more specifically, 219 from *Educação & Sociedade* and 57 from *Revista do ANDE*. Such texts were spread in different sections, amongst which: analysis of the pedagogical practice, commentaries, communications, correspondence, debates, editorial, articles, facts and analysis, teaching practice, everyday teaching practice, journal of education, journal of the magazine, movement of the workers in Education, notes, projects and experiences, and reviews. However, more than half of the selected texts (164 of them) are in the articles sessions, the remaining is distributed in the other sessions of both magazines.

At first, the attempt was to locate all the articles that may reference the expression *social transformation* or similar, such as: *social change*, *change*, *society transformation*, *structural transformation*, *new social order*, *transforming pedagogy*, *social revolution*, *revolutionary pedagogy*, *revolutionary praxis*, *transforming praxis*, *transformation of reality*, *transform/change the world*, *transforming action*, *emancipating education*, *construction of a new society*, amongst others relating expressions, which, in an explicit or implicit way, relate to the discourse of a social transformation. Even in the cases in which the selected texts did not allude to such discourse or the expression was not directly associated to the debates of the educational field, the reference to such works has still been acknowledged, given that they indicate how, in some way, these discourses are present in the discussions of the mentioned period in different fields (syndicates, social

movements, law etc.), primarily because they set the Marxist perspective as a theoretical basis.

The methodology applied to the analysis of the selected empiric material embraced as theoretical support the concept of *field*. The objective is to consider the different social settings that agents and groups occupy in the interior of a specific social physical space as well as to investigate their relations with one another and with the specialized knowledge produced in their respective area. For the proper understanding of the arguments which will be unfolded, it is necessary to consider that fields are structured settings of relations in which the agents dispute specific capitals at stake (Cf. BOURDIEU, 1983). Considering this scenario, the structure of the educational field and the predispositions of the agents mold the forms of competition which motivate and engage such agents and their institutions. These competitions regulate the disputes for legitimacy and authority to lecture on education, as well as the disputes for privileged positions in the social hierarchy that, as a consequence, may render advantages in the conduction of the educational policy and in the imposition of the pedagogical practices and theories considered as being the most legitimate ones.

Considering that “every field is the site of a more or less openly declared struggle for the definition of the legitimate principles of division of the field” (BOURDIEU, 2007a, p. 150), **the discourses, words and watchwords, phrases and trivial expressions**, when analyzed as products of strategies and practices of determined agents separated by social stratification and institutions, permit to descry in their propositions the purposes they intend to serve, within the struggle for the imposition of a determined legitimate vision of the social world. Thus, the study of a specific discourse which is consecrated and legitimated — in this case, that of social transformation — allows to apprehend the ways of functioning of this field (the educational field) in a determined moment of its history, as well as modifications of this discourse throughout time. By pertinent operations of homology it may equally enlighten the production and legitimization of discourses, and their successive modifications in other spaces of symbolic production.

## The discourses of change in the educational field

The discourses which express the demand for social transformation are apprehended, in the present study, as part to a wider set of discourses disputed by the agents of the educational field, which can be referred to as “discourses of change”, that is, discourses which are associated to a determined “pedagogic way of thinking” that emphasizes the dynamic aspect of the institution of school and education, by considering them as privileged spots to transform the social structures (cf. PEREIRA, 1967).

Mentioning a few examples to evidence the assertion according to which the history of the Brazilian educational field is marked by the discourses of change should be enough. One could mention the belief in the idea of the “reformation of society through the reformation of mankind”, which is prevailing in Brazil, in particular from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century (Cf. HILSDORF, 2006). In the same manner, the “pedagogic optimism” during the years 1920 and 1930, identified by Jorge Nagle (1974), is another example. According to Nagle (1974), as from 1920 it started to be pondered that the path to progress was in the diffusion of education and in the moral and civil formation of the citizen. It was a period marked by strong “enthusiasm for education”, or for the “[...] conviction that, by the multiplication of schools, of the dissemination of schooling, it will be possible to incorporate broad layers of the population in the pathway to national progress and to insert Brazil in the way to becoming a major nation of the world” (NAGLE, 1974, p. 99-100).

Such bet in the dynamism of education is correlated to the “[...] belief that certain doctrinaire formulations on schooling indicate the way to the true transformation of the new Brazilian citizen (*Escolanovismo*<sup>1</sup>)” (NAGEL, 1974, p. 100). **During this period, the theses which were in season** discussed the delay of progress in Brazil, and were substituted by the

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<sup>1</sup> *Escolanovismo*, or *Escola Nova*, was a Brazilian educational movement characteristic of beginning of the 20th centuries that defended the universal, open and accessible character of school.

conviction in social transformation through the education of all citizens. At the same time, “[...] in the new analysis of the national reality, the idea that the problems of idleness of the freedman and of the indiscipline of the immigrant were due to the lack of education of such groups of the population gained force” (SANTOS, 2001, p. 11). Carvalho (2001, p. 303) also notes that “[...] ‘organizing the national workforce’ with the aid of the school, ‘bringing civilization’ to the Afro-descendant and mestizo populations, to this moment considered inapt to work, becomes the alternate way to progress”.

One could also mention the idea of “reconstruction of the nation through reconstruction of education”, which was dominant from the years 1930 to 1945. Notorious intellectuals such as Fernando de Azevedo, Lourenço Filho e Anísio Teixeira gained political space in the public administration of the political regime<sup>2</sup> established in the Revolution of 1930 and started to implement the ideal of development, by means of the Escola Nova pedagogy, the “[...] modern Brazilian nation through the renovation of education” (HILSDORF, 2006, p. 11). This pedagogy is taken as modern in contrast to traditional pedagogy. “The rule that organizes the new practices of pedagogy”, as lectures Carvalho (2011, p. 302), “is no longer derived from, if even merely mediated by, science. It [*escolanovismo*] is a metaphor of the rhythms imposed to the bodies and the minds by the modern life, empire of the industry and the technique”.

Still in the aforementioned period, the educational politics of the Vargas Era were oriented by the following tendencies: centralization, authoritarianism, nationalization and modernization. The aim was to institute, by schooling, new family, religious, work and native values, with the intent of accomplishing the idea of a Brazilian modern nation. By means of decrees, between 1942 and 1946, the government regulated thoroughly all the levels

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<sup>2</sup> The Vargas Era is the period between 1930–1945 when, after the Revolution of 1930, Getúlio Vargas continuously governed Brazil together with a military coalition. His ruling was characteristically interventionist, authoritarian and populist. It came to an end in 1945, when the redemocratization of the country took place.

of the educational system in Brazil. However, as far as it is known, such regulations were nothing like the ideals proposed by the intellectuals who represented the pedagogy of *Escolanovismo* (Cf. HILSDORF, 2006, p. 105).

Another example is the events in Brazil in the period just before the military dictatorship (1964–1985), particularly from the 1950s to mid-1960s, in which popular culture was viewed by left-wing groups as a way for resistance and transformation of reality. Education is considered as a “[...] result of popular culture, given that within it dwells the capacity of resistance to domination and of agglutinating interests and values connected to the craving for change and national liberation” (GERMANO, 2005, p. 140). In this moment, it started to be considered that these ideas were a threat to the established political order. According to Germano (2005, p. 139), **it was not about reclamations for new schools, but instead “for instituting a liberating education, impossible for it to be accomplished if not within the process of awareness [consciousness raising] of the people, having as basis the popular culture, seeking the disalienation and the social transformation of the country”.**

### **Education and social transformation: the 1980s decade**

The examples aforementioned suggest that the discourses of change, which tend to emphasize the transforming potential of education, are not recent. It is a well-founded belief, widely shared and diffused in different historic periods. This becomes rather evident when one analyses the construction of the pedagogical ideas of the Brazilian educators in the 1980s, at least in what refers to those who, in the field of educational production, are placed in the spot referred to as “critical perspective”. In that decade, the idea that the revolution of education (university, school) would provoke the so expected transformation of society, and hence its democratization effectively, was salient (Cf. BARRETO; ALVES, 1988; COVRE, 1984; FERRARI, 1982; GARCIA, 1984; NUDELMAN, 1981; PIMENTA, 1986; SAVIANI, 1984).



The prevailing point of view in what refers to the possibility of social transformation through education, according to some authors such as Gadotti (1999), Gandin (1997), Meksenas (1988), Vieira (1994) and Wanderley (1984), can be summarized in line with two approaches of pedagogical ideas, briefly described as follows.

Firstly, these authors refer to the theories considered as functionalist, whose main representative is Durkheim. According to this perspective, it is considered that the social structure is not questioned and education is taken as essentially good, that is, capable of turning men into real human beings. In a general way, school and schooling are seen with a certain optimism, and the belief according to which it is possible to build a better society through education prevails. Due to this line of thought, this theory is characterized as reforming and reproductivist. Both authoritarian/traditional pedagogy as well as the liberal pedagogy are indicated as representatives of this model and “accused” of contributing to the maintenance of the unfair social structure. These pedagogies become a target of censorship by critical pedagogy theories.

In contrast, the aforementioned authors also refer to the progressive education theories. The progressive theories are contrary to the ideas of the functionalism and are based on the Marxist conception. To this perspective, society is considered imperfect and the school receives double interpretation: on the one hand, it is comprehended by a Marxist approach, represented by Baudelet and Establet, as one of the agencies that transmit the dominating ideology, one of the settings that reproduce and legitimate the established social order. On the other hand, the other Marxist approach, represented mainly by the French educator George Snyders, criticizes this vision as limited, and such limitation consists in attributing to the school the exclusive role of a reproducer; it affirms that school also disposes of the possibilities of transforming social reality by means of its progressive force and its capacity of resistance to the dominating power. The liberating pedagogy and the critical social pedagogy of the contents are considered representatives of this progressive approach in Brazil.

This characterization of pedagogies reveals a manner of expression of the struggle for legitimacy which was consolidated among the authors in the educational field in the 1980 decade. Such authors are stimulated, due to the interests and struggles, to “map the ground”, to define borders and differentiations. In order to do so, they use a sort of typology of the pedagogical theories: those transforming and dialectic in opposition to those reproductivist and functionalist. Although they are not typifications that correspond to reality, that is, they are only representations produced in the struggle for legitimacy, these classifications influence reality when they produce hierarchies in the power of the field (the transforming and dialectic pedagogies occupying dominated positions in the beginning of the 1970s and being dominant in the end of the 1980, while technicist, traditional and functionalist theories were prominent in the 1970s and then dominated in the end of the 1980s).

This kind of antagonism — as already mentioned, transforming and dialectic pedagogies in opposition to the reproductivist and functionalist ones — is present in the empiric material analyzed in this study. There can be found authors more tending to emphasize the aspects determinants of education of school (OLIVEM, 1979; RAMOS, 1978), as well as those inclined to describe the authoritarian structure that reproduces social inequalities and, by doing so, to propose practices which allow to change such situation of reproduction of inequalities (ANDRÉ, 1987; ARROYO, 1980; CURY, 1979).

In a general view, it can be observed that the authors, in the 1980 decade, are inserted in a debate that previously existed in the educational field. this debate is characterized by the oscillation in which sometimes the structuring aspects of society, and therefore the limitation of the role of school (the school and the education as authoritarian, oppressive, coercive, determinist and reproductivist) are highlighted, and other times the transforming functions of the school and education (who bring consciousness and are libertarian and emancipated) are at feature. Such a dichotomy, whose extremes alternate their strength one over the other, allows seeing a *political* discourse being built in the educational field

under the transfigured form of *pedagogical* discourse. The efficacy of this political construction is equivalent to the legitimacy and the recognition of the spokesmen of the discourse. Indeed, consider that the “pedagogical ideas” constitute the product of the representations, simultaneously technical and social-political, of those who, recognized and authorized by the accumulation of symbolic capital acquired in the previous struggles, give existence to the named thing; thus, the construction of the antagonism between reproductivist and pedagogical theories correspond to the struggle between the different agents of the educational field by the legitimate right to exert the power “of constituting nomination that, when giving the name, gives the existence” (BOURDIEU, 2004, p. 72).

This way, it is possible to perceive that the discourses of change are constructed and “re-signified” in the midst of the struggle for legitimate classification of the instruments (theories and concepts that interpret reality) and for the imposition of the practices and pedagogical values considered as more significant. They are truths supported by “socially well-founded” (Durkheim) and recognized oppositions. Such oppositions are built upon the forms of vision and division of the social world which tend to antagonize “individual/society, individual/collective, consciousness/unconsciousness, interest/disinterest, objective/subjective etc. which seem constitutive of any spirit normally constituted” (BOURDIEU, 2007b, p. 10). In relation to the pedagogical thought, such pairs of opposition can also be complemented by others, such as ecstatic/dynamic, coercion/liberation, reproduction/transformation. Such oppositions seem to correspond to a state of the simultaneously political and epistemological division of the Brazilian educational field.

### **Styles of thinking and the genesis of the transformational discourses**

The belief in the transforming potential of education is present in the educational discourses since the end of the 19th century. Luiz Pereira (1967, p. 157) considers that in the last decades of the referred century began the “elaboration of the named ‘interpretations of Brazil’,

containing attempts of diagnosis of the global structure, which bears 'great deficiencies' that should be overcome by the dominating layers". The educational insufficiency was already identified and it was defended that there should be an expansion of the education system as a solution to the social problems faced in this period. However, it was in the 1950 decade, period during which the processes of differentiation of the Brazilian society were intensified (the transformation of the pre-industrial-urban society to the characteristically industrial-urban society), that the implementation of the social sciences in Brazil took place and that the intellectual specialized in Education emerges.

By analyzing this context, Luiz Pereira (1967) identified two distinct "styles of pedagogical thinking" produced by two different types of specialists, the educational intellectuals and social scientists, relating to the structural conditions of the Brazilian society in the years 1950s and 1960s. The pedagogical thinking, to Luiz Pereira (1967, p. 155), is characterized by its object: "it is about the intellectual activity whose scope is the description, interpretation and evaluation of the educational aspects of the national living, as well as the proposition of changes in the same order". In the same way, the pedagogical thinking embraces the processes which are specifically related to school and those that possess a socializing dimension, and that express the micro-social and macro-social fields of reality.

The first style of thinking which was identified by Luiz Pereira (1967) refers to the intellectuals of education. Such intellectuals emphasize the dynamic relations between school and society in a way to promote structural changes defined and defended in the ambit of collective consciousness. Under this point of view, the school, as an institution, is comprehended as one of the privileged sectors which can transform society, and it brings a sort of "progressivism" with which the "pragmatic targets of the educators as well as all the strategy and programs of change of the global society — known as social reconstruction by the school — would be 'theoretically' justified" (PEREIRA, 1967, p. 159).

The second style of pedagogical thinking is defined as belonging to the class of the social scientists, and such class, according to Pereira (1967,

p. 160), “[...] has played the role of a ‘corrective’ of the knowledge acquired by the educators”. Social scientists have contributed to the explicitness of the conditionings outside school, conditionings that are determinants for the well-functioning of the referred institution, as well as for the verification that the social life takes place in many distinct levels of profundity, being more dynamic and more deep, and that the educational institution is no longer adequate to the deeper levels. It is verified that the “style of pedagogical thinking” is, when comparing to that of the educators, “posterior when considering the time in which it is inserted, as well as more radical, once it is taken from the consciousness of reality, the necessities and the conditionings of such reality, and while it proposes political macro-decisions which affect deeper levels of the Brazilian society”.

Both styles of thinking, one more tending to emphasize the dynamic aspect of the educational field and the other more inclined to focus the structural aspect, seem to cohabit along the entire 1980s until mid-1990s. Such a verification is possible when considering the examples that were found in the empiric material that describe the negative verdicts, the distrust and even the direct criticism to the supposed transforming potential of schooling and education: “romantic vision”, “it threatens to overestimate the role of school in transforming society”, “it is naive to conceive it [the school] as the privileged agency to help the class struggle and social transformation” (Cf. CANIATO, 1985; FRANCO; ARAGÃO, 1984; GANDINI, 1980, PARO et al. 1988; RIBEIRO, 1987). Another example of that is the growing discussion of the relation of university to the reproduction of inequalities and its role in transforming society:

we face the following question: how to refresh the university system for it to serve structural transformation of society if the strata who administer such society do not want more than modernization to make the institution more efficient in the improvement and maintenance of the *status quo* that is so favorable to them? [...] If one still keeps on reflecting about the subject, that is because one feels that the transformation of the whole will only be achieved with the collaboration of all parts (GOERGEN, 1979, p. 51).

In the mid-1990s, this obsession with proposes to promote social transformation through education is partly abandoned. Such fixation had been rather distinctive in the end of the 1970 decade and a great portion of the 1980s, whose characteristic is an intellectually strong production oriented to emphasize, as already mentioned, the transforming aspect of education and in which it is highlighted both the social dynamics as well as the capacity of the intellectuals (educators and pedagogues) in the resolution of social problems, leaving to second place the challenges concerning the understanding of the functioning of school and the comprehension of the subtle ways by which education is implied in the maintenance of the social structures:

Indeed, to the end of the 1980s, the dichotomy “reproduction × transformation” grows old little by little, and such aging is accompanied by the decline of the ways of analysis more prestigious at the time in the subject field — that is, the critical social pedagogy, pedagogy of the oppressed and its variants practiced by the Marxism. But the set of problems of reproduction and transformation (or resistance) remained, as if it was endowed with inertness, and would only leave the scene in the mid-1990s (CATANI; CATANI; PEREIRA, 2001, p. 70-71).

The influence of the alleged critical theories seems to be directly linked to the genesis of the transforming discourses in the Brazilian educational field, more specifically to the Marxist approach which was highly discussed from the 1950s on. The “progressive redefinition of the intellectual field, with the advent of the social scientists and the collegial Marxism in Brazil” could be noticed at this moment.

The belief in the transforming potential of the human action in the world was explicitly related to the modern thought, noticeably to two approaches which are connected: the first one, arisen in the advent of the Illuminism in the 17th century, when the human being starts being considered as a rational, autonomous, emancipated and critical subject, capable of doing it own history and transforming society; the second one related to the thought of Karl Marx (1818-1883), when considering that it is in the history

of the real human beings that the mechanisms of oppression and the instruments of social liberation can be found, through the revolutionary praxis. These two theoretical perspectives influence the pedagogic theories that arise and are developed in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, it is through the pedagogic theories considered to be *critical* that the Marxist discourse gains visibility and is comprehended as a vehicle of contestation to the traditional pedagogies as well as of proposition of new transforming pedagogies.

Yamamoto (1996), in an investigation about the Marxist influence in the Brazilian intellectual production from 1971 to 1989, in three periodicals specialized in the educational field, characterizes the ingress of the Marxist tradition on Brazil as relatively late and precarious. According to Yamamoto (1996, p. 68), a systematic approach of the Marxist thought in the educational field “found place only when there was the retaking of the debate in the process of democratic transition”, and also observes that the authors “within the Marxist tradition pay the heavy tribute to two of its conditionings: the precarious accumulation of the Marxist debate in the preceding period and the (politically determined) urgency to seek alternatives of viable interventions”.

The study of João Valdir Alves de Souza (1996), published in a moment in which the belief in the transforming potential of education starts to be questioned by new ascending theories, such as the ones considered as post-critical and post-structuralist theories, presents in a very wide manner the analysis of the theories which emphasize the reproductive side and those which emphasize the transforming side of education. In this work, the author analyzes the optimistic view relating to education, of authors such as Marx, Durkheim and Mannheim, and the unoptimistic view of Weber, Foucault, Bourdieu, Passeron, Baudelot and Establet. He wonders: why would such an optimistic view on the possibilities of schooling have prevailed in the educational area when there was, at the end of the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century, authors who already indicated that school was not as a place of emancipation and progress, but was instead, par excellence, a place of symbolic control and social reproduction? The answer the author presents is this:

It seems possible to say that, despite the Marxist criticism to the contradictions that the capitalism already presented in the middle of the 19th century, the enthusiasm brought by the Enlightenment, reinforced by the optimism of Marx himself with regard to the revolutionary force of the proletariat, was so strongly consolidated that the conscientious construction of the future began being regarded as inevitable (SOUZA, 1996, p. 751).

One should finally add that the optimism subjacent to the idea of a conscious construction of the future adjusts perfectly, in Brazil, to the manner of thinking of the educational intellectuals. These, when inserted in the struggles of the educational field, adopt arbitrariness, such as awareness, liberty, revolution and social transformation as a mechanism for legitimization, as well as a way to respond to the structural changes in society and in the educational system and to the tensions such changes provoke.

### **Complementary considerations**

The study of the empiric material has evidenced the preponderant use of discourses which highlight the transforming aspect of education, since the First Republic until the redemocratization of Brazil, after the military dictatorship. Throughout this period, these discourses were modified by the incorporation of new watchwords or by their substitution, influenced by the political, economic and social conjuncture in effect in the country. In the years 1980s, due to, above all, the complex relationship the educational field kept with the political field, widened by the movement of redemocratization, the changing discourses were strongly invigorated in the pedagogic theories and expressed in texts diffused by the spaces of consecration of the area, such as periodicals and publishing houses.

Moreover, it can be suggested that the discourses on social transformation through education and schooling configure a gender of symbolic production which has its origins related to a “pedagogical



thinking style” of the intellectuals of education, such style that tends, as mentioned, to emphasize the transforming potential of education regarding the social structure; this symbolic production also is related to a discourse bound to the concept of mankind that emerges from Modernity, influenced mainly by an optimist form of appropriation of the Marxist approach. This kind of appropriation of the Marxist theory influenced and stimulated the adhesion of the authors to the set of problems of social transformation. That is, moved by the struggles of the field, in a time of accentuated politicization, illustrated by the 1980s, the authors adhere to the Marxist theories and, as a consequence, to the belief in the transforming potential of education. All this happened as if the struggle around this specific cultural arbitrary (the social transformation through education and schooling) was the mechanism, not necessarily intentional, by which the agents ascend the symbolic hierarchies and impose, as legitimate, the beliefs capable of conferring the social reason to exist to the field and the fights they are invested in. Far from being an extemporaneous, accidental and random product, this type of arbitrary, as well as its corresponding products, constitutes a component part of the symbolic game practiced in the educational field in that historical moment.

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