



The presence of the new school ideology in the first decades of the 20th century in Russian education after the socialist revolution: adapting or overcoming educational ideas and practices? ¹

A presença do ideário escolanovista nas primeiras décadas do século XX na educação russa pós-revolução socialista: adaptação ou superação de ideias e práticas educativas?

La presencia de la ideología de la nueva escuela en las primeras décadas del siglo XX en la educación rusa después de la revolución socialista: ¿adaptación o superación de ideas y prácticas educativas?

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Abstract

This work aims to analyze the possible theoretical contributions of the New School ideology for the construction of the socialist pedagogy in Soviet Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. Then, we have the challenge of locating in time and space the reflections on the school, the change in the cultural and political mentality of the population, the social, political and economic organization of Soviet Russia. In this work, we present a theoretical approach to the contributions of the New School ideology based on the Deweyan framework, especially its observations *in loco* of the Soviet educational experiences in the year of 1928. By highlighting the existing approximations between the pedagogical principles defended by active pedagogy, of liberal inspiration, with the writings of Russian educators and Soviet statesmen, we analyze the contradictions placed in the historical context and question some certainties and convictions that we have about the “originality” of the pedagogical proposals arising from the Russian Revolution.

Key words: New School. Soviet Pedagogy. John Dewey.

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Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar as possíveis contribuições teóricas do ideário escolanovista para a construção da pedagogia socialista na Rússia soviética no início do século XX. Para tanto, temos o desafio de situar no tempo e no espaço as reflexões sobre a escola, a mudança de mentalidade cultural e política da população, a organização social, política e econômica da Rússia soviética. Neste artigo realizamos um recorte teórico das contribuições do ideário escolanovista a partir do referencial deweyano, especialmente, suas observações *in loco* das experiências educacionais soviéticas no ano de 1928. Ao evidenciar as aproximações existentes entre os princípios pedagógicos defendidos pela pedagogia ativa, de inspiração liberal, com os escritos dos educadores russos e estadistas soviéticos, analisamos as contradições postas no contexto histórico e problematizamos algumas certezas e convicções que temos acerca do “ineditismo” das propostas pedagógicas oriundas da Revolução Russa.

Palavras-chave: Escola Nova. Pedagogia Soviética. John Dewey.

Resumen: Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar las posibles contribuciones teóricas de la ideología nueva escuela a la construcción de la pedagogía socialista en la Rusia soviética a principios del siglo XX. Para ello, tenemos el desafío de situar en el tiempo y el espacio las reflexiones sobre la escuela, la mentalidad cultural y política cambiante de la población, la organización social, política y económica de la Rusia soviética. En este artículo realizamos un extracto teórico de los aportes de la ideología de la nueva escuela a partir del referencial Dewey, especialmente, sus observaciones *in loco* de las experiencias educativas soviéticas en el año de 1928. Al evidenciar las aproximaciones existentes entre los principios pedagógicos defendidos por la pedagogía activa, de inspiración liberal, Con los escritos de educadores rusos y estadistas soviéticos, analizamos las contradicciones ubicadas en el contexto histórico y cuestionamos algunas de las certezas y convicciones que tenemos sobre la “originalidad” de las propuestas pedagógicas originadas en el Revolución.

Palabras clave: Nueva Escuela. Pedagogía Sovietica. John Dewey.

By proposing this topic for discussion, we understand that it is a historical, exhaustive and, to some extent, controversial debate. We have the study by Bittar and Ferreira Jr. (2015) that analyzes the possible approximations between New School pedagogical activism and pedagogical practices of Soviet education in the transition period after the October Revolution of 1917.

In this sense, our article aims to add efforts in the analysis and problematization of the theme, mainly with regard to the thesis of the importance of modern pedagogical renovation at the turn of the 19th century to the 20th century for the construction of a new historical subject, or that is, in the case of the Russian socialist experience, how educational ideas and experiences from other countries constituted references for thinking about and proposing an educational reform in line with the social and political principles defended by the socialist revolution.

With the initial highlights exposed, we have the challenge of locating in time and space the reflections on the school, the change in the cultural and political mentality of the population, the social, political and economic organization of Soviet Russia.

When we refer to **Soviet Russia**, after October 1917, we are already in a period of systemic transition in which pro-revolution political groups achieved political and economic hegemony in the country, something that was being built over several years. In this article, we will highlight as an initial time frame the 1861 Reformation, promoted by Tsar Alexander II, which "formally" abolished the servitude of the Russian peasantry.

In his articles, Silva (2012) argues that the 1861 Reform, despite setting the peasants free, assigning them a small portion of land to be cultivated and economically exploited by them, in practice, had no effect. On the contrary, it caused the need for peasant smallholders to sell their labor power in exchange for their livelihood.

We are clear that the 1861 Reform was the result of the growing process of Russian peasants' dissatisfaction with the situation of exploitation in the feudal system, even without a constituted political organization to guide the movement. In the Russian case, we will see that, despite all its contradictions, the peasantry will be fundamental for the realization and consolidation of the Soviet revolution. For Silva (2012), such limitations placed on small peasants by the 1861 Reform were directly related to the explicit desire to keep the former serf subordinate to the interests of large landowners.

Among the other obligations maintained by the commune was to ensure the payment of the debt contracted with the State for the lands acquired from the lords. [...] During the emancipation process, the peasantry was expropriated of a part of their land called *otrezki*, which was passed to the lords, leaving the peasants with insufficient land (about three-quarters of them had less than 25 acres) and without being able to use most of the forests and commons. The objective of the measure was precisely to force them to work on the lands of the lords to guarantee their subsistence. In many cases they had to resort to renting land from lords or *kulaks*. In certain regions they did it in exchange for work, partially reviving the old *corvée*. In other cases they were temporarily employed as wage earners in industries or in the countryside to supplement family income (Kemp, 1987, p.153). Both on state lands and on landlords' properties, the former serfs continued to be obliged to commit a good portion of their income to paying taxes and indemnifying the lands received. Generally speaking, the land was valued above the market price. The dissatisfaction generated by the reform was great, as the peasants considered that they were paying for land that was already theirs (GERSCHENKRON, 1976, p. 119 apud SILVA, 2012, p. 112, emphasis added).

Therefore, we clearly perceive a division in the composition of the Russian peasantry that, despite “all” owning a portion of the land, exploitation and economic profitability were something restricted only to a portion of the peasant population. Two main social groups formed the Russian peasantry. On the one hand, the *kulaks*, rich peasants and large land tenants. On the other, **agricultural workers**, small peasants who sold their labor power on the lands held by the *kulaks* to supplement their livelihoods.

Lenin, in his work **The Development of Capitalism in Russia**, written at the end of the 19th century, points out the characteristic of this composition through statistics in several provinces of the country. He states that, compared to the number of small and medium peasants in terms of population and land extension, the quantitative number of *Kulaks* was small. However, what guaranteed the supremacy of the smallest group over the others was the possession of the means of production for more profitable exploitation of the land with the use of traced animals, rudimentary agricultural tools and capital for extraction of surplus value via wage labor paid to small peasants who depended on this source of subsistence. In his words

It appears that the concentration of agricultural production is very considerable: capitalists "members of the community", that is, who have 10 or more draft animals (and they are no more than ¼ of the population), holds 36.5% of the sown surface – as much as the other 75.3% of poor and middle peasants combined! The “average” figure (15.9 deciatins of surface sown per establishment, which creates the illusion of a general well-being, is, here and always, absolutely fictitious. [...] Therefore, in the lower group there are very few peasants; the poor have no perfected instruments and the middle peasants have them on an insignificant scale. The concentration of draft animals is even more striking than that of cultivated areas; it is evident that the rich peasantry practices both large-scale capitalist agriculture and livestock farming as well. At the opposite pole are the "peasants" who must be classified as agricultural workers and day laborers with a communal lot, since their main livelihood is [...] the sale of their labor power; to them, to lower their wages and secure them to the land, landowners sometimes provide one or two draft animals (LENIN, 1988, p. 47-48).

Statistical data were extracted from the province of Samara, an important Russian city, geographically located close to Kazakhstan and Central Asia, demonstrating its relevance from a commercial point of view. The most relevant fact of the statistical data is the proof of the Leninist thesis that Russia, even experiencing a late development of capitalism, compared to other countries in Central Europe, already established social relations of capitalist exploitation in the countryside.

In this sense, we demonstrate, through theoretical analysis of the agrarian situation in Russia, that the historical context in the late 19th and early 20th century was tense, as the conflicts of interest between the main groups that formed the agrarian population were antagonistic and contradictory. This historical reality is considered important for Lenin, from a political and strategic point of view, for the overthrow of the tsarist government, since the revolutionary leader writes in his work **Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution**, of 1905, a political balance of the actions of the various groups that participated in the country's political life, with prominence given to groups considered to be counter-

hegemonic, that is, groups that aimed at the overthrow of the old regime, but that diverged in the ways of governing after the fall of the government.

Based on Lenin's writings on the latent conflicts between small peasants/rural proletarians and *kulaks*/large landowners, we realize that, along these two early decades of the 20th century, the path built to the conquest of power is marked by contradictions and political clashes that have caused the possibility for the Bolsheviks to assume the political leadership of the revolutionary process.

In the course of the discussion about the agrarian situation, the composition of the peasantry and political groups in pre-revolutionary Russia, one question is crucial for our understanding: the social and economic conditions of the small peasants who formed the majority of the country's population, allied to the theoretical, tactical and political knowledge of the urban proletarians, were fundamental for the overthrow of the tsarist government and the establishment of the socialist regime.

The concern to raise the discussion of the agrarian situation in Russia, its composition and social organization, was relevant to historically situate the important role played by the small peasant and rural proletariat in the Russian revolutionary process, and how they drew Dewey's attention, in 1928.

To start the discussion on the impact of World War I on Russia, we quote an excerpt from Hobsbawm's work (1995), **The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991**, in which he deals with the "surprise" of the great Western powers with the outcome of Russia's exit from the war, being in such precarious conditions to promote a social revolution that would challenge the capitalist regime in full global expansion and domination of imperialist countries.

Making the world safe from Bolshevism and re-mapping Europe were overlapping goals, for the most immediate way to deal with revolutionary Russia, should it happen to survive – which did not seem at all right in 1919 – was to isolate it behind a "quarantine belt" [...] of anti-communist states. As the territories of these states had been largely or entirely cut off from former Russian lands, their hostility to Moscow could be taken for granted (HOBSBAWM, 1995, p. 40).

At the time, the world context was marked by strong competition between the developed countries of Central Europe that sought to expand and conquer other consumer markets in developing countries. At first, the objective was to establish a commercial relationship, in order to submit such countries to the imperialist logic of dependence and social stagnation, since it was necessary to create the proper conditions for the perpetuation and control of such nations and peoples.

According to Hobsbawm (2009), one of the main factors that drove the change in the mindset of capitalists, who until then defended the "free competition" between markets to protect a "market protection system", was caused by the reduction of rates of profits and the possibility of maximizing them to a level never reached in the form of cartels, trusts² and the use of scientific rationality in business management.

In this sense, it is necessary to understand how this new phase of capital transition is characterized, called monopoly/imperialist capitalism, which begins at the end of the 19th century and intensifies its relations in the first decades of the 20th century. This phase resulted in the sharing of the world between the great powers of Central Europe

² We mentioned the explanation of the concepts of cartel, *holding*, oligopoly and trust in an economic bias in the first part of the thesis, thus, our intention is to clarify the reader as objectively as possible about the main characteristics of the new phase of capitalism and its consequences in everyday life of the population.

(England, France, Germany, Italy), the United States and Japan. Hobsbawm (2009) argues that, in the monopolistic phase of capital, its central concern revolved around the economic issue. However, the same author alerts us to a broader understanding of the economic issue. Unlike the period of the great navigations in which the relationship of dependence was solely and exclusively exercised by the colonies, in monopoly capitalism, consumer markets are producers of certain products that make up the productive chain of large industry; it is necessary to combine a “certain” development between the imperialist States and the developing States.³

According to Hobsbawm (2009), it is necessary to associate the various factors and striking characteristics of monopoly capitalism that, over the last quarter of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, sought to group some countries with which they had close trade relations and, concomitantly, fight other countries that were not part of this economic bloc. However, the “harmonious” relationship between the great world powers was no more than a “beautiful rhetoric”, as we saw in the Leninist analyses, “[...] because, under capitalism, there is no other basis for sharing the areas of influence, of interests, of the colonies other than the strength of those participating in the division, the economic strength, in general, in its multiple aspects: financial, military etc.” (LENIN, 2007, p. 140).

From this historical discussion and the developments arising from the new phase of capitalism, here is a question: how was it possible to “grow” a revolutionary movement in a country devastated by war, poverty and hunger? Why did this historic event provoke a large-scale reaction from hegemonic countries, since it was something located in a backward country and with an absolute majority of the illiterate population?

We raise these questions here in order to show that the discussion on the Russian and international historical context drew the attention of the world in several aspects, especially Dewey, who, even before visiting the country, had already written how he observed the reactions in his country of origin against the new social organization.

In his article published in *The Seven Arts* in May 1917, entitled **In a Time of National Hesitation**, Dewey makes some observations about the events that took place in Russia and its consequences for the rest of the world, which was in a process of “peace reconciliation”, after the World War I, in which the great world powers managed to maintain and impose their hegemony and control to the defeated countries and other countries. However, the philosopher draws our attention to a detail regarding the Russian situation, which, even before the October Revolution, already aroused some noise and suspicions of revolt or social revolution.

When the President spoke his words as to the conditions under which the American people would voluntarily cooperate in fixing the terms of future international relationships, something stirred within, but the whole bulk did not respond, not even though the appeal was couched in that combination of legal and sentimental phraseology which is our cherished political dialect. At the Russian revolution there was a more obvious thrill. Perhaps through some convulsion, some rearrangement still to come, there will be a revelation of the conditions under which the world’s future may be wrought out in patient labor and fraternal comity, a disclosure so authoritative that in it we shall see and know ourselves and

³ Sharing the same criticisms of capitalism in its imperialist phase, Trotsky (1879-1940) elaborates a theory that analyzes this relationship between central and peripheral countries, called Uneven and Combined Development. For a more condensed reading of the discussion, see LÖWY, M. The theory of uneven and combined development. Available on: <http://www.afoiceomartelo.com.br/posfsa/Autores/Lowy,%20Michael/a%20teoria%20do%20desenvolvimento%20desigual%20e%20combinado.pdf>. Accessed on: 24 Oct. 2018.

recognize our will. More likely there will be partial events and partial conclusions (DEWEY, 1929a, p. 446, emphasis added).

It is important to clarify to the reader that, over the first two decades of the 20th century, Dewey adopted a political position critical to the changes undertaken by the capitalist system in different spheres (cultural, political, philosophical, economic, moral), particularly focusing such criticism on the role played by the United States. In the same article, Dewey emphasizes this issue and highlights the impacts of the change in the configuration of international relations in the way of acting and thinking of the American people.

This is itself proof that a New World is at last a fact, and not a geographical designation. [...] We must be spoken to in our own terms. I do not say this in a complacent or congratulatory mood, but record it as a fact. It is a disagreeable fact to many, and especially disagreeable to those with whom we feel most friendly. It cannot fail to be in some measure disagreeable to ourselves that we should have attained a state which is bound to be intellectually and morally unpleasant to those who are our near spiritual kin and who have as against anybody but ourselves, our warm sympathies and best wishes. **That the gallant fight for democracy and civilization fought on the soil of France is not our fight is a thing not to be realized without pangs and qualms. But it is a fact which has slowly disclosed itself as these last long years have disclosed us to ourselves. It was not ours, because for better or for worse we are committed to a fight for another democracy and another civilization. Their nature is not clear to us: all that is sure is that they are different.** This is the fact of a New World. The Declaration of Independence is no longer a merely dynastic and political declaration. (DEWEY, 1929a, p. 445, emphasis added).

Thus, when we come across Hobsbawm's (1995) analyzes regarding the impact of the October Revolution of 1917 and associate them with the first Deweyan impressions written in the same year, we actually realize that such an event had an impactful effect on international social relations. According to the author, given the numerous contradictions posed,

It seemed obvious that the old world was doomed. As the Chinese proverb says, the old society, the old economy, the old political systems had “lost the mandate of heaven”. Humanity was waiting for an alternative. [...] Apparently, all that was needed was a signal for the peoples to rise up, replace capitalism with socialism, and thus transform the meaningless sufferings of the world war into something more positive: the bloody pains and convulsions of childbirth of a new world. The Russian Revolution, or more precisely, the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, intended to give the world this sign (HOBSBAWM, 1995, p. 62).

In an article entitled **Propaganda**, published on December 21, 1918, in *The New Republic*, Dewey mentions the aspects of resistance and combat exercised by the government and hegemonic groups in the United States in favor of defamation and the construction of an anti-communist discourse that would place the two countries in opposing

sides. In fact, what is evident with this strategy is the attempt to hide the real contradictions of the capitalist system which, in its essence and by the internal crisis, reveals its inequalities and disparity with what promises and what is actually materialized and experienced by the population. So, it is necessary to know that

Heresy is proverbially a contagious disease. To learn anything about the Bolsheviki except their excesses would corrupt an otherwise staid and respectable America. Consequently men who sincerely wonder how, say, the Roman Emperors could have been so cruel and stupid as to try to prevent the spread of Christianity by oppressive means are sincerely anxious to prevent men's minds and morals from being undermined to-day by the spread of knowledge of heretical social activities. And it must be admitted that the means formerly at command were clumsy and brutal in comparison with those now available (DEWEY, 1929a, p. 521, emphasis added).

Among the various social aspects, we will highlight the issue of education and how it has crucial importance both from the point of view of maintaining the current order and for the promotion and formation of a new historical subject.

The educational situation in Russia in the first decades of the 20th century is treated as a priority by the leaders of the revolution, given a social and cultural scenario that demanded participation, understanding and awareness of the social changes that were being initiated. However, in this period, we have a worrying picture of illiteracy that covers more than two thirds of the population, something that sets countless challenges for the new workers' government.

For Capriles (1989), education in Russia, at the turn of the 19th century to the 20th century, was one of the greatest social barriers, because, even being a country of continental dimension, which had numerous natural resources, it presented an educational framework similar to that of the poorest countries in the world.

At the beginning of the 20th century Russia was, especially in the education field, one of the most backward countries in the world. Most of the population was illiterate. Documents from the national census carried out in 1897 show that among men only 29% could read and write, while the percentage of literate women was much lower: 13 out of 100. On the other hand, 4 out of 5 children did not have the minimal possibility of studying (CAPRILES, 1989, p.18).

Following the same diagnosis, for Zoia Prestes (2010), concomitant with the challenge of providing instruction for the working class, no instruction would be acceptable. On the contrary, it required the efforts of several researchers in the areas of pedagogy and psychology to develop an educational proposal that fulfilled a dual role – instruction and cultural training.

During this process of construction and development of the new Russian educational system that was capable of meeting the social aspirations desired by the socialist revolution, a direct and organized intervention by the Soviet State was necessary, in order to provide the general lines of work and contribution necessary to initiate the jobs. It is important to observe that it happened like every beginning, even more in a social context marked by internal and external conflicts, see the Civil War that lasted from 1918 to the end of 1920, a conflict caused

by the resistance of groups linked to the old regime and international support that fought the consolidation of the Soviet revolution.

As previously mentioned, concomitant with the challenge of instruction of the working class and the new generation, is the question related to the form and content of such instruction. According to Krupskaya (2017), an important figure in the leading group of the Bolshevik government and member of the People's Commissariat for Education, it was necessary to overcome the current state of backwardness and mismatch of education developed by Russia at the time.

In the text entitled **Woman and the education of children**, written in 1899, even before the revolutionary process, Krupskaya analyzes the instruction aimed at the Russian population and presents harsh criticisms regarding the distinction between the ruling class and the working class. For the author, the priority in schools would be the literacy process, and either way it was developed in a precarious and backward way compared to the new teaching methods and techniques that were already in force in more developed countries, especially the United States.

Those children who attend school learn only with difficulty to read, write and count, and even then, in a poor way. We have very bad schools in Russia and it is forbidden for teachers to teach children anything other than literacy. It is preferable for the government to keep the people in ignorance and thus in schools it is forbidden to talk to children and give them books to read about how other peoples gained their freedom, what their laws and regulations are; it is forbidden to explain why some nations have certain laws, and other nations have different laws, and why some people are poor and others are rich. In a nutshell, in schools it is forbidden to tell the truth, and teachers should only teach children to revere God and the tsars. To prevent any professor from mentioning any truth, there is strict monitoring by the authorities and, to occupy the position of professor, there are those people who did not know much. In this way, the child leaves school knowing little, just as he entered it. The mother herself is generally not able to teach her children anything, as she does not know anything either (KRUPSKAYA, 2017, p. 22-23).

In this way, we demonstrate to the reader that the preparation and theoretical and political training of the pedagogical team in Soviet Russia were built in this period of transition from the 19th to the 20th century. The, it is necessary to understand that the actions of the political group were conditioned to this historical context, that is, it was necessary to know what was most advanced at the time in order to advance under these conditions in a revolutionary process.

Given this social scenario, direct intervention by the Soviet State in education was more than necessary, it was a *sine qua non* for the consolidation and permanence of socialist ideals, since it was essential to promote a change in the cultural and political mentality of the new generations. Therefore, we will notice in several writings of the Russian pedagogical team a reference to the renovating pedagogical movement, whose general principles were centered on the figure of the child as an active subject in the learning process and promotion of the union of school contents with everyday social situations.

Some would ask: how did they use bourgeois, liberal pedagogy in socialist schools? In order to dialogue with such questions, it is necessary to understand and historically situate the debate, as the concrete reality does not develop out of nothing. On the contrary,

it is the result of a dialectical movement of contradiction and overcoming, insofar as the challenges, needs, interests and worldview of the subjects who make history are posed. This means that it is necessary to recognize the advances, limits and setbacks of each human achievement, and, in this particular case, the renovating pedagogical movement brought numerous advances regarding the pedagogical model in force, which excelled in other principles, worldview and men. To Manacorda (2010),

The education-society relationship contains two fundamental aspects in modern pedagogical practice and reflection: the first is the presence of work in the process of technical-professional instruction, which now tends for everyone to take place in "school" as a separate place, instead of on-the-job learning, carried out with adults; the second aspect is the discovery of child psychology with its "active" demands. These two aspects have deeper relationships between them than might seem, at first consideration, although in practice these two pedagogical requirements are divergent [...]. These two aspects dispute the great and varied movement of pedagogical renewal that developed between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th, in Europe and America (MANACORDA, 2010, p. 367, emphasis added).

Therefore, a great challenge is posed for the entire society. Whether with reference to liberal ideals and principles, or with reference to socialist and communist ideals and principles, and also the centrality of the subject in the process of building their own history and knowledge in detriment of the supremacy and subordination of "supernatural" and "crystallized" forces. Therefore, work, a fundamental element that drives the development of capitalism in all its phases, is now seen not only in its professional character itself, but has also explored its educational character, now with more systematization and harmony with society.

Krupskaya, in his text entitled **To the Congress of Public Teachers**, published in the magazine *Verdade Proletária* n°. 15, in 1913, demonstrates knowledge of discussions in other countries regarding the need for pedagogical renewal. It is important to emphasize that, at that historical moment, the October Revolution had not exploded. Russia, months later, would enter a war of great proportions. It meant that the direction of education in a new society that would break with the logic of capital and provide the working class with conditions of liberation and political autonomy was already a latent concern of revolutionary leaders. Therefore, it was necessary to understand that

In the modern state of classes there is a dispute for influence on youth between different classes. The working class presents its democratic demands for school as follows: 1) *general education, free and mandatory for all children of both sexes*, lasting up to 16 years of age; in addition, the school must provide children with a broader and more multilateral physical development (mandatory requirement for this is the provision of healthy food and clothing for children); of work (on the basis of which is the participation of children in productive work, from an early age, in connection with broad polytechnic education, starting in kindergarten and lasting until college); mental, which prepares children for independent intellectual work; social (which aims at the development of social predispositions, habits for collective work, habits of self-organization and so on); 2) *Secular school*, that is, with total

separation and independence between school and church; 3) *democratic and non-bureaucratic organization of school work*, with the broadest participation and control of the population, with the election of school committees that monitor their activities; 4) *full guarantee of freedom of opinion and right of association for teachers*; and, 5) *the population's right to receive education in their native language, without any type of privilege for any language*. These are the main requirements of a consistent democracy, in which the proletariat is vitally interested and which it defends, as children are its future (KRUPSKAYA, 2017, p. 33-34, emphasis added).

Based on the arguments of Krupskaya (2017) and Manacorda (2010), both researchers with recognized trajectory in the theoretical perspective of historical and dialectical materialism, it is possible to see that contradiction is a present and fundamental element, with the purpose of knowing, questioning and overcoming, so that active pedagogy is a reference, the starting point and not the arrival point for a socialist pedagogy. To Manacorda (2010),

Marxist socialism, unlike that of the utopians, **presents itself as the antagonist and, at the same time, the heir of the entire bourgeois tradition**; there is none of those negative temptations in it, typical of petty-bourgeois and anarchist democratism, such as are manifested in Rousseau's instinctive return to nature or in the ostensible need to destroy everything, including culture [...]. **Marxism does not reject, but assumes all the ideal and practical achievements of the bourgeoisie in the field of education, already mentioned: universality, secularism, statehood, gratuity, cultural renewal, assumption of the theme of work, as well as the understanding of literary and intellectual aspects, moral, physical, industrial and civic**. What Marxism adds of its own is, in addition to a harsh criticism of the bourgeoisie for the inability to carry out its programs, **a more radical and consequent assumption of these premises and a more organic conception of the education-work union in the Robert Owen's thinking perspective of a total formation of all men** (MANACORDA, 2010, p.357, emphasis added).

After some initial considerations about the relationship of active pedagogy with the work developed by the Soviet pedagogical team, we move on to the discussion of government measures taken to face this unstable educational scenario in Soviet Russia. At the same time, we see that this relationship will come back stronger in the writings of Krupskaya (2017) and Lunatcharski (1917 or 1918), both important members of Narkompros. They were better known as the People's Commissariat of Education, the central body responsible for planning and organizing the Russian national system, whose initial task would be to develop an educational plan that would fight illiteracy and promote a pedagogical renewal in accordance with the principles defended by the Communist Party.

Regarding the concern for the education and training of the Russian population, Anatoi Lunatcharski (1875-1933)⁴ was appointed the first People's Commissar of Education after the October Revolution of 1917, remaining at the head of the organ until 1929. In his speech in I All-Russia Congress for Public Instruction, the commissioner

⁴ For more information on Lunatcharski's academic and political background, see <https://www.marxists.org/portugues/dicionario/verbetes/l/lunacharsky.htm>. Access on: 24 Oct. 2018.

presents knowledge of the situation that will be faced by workers and points out the importance of the central education body as a support and reference point for other sectors of education in the country.

When I was appointed Commissioner for Public Education, I could not fail to realize this enormous responsibility that the people have invested in me. It is a question of transmitting knowledge as quickly and widely as possible to the people, of destroying the privilege of knowledge that only a tiny part of society enjoys. [...] We knew that there was a State Committee, as well as avant-garde pedagogues; we knew that our school reform does not coincide with theirs, that it goes further, that it involves a continuous advance towards the objective of forming a man who is more cultured, more disciplined, better adapted to social life. [...]. **State power has a problem for now: how to give the people, as quickly as possible, as much knowledge as possible for the enormous task that the revolution has entrusted to it** (LUNATCHARTSKI, 1917 or 1918, p. 02, emphasis added).

Lunatcharski (1917 or 1918) is clearly convinced that the desired change in the way of dealing with education and instruction of the working class should be the work of the working class itself; we want “[...] an authentic power of the people [...]. Our orientation is, therefore, to interest the population in education, [...] that the local population, organized in committees or soviets, assume the supreme direction of the school” (LUNATCHARTSKI, [1917 or 1918], p. 03).

We consider as important the discussion carried out by Irina Mchitarjan⁵ in her study concerning the reception of Deweyan ideas in Russia before and after the October Revolution of 1917. Mchitarjan, in her article entitled “*John Dewey y el Desarrollo de la Pedagogía Rusa before 1930 — Inform sobre una recepción olvidada*”, published in 2009 in the journal Encuentros sobre Educación, presents a series of details about the importance of active pedagogy developed by John Dewey for Russian educators and how this dialogue was assimilated by them in the development of new pedagogical proposals for Russian education, before or after the revolutionary process.

In that article, the author emphasizes that the renovating pedagogical ideas were something known by Russian educators and, in a sense, despite some divergences between the perspectives defended by the groups of Russian reformist educators, something in common unified the work of both groups – the need to adapt the school to a modern, dynamic and industrialized society –, that is, they longed for a secular and universal school for all. According to Mchitarjan (2009),

The appreciation that the main actors in the field of Russian school politics between 1900 and 1917 – the “state pedagogues” and the reformist forces – made of these problems was very different. While the intention of the state pedagogues - who exercised their functions in bodies linked to the church and the state - was to preserve the system at a level of underdevelopment, the reformist forces (if, as

⁵ Irina Mchitarjan holds a PhD in Education from the Faculty of Education at the University of Bielefeld in 1998. Her research focus is on comparative international studies, with an emphasis on education systems and the cultural transposition of pedagogical thoughts across countries. For more information, see <https://www.unibw.de/hum-bildungswissenschaft/professuren/iib/prof-dr-irina-mchitarjan>.

Access on: 24 Oct. 2018.

well as different pedagogical orientations) but, with increasing intensity, the introduction of compulsory general education and the establishment of a common, homogeneous educational system and the reform of its pedagogy. In addition to these joint claims, each of the reformist forces worked on their own reform projects (cf., in more detail, Mchitarjan1998). In this framework, two important reformist currents of the time were fundamentally – that of “free education” and that of “realistic education” – that acted in the reception of Dewey's pedagogy before 1917 (MCHITARJAN, 2009, p. 166, emphasis added).

Therefore, we realize that, even before the October Revolution of 1917, there was already an atmosphere of debates and discussions around the need for change in the Russian educational scenario, which, even though unwanted and encouraged by the tsarist government, was gaining adherents and building more fertile ground for its later implementation by the Soviet government.

Among the groups of reformist educators existing in Russia in the period in question, we highlight two, namely, free educators and realist educators. Both groups defended pedagogical renewal, the difference between them was due to the focus of learning, that is, while the first focused its attention on the pedagogical and educational aspects and the autonomy of the learning subject (the student), the second emphasized that the educational process should prioritize training for productive work, in line with the demands of modern and industrialized society.

According to Mchitarjan (2009), the group called “free educators” acquires this connotation due to the fact that the theoretical principles defended are close to the liberal perspective, i.e. the defense of individual freedom and autonomy, valuing the diversity of everyday life and the centrality of the student in knowledge construction process. L. Tolstoy (1828-1910)⁶ is considered one of the pioneers and main exponents of this theoretical perspective in the Russian educational scene, in a way that he influenced several Russian educators, especially Krupskaya and Lunatcharski, both political personalities who will have prominence in educational planning in the post revolutionary period.

It is important to emphasize that both political personalities mentioned, despite dialoguing with some principles of modern liberal pedagogy, presented a theoretical radicalism arising from their political formations in the field of Marxism and participation in the Russian Communist Party. At this moment, we realize the political character of the position adopted by them when they assume bureaucratic responsibilities with regard to conducting and convincing others involved in the educational process of the need to consolidate the pedagogical change capable of meeting the aspirations of the Russian working class in need of professional/technical instruction and cultural and political training.

In his text written in 1918, entitled **On the matter of the socialist school**, Krupskaya characterizes how the Soviet school should act in the formation of the new generation. She emphasizes that the levels of education must be integrated with each other, so that the school's ultimate goal is the full education of the individual, to wit, that includes the cognitive, affective, social, cultural and political aspects in order to achieve their autonomy and freedom.

Thus, kindergarten, primary school and middle school are all links of general development, intimately linked together. Most importantly,

⁶ Leo Tolstoy was an important nineteenth-century Russian novelist and writer. Author of the well-known novel *War and Peace*, published in 1869. For more information about Tolstoy, see the electronic addresses: https://www.ebiografia.com/leon_tolstoi/; https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liev_Tolst%C3%B3i. Access on: 26 Oct. 2018.

what should be different in the socialist school compared to the current school, is the fact that **the only purpose of the school is the possibility of the student's full multilateral development**; it must not suppress your individuality, but only help in your formation. The socialist school is a free school, where there is no place for training, quarters and memorization. **However, by assisting in the formation of individuality, the school must prepare the student to ensure that he is able to reveal this individuality in a work that has social utility.** And so, the second characteristic of socialist schools must be the broad development of the productive work of children. Currently, there is a lot of talk about the method of work, but the socialist school must not only apply the method of work, but must also organize the productive work of children (KRUPSKAYA, 2017, p.74-75, emphasis added).

When resuming Lunatcharski's speech at the First All-Russian Congress for Public Instruction, when he affirms the difference between the socialist school and the bourgeois school, we perceive the same theoretical perspective defended by Krupskaya. This perspective is evident when he attributes relevance and concern to the individuality of the subject giving education, so that their differences are respected and valued, at the same time in which the collective constitutes an important reference in the sense of solidarity and mutual cooperation between members of the social group. In this special case, the school and the school community interact according to the interests of the more general and complex societal project.

Greater individualization is part of the authentic socialist school, but the more children develop (we see it in all kindergartens, in all schools for children), the more important it becomes that, from an early age, it is taught to them to respect the social character of others, so as to organize common games and pastimes for children, and obligate them to cooperate. Something like school theater, like work in the school garden, on a farm, in a library, in a laboratory, will force children to work together. Will not each one end up, for themselves, understanding that they cannot be content with just one aspect of the school, that they cannot deal solely with themselves, without taking into account the others? The entire game is a process in which you have to cooperate. Everything that is based on the principle of choir, harmony, is social education and contributes to integrating the child into the complex, but united structure that a true society should be (LUNATCHARTSKI, 1917 or 1918, p. 14, emphasis added).

Therefore, based on this existing theoretical alignment between Lunatcharski and Krupskaya regarding the ideas of pedagogical renewal for this initial period of consolidation of the socialist revolution, we realize that the ideas of the reformers of "free education" played an important role in the reception of John Dewey's concepts of the New School.

Next, we will see that the other group of reformist educators, called "realistic educators", presents another central focus for this moment of pedagogical renewal, but that both groups have in the Deweyan theoretical reference an important support point for thinking about a new modern school.

According to Mchitarjan (2009), realistic educators aimed to insert work as a central element in educational practice, so that, through work and practical activity, students could

learn and acquire knowledge aimed at a professional qualification to be exercised at the end of the training process promoted by the middle school. So they wanted,

in light of all this, consolidate the principle of work in elementary schools and extend vocational training. Its objective was to give priority to a realistic, scientific and practice-oriented education (cf. Medynskij 1938, pp. 377ss., 381; see more in “Reforma SrednejŠkoly” 1915, p. 78-85) (MCHITARJAN, 2009, p. 166).

Thus, for realist educators, at that historical moment it was necessary to emphasize a school education that was fully in tune with the demands of modern society. Then, education would contribute to the preparation and qualification of future specialized and dynamic workers, as it happened to demand with the development and advancement of the industrialization process around the world.

Concomitant with the desire to unify work from an educational and professional perspective, realistic educators considered that the active pedagogy, developed by Dewey in US schools at the time, showed special concern with the social aspect, in the sense that education was aimed at the general public, without distinction of social class, and, through cooperative, participative and dynamic work, it contributed to the formation of a new social subject, adapted to the new demands of the developing society.

At this moment, we reiterate the importance of understanding the historical period in question and, therefore, we see in the speech of the realist educators at the 1st Pan-Russian Congress of Popular Education, held in St. Petersburg, from December 22, 1913 to January 3, 1914, that one of the central concerns revolved around the defense of the school of work, a theme defended by the group of free educators. However, along the discussion, we clearly see the care of realistic educators in convincing themselves of the importance of education aimed at work in the productive sense, in line with the desired social demands for promoting the pedagogical renewal of Russian education.

The basic thesis of almost all of them was the following: **the school of work was the best solution to the problems of the time, both pedagogical and economic** (cf. Levitin 1914/1915). To support this thesis, some “realistic” pedagogues (eg, Kasatkin, Levitin and Repin) have also referred, among other authors, to Dewey and his conception of training through work, citing works by Dewey and claiming that thanks to the implementation of the principle of work in North American schools, they had achieved important pedagogical advances in the United States (cf. “Doklady” 1915, pp. 46 and 51). **It was argued that through the principle of work, the North American school had not only improved teaching, but had also achieved considerable success in the social education of young people** (cf. “Doklady” 1915, p. 78) (MCHITARJAN, 2009, p. 170, emphasis added).

On the debate on the school of work, Capriles (1989) discusses the importance of Shulgin and Pistrak for theoretical deepening of this essential issue for the Soviet school. According to Capriles (1989), the effort of the entire Russian pedagogical team to consolidate a new pedagogical proposal is noticeable. And it has the most advanced knowledge available as its scientific foundation, always associated with the political project of a society in a consolidation phase.

With this discussion of the participation and importance of reformist groups (free and realistic educators) in Russia before the establishment of the Soviet regime in 1917, we wanted to explore all the dynamics and complexity that revolved around the problem to be faced by Russian statesmen responsible for education in the country after the seizure of political power by the Bolsheviks. Thus, when we dialogue with the authors (CAPRILES, 1989; MCHITARJAN, 2009) about the reception of Deweyan New School ideas and how they constituted an important theoretical reference, we are aware of their limitations and contradictions, to the point of recognizing their theoretical effort to understand the reasons that provoked the approximation of different theoretical matrices in a local and international historical context, marked by complex political and economic disputes.

When problematizing the reasons that led Russian educators to approach Deweyan active pedagogy, we have the analysis of Manacorda (2010) who affirms the unique importance of the American philosopher in the discussion of modern pedagogical renewal. The author not only argues in its pedagogical aspect, but also in the association of work as an educational element capable of promoting learning in a participatory, dynamic and cooperative way, taking into account the demands of different aspects of social life (economic, cultural, political, scientific).

As a contribution to the debate, we invited Viktor Nikolaevich Shulgin (1894-1965),⁷ an important Russian educator, who carried out several works together with Pistrak at the Commune-Experimental School in Moscow, with whom he presented some divergences on the application of polytechnicism in rural schools and the city.

Shulgin (2013) will present an initial discussion, in his book **Rumo ao Politecnismo**, about the relationship between school and society defended by John Dewey. According to the author,

It is thus clear that Dewey faces an *insoluble* contradiction; *he understands* that the economic development of the world imposes on the school requirements that are not feasible within the existing democratic regime. “Unpracticable”, “impossible”, they demand more than Dewey wants. Is it him? He does not want to break away from the existing system, fight for the future; no, he wants to “soften the contradictions”, “adapt”. This is the main goal of his philosophy. This is the core of his education system (SHULGIN, 2013, p. 29-30, emphasis added).

Thus, we realize that Shulgin (2013) recognizes the considerations made by the American philosopher regarding the critical moment of the school and its relationship with capitalist society. However, according to the Russian educator, theoretical fidelity to liberal principles would make it impossible for Dewey to face some contradictions in the capitalist system. It is something that, in the Marxist view, is considered crucial for overcoming such criticisms about school education. The class struggle is one of the contradictions listed by Shulgin (2013) that is not taken into account in Deweyan analyzes

⁷ An educator and historian, Shulgin finished his studies at Moscow University in 1917. He was a member of the Council of Deputies Workers of the City of Ryazan and the Executive Committee, he was Provincial Commissioner of Finance and Provincial Commissioner of Education of Ryazan in 1918. Between 1918-1922, he worked at the People's Commissariat for Education. Between 1922-1931 he was the director of the Institute of Methods of School Work (in 1931 of the Institute of Marxist-Leninist Pedagogy). He worked in the Scientific-Pedagogical Section of the State Scientific Council (GUS) from 1921-1931, chaired by N. K. Krupskaya (FREITAS, 2013, p. 07-08). See in: FREITAS, L.C. Preface. In: SHULGIN, V.N. Towards polytechnicism (articles and lectures). Translated by Alexey Lazarev and Luiz Carlos de Freitas. São Paulo: Editora Expressão Popular, p. 07-11, 2013.

regarding the process of pedagogical renewal, driven by changes in the production process and in the world of work. According to Shulgin (2013),

This is how Dewey fumbles with contradictions, unable to resolve them, unable to connect the dots; thus, dreaming of a classless society, he actually acts in favor of the bourgeoisie. This theoretical confusion grows into a true philosophy, a philosophy of reconciliation, of settling disputes, of pragmatism. A dying class, of which Dewey is representative of his thinking, cannot, of course, create any other philosophy. It has everything in the past, it has no future, and therefore it does not try to resolve contradictions (its resolution equals its destruction), but to reconcile, to soften. Therefore, his pedagogy of reconciliation, “the elimination of contradictions” is powerless and inconsistent. [...] Dewey's pedagogy is the pedagogy of the imperialist epoch; it was born in the most developed country in the world; that is why in it, more vividly than anywhere else, the germs of the future find their reflection, that is why the contradictions are the most visible (SHULGIN, 2013, p. 37-38, emphasis added).

It is interesting to note, in Shulgin's criticisms (2013), that he recognizes in the Deweyan pedagogical proposal “the germs of the future”, making clear that it is not possible to promote the full liberation of humanity through liberal principles. However he emphasizes the valorization of the social environment as a reference for educational processes, something strongly explored in Deweyan pedagogical theory.

It is possible to see that Shulgin (2013) presents a scathing criticism of Deweyan pedagogical principles, if we compare with the criticism made by other Russian educators who participated in the pedagogical transition after the Russian Revolution in October 1917. Based on his book, which discusses, in particular, the category work associated with education as an educational principle, Shulgin (2013) states that

The task is not to create a worker with narrow specialization, but “to give the student some ideas about the real conditions of production, so that he has a certain criterion for a more conscious choice of a profession”. [...] Dewey is an enemy of professional school: “Nothing could be more absurd than preparing for a specific activity”. In his opinion, modern production requires a broadly educated worker and schools that, according to him, meet this requirement, but with work properly organized to, in it, “offer training for more than one profession”. Herein lies the strong and positive side of Dewey's pedagogical system. He understood that the school of work is not casual, it is not an idle invention of pedagogues. No; it is necessarily called to life by the progress of economic development. He understood that the economy requires an industrial school, that the worker needed by the teaching school cannot be created; he understood that we do not need a narrow professional, but a man with a great store of theoretical and practical knowledge; that all school programs must be linked to life, that students, in the future, even in *school*, *must already take part* in the edification, that the school must be placed at the service of life; and, more than that, he tried to show how this is done, how this can happen (SHULGIN, 2013, p. 34-35, emphasis added).

Therefore, by inviting Shulgin (2013) to the debate on the reception and/or rejection of Deweyan pedagogical principles in Soviet Russian schools, we demonstrate to our reader that, despite the **profound theoretical differences** that guide the worldview of Soviet educational leaders and John Dewey, it is noticeable that everyone attributes a political role to education for human formation that contributes to the construction of a societal project.

Another point of observation is the publication of the Krupskaya texts, and at this time, we will prioritize publications ranging from 1921 to 1927. The caveat made here is important to demonstrate to the reader that, despite the differences in publication dates, even in this period, we noticed a certain unity with what other studies have analyzed regarding the relevance of active pedagogy for the development of a properly socialist⁸ pedagogy. This aspect will not be a central object in this study, but it is noticeable that after the political change in the central government of the Soviet Union with the Lenin's death and Stalin's consolidation, such renovating ideas became the target of criticism and rejection by some who, until then, had as reference the educational principles developed by active pedagogy.

Thus, in the text entitled **The matter of comunist education** written in 1921, Krupskaya points out the necessary guidelines for the construction of a true school, which is democratic, participatory and referenced in the aspirations of the working class. To Krupskaya (2017),

The school that Soviet power seeks to create meets the requirements of a **full democracy**: it is unique for everyone. This school meets the demands of economic development, contributing to better preparation of the working class at this historic moment: it contributes to the transformation of the working class that took power into owner and organizer of collective production (KRUPSKAYA, 2017, p. 88, emphasis added).

The transformation intended by the Soviet government should be guided by the principle of democracy and massive participation of the working class. Therefore, education should be the essential means for the formation of this class consciousness. Krupskaya, in the text **The proletarian ideology and the proletarian culture**, published in 1922, makes it clear that the class character assumed by the proletariat is provisional, as it is necessary to build the political situation that leads society to the end of the class division. Then, its objective is "[...] to break the old state machine, the old repressive apparatus; **the proletariat must use all means to also ideologically gain influence to convince others**, to achieve general acceptance of its ideology" (KRUPSKAYA, 2017, p. 99-100, emphasis added).

Therefore, working class leaders are faced with a double challenge – instructing the working class, eradicating illiteracy and, at the same time, promoting a change in the pedagogical methods and techniques used in the teaching and learning process. As a starting point, Krupskaya, in his text **The tasks of the primary school**, published in 1922, states that the primary school

⁸ During the research entitled "The educational thought of John Dewey: historiographical study based on academic productions" (thesis and dissertations) of Graduate Programs in Education, we found a dissertation that particularly discussed this issue, entitled *The New School ideology and socialist pedagogy in the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 20th century and the conceptions of integral and integrated education*, written by Cezar Ricardo de Freitas, in 2009, in the Graduate Program in Education at the State University of West Paraná, Cascavel University Campus. Available at: <http://tede.unioeste.br/bitstream/tede/907/1/Freitas%2c%20Cezar%20Ricardo.pdf>. Acces on: 25 Oct. 2018.

it must arouse curiosity in the child, an active interest in the environment, an investigative interest in phenomena and facts, both in the field of natural sciences and in social life. For this, it is necessary to have a strong connection between the school and the population, with its work, with its entire economic life; in teaching, it is necessary to rely on the reality of the child's environment. An investigative method of approaching the studied disciplines is needed, which in turn places natural sciences and work in the first place. **The second formative task of the elementary school is to teach children in books, in science, to seek answers to the questions that appear, to make them aware that they can look for in books what humanity thought about this or that question.** From this, comes a need to give a large place in school, even in elementary school, to the independent study of children, changing the character of school studies, expanding the selection of study materials. **The third and no less important task is to develop in children the habit of living, studying and working collectively** (KRUPSKAYA, 2017, p. 105-106, emphasis added).

At this moment, three points call our attention in this quote and which we repeatedly see in the writings of the Soviet pedagogical team of the period. The first, concerns the valuation of the individual as a subject of the process. It is important to note that both Krupskaya and Lunatcharski emphasize the figure of the student as central to the learning process.

This concern to promote the role of the student in the educational process is directly associated with the desire to form a political and democratic conscience for the new generation that consolidates a revolutionary process that presupposes breaking some barriers imposed by the capitalist regime, including passivity and submission, both need to be fought at all costs in all social spaces.

Our second highlight, coming from the quote from Krupskaya's excerpt, concerns the concern of the Soviet pedagogical team with the content and form in which pedagogical proposals will be worked on in schools. We realize that valuing the student as a subject of the learning process has a strong connection with the way of working, as an autonomous subject will be able to investigate and handle various research sources. Moreover, from the encouragement of practical and laboratory activities, it is possible to develop a critical spirit and the criterion of scientific validity.

According to Lunatcharski (1917 or 1918, p. 40), it is “[...] very useful for elementary school children to have an adjustment workshop, a school where they can learn carpentry, working on lathes, and that they know how to measure, apply and operate with precision any simple object”. It is noticeable the special attention given to manual work and social daily life, these activities of a practical nature, which provide to children a concrete and living knowledge of social reality.

As a third highlighted point, we have the issue of collective and cooperative work as one of the foundations of the teaching and learning process. The pedagogical organization of the Soviet schools sought, at the same time, the formation of the individual's autonomous individuality through group activities, and, to carry them out, it would be necessary the cooperative and solidary work of the group members. With this, the understanding of the social utility of it all was experienced in the daily practice of schools, as it would not be possible for just one individual to take care of the vegetable garden, animals, perform small carpentry services in a satisfactory manner and meet the wishes of the context in which they were inserted.

This character of Soviet education did not go unnoticed by Dewey on his visit to the country in 1928. In the article entitled **Building a New World**, published on November 21, 1928, the philosopher observes the challenges faced by socialist leaders regarding to the task of education and is amazed by the insight and perseverance in conducting the work.

The trip to Moscow impressed me more than my own country. There is, in fact, a youth freed from the memories and fears of the past, a youth driven by a life full of hope, confidence, almost hyperactive, naive in some matters and full of courage in others. **Freedom from the sequels of the past potentiates the ardor for the creation of a new world.** When we had contact with educational leaders, I felt a sense of unease about the unfolding of the infinite task undertaken. **There was no dismay, but a concern for the future interacting with their hopes and enthusiasm. The union between spontaneity, humor and seriousness is a hallmark of Russia. It certainly influences the human beings in charge through educating the challenge of creating another mindset for the Russian people** (DEWEY, 2016, p. 72, emphasis added).

It is very exciting and provocative to see the dialogues established in the historical context in question by intellectuals from different theoretical backgrounds, which is something that we consider to be very healthy and fruitful. Following this perspective, we come across another article produced by Dewey, entitled **The new school for a new era**, published on December 12, 1928, in which the philosopher demonstrates that he is aware of the discussions promoted by Russian educators regarding education and of the movement of pedagogical renewal as opposed to the traditional teaching developed by the old tsarist regime.

there are two causes for the adoption of this conception of industrial education identified with the general culture and suitable for a cooperative society in the present. **One is the state of progressive educational theory in other countries, especially in the United States during the first years after the Revolution.** The fundamental principle of this advanced doctrine was that participation in productive work is the main stimulus and guide for self-educational activity on the part of students, since such productive work is in accordance with the natural or psychological process of learning; the other is that it provides the best way to relate school to social life. Some of the Russian liberal educators brought these conceptions to experimental private schools before the Revolution; the doctrine had the prestige of being the most advanced among educational philosophies, responding to immediate Russian needs (DEWEY, 2016, p. 97-98, emphasis added).

By highlighting the existing approximations between the pedagogical principles defended by active pedagogy, of liberal inspiration, with the writings of Russian educators and Soviet statesmen, we analyze the contradictions placed in the historical context and question some certainties and convictions we have about the “originality” of the teaching proposals from the Russian Revolution.

It is important to make clear that we recognize the effort made by Soviet educators and statesmen ahead of the great challenge faced in organizing, systematizing and executing an education system that would transform the Russian educational scene and contribute to the consolidation of the revolutionary process. Proof of this is the continuous and challenging effort to point out the contradictions placed by the Soviet leaders at the head of education regarding the materialization of pedagogical proposals and their differences that express the hegemony of the interests of the proletarian class and its commitment to the project of communist society.

When analyzing Lunatcharski, in his speech at the First All-Russian Congress for Public Instruction, he makes a direct mention of Dewey regarding the defense of school activities being fully in tune with everyday social life, so that school contents will be assimilated by the students with social meaning. Then, they will have the notion of its social importance and relevance for themselves and for the whole community.

When Dewey describes how food should be prepared and how excellent lessons in chemistry and physics can be given, in botany and zoology, in hygiene and physiology, he is profoundly right. Although the objection has been made to me in this regard that if you talk so much when preparing lunch, something will evaporate, something will burn etc., I nevertheless believe that this approach is more or less the good one. **If it is seen in this way, then, of course, it will have a pedagogical value.** But if the children chop wood, prepare lunch, fetch water today, and do the same tomorrow and the day after, it does not contribute much to intellectual or even physical development. It will be, then, a very obtuse work (LUNATCHARTSKI, 1917 or 1918, p. 51, emphasis added).

In the same direction, we see that Krupskaya (2017), when discussing the text on the tasks of the primary school, affirms that, in a movement that starts ascending, having as starting point the local community, its demands and concerns in different areas, the link between the school and society is fundamental. Thus, we believe that the participation and involvement of the subjects involved reach levels higher than what we consider usual in a trivial school community. Soon,

The school must react to life. No matter how useful the school's intervention in life is, it is only important that the school does not turn a blind eye to life, but actively wishes to interfere with it. In the village, due to negligence, a child was burned and died. **So they built a kindergarten for young children.** The important thing is that the student children have taken on all the work with the kindergarten: they help the children repair clothes, paint a picture for the garden, make a toy. **Or a pest appears in the garden: the children learn how to deal with it at school – they will offer their services in the fight against the pest on one or another weaker farm.** They will help to carry and sort mail, to write a letter. **Older children suggest a manual for the people at school, using the school library and the teachers' council, and so on** (KRUPSKAYA, 2017, p. 109, emphasis added).

During the discussion about the main educational measures adopted by the Soviet government, we have the impression that the search for recognition and political conviction by the population would not be something simple, nor would it be achieved through decrees and speeches. It needed more than fine words and good ideology. The working class overthrew the old regime to fight hunger, misery, political and economic authoritarianism.

In this sense, we observe the wit of the main Soviet leaders in relation to this historical context and, particularly, when we look at the measures created in the field of education. The understanding that it was necessary to experience this transition with caution, wisdom and prudence is notorious, without losing sight of the horizon of the corporate project that is intended to be consolidated.

Regarding the school's share of contribution, Krupskaya and Lunatcharski solemnly explored fundamental elements that would evidence a change, in fact, in the direction of education in the country. Participation in school life was something stimulated by the education system, so that "[...] each school must have its own face, its individual focus for the study of the work activity, depending on its specificities" (KRUPSKAYA, 2017, p. 114). This meant that the social, cultural and economic characteristics of the school community would constitute the fundamental reference for the elaboration of school activities in order to meet the specific needs of that location.

It seems to us that the theoretical perspective adopted by the People's Commissariat of Education during the first years of the October Revolution produced relevant effects in changing the cultural and political mentality of the Russian population in the eyes of the world. However, the worldview of the various Soviet social experiences is neither homogeneous nor friendly to the new social regime. On the contrary, the anti-communist discourse spread rapidly and purposefully with the intention of combating and harassing any manifestation similar to those practiced in the Russian territory.

Contrary to the hegemonic discourse on Soviet experiences, Dewey (2016), in the article entitled **How do Russian schools work?**, published on December 5, 1928, observes *in loco* another reality beyond the one known by the world and, particularly, by the educators and the general population in the United States.

I enjoyed developing progressive educational ideas and practices under the supervision and promotion of the Bolshevik government. I only write about what I saw and not what I was told about the topic. However, a second factor operated deep transformations in Russian educators (whose history is typical and symbolic) distancing us from the perspective of reformism and progressive ideas as a way of adapting them to communism. **It is something emphasized by every communist educator and not just what I have just mentioned. The frustration of not achieving educational goals due to economic conditions is more important in the history of communist pedagogy than explicit political and governmental opposition. [...] He says education is made up of two parts, one smaller and one larger. The first is given by the school; the second is composed of a set of influences manifested by real living conditions, especially family and neighborhood.** The experience showed to this educator that his work, even under the relatively favorable conditions of an experimental school, was undone by the educational conditions and the training difficulties expressed in the relationships with the social environment. Therefore, he became convinced that the social environment and

the progressive school must work together and in harmony, reinforcing each other; it is an essential condition for the objective of the progressive school not to be harmed and dissipated. **The growth of this conviction of academic advancement made it insensibly communist. He became convinced that the way to use school agencies for a socialized reform involved denying the selfish ideals and methods inculcated by private property institutions centered on profit and ownership acquisition** (DEWEY, 2016, p. 86-87, emphasis added).

Then, it is clear to us that the intention to promote another type of education for the working class after the revolutionary process would need to advance in crucial points and other modern pedagogies did not dare to assume this task. Among them was the issue of universalization of the knowledge produced by humanity in a historicized, dialectical way and that would strongly explain its political character.

Thus, the Soviet school aimed at the formation of a new social and political subject, who, at the same time, was a well qualified and professionally educated worker and a political activist who participated in the political life of the country, contributing to the consolidation of the socialist project. For this, the Soviet school, through work, organized the entire pedagogical process aiming to develop in children and young people the spirit of class solidarity, so, it was necessary to respect the individualities of the subject, however understanding that this training would take place in the environment of interaction and mutual help between subjects, because

We want to form a man who is as harmonious as possible on the moral and spiritual plane, who has a complete general education, and who can easily acquire a qualification in any field. We also propose to form an authentic benevolent collaborator towards his fellow citizens, we want to form a comrade towards all other people and, while the struggle lasts, a fighter for the socialist ideal (LUNATCHARTSKI, 1917 or 1918, p. 65, emphasis added).

Therefore, we emphasize the relationship of the changes promoted by the Soviet government regarding the organization, planning and pedagogical model and how such measures were directly associated with the historical and political context at the time. Thus, the centrality of our analysis prioritized the social and political character of the pedagogical renewal process and the dialogues established between the modern pedagogies that were in full development in other countries.

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