The School at the Service of Inclusion and Cultural Diversity

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In a first part, after clarifying the concepts of inclusion, inclusiveness, and inclusivity, and their relationship with cultural diversity, the communication aims to demonstrate that everyone's right to education is evident in the transnational policies issued by the UN and the EU, as a differentiating mark for highest indices of development of a country. Education is seen as the great means of promoting the values of democracy, respecting the human rights characteristic of a State ruled by the law, and struggling against violence, racism, extremism, xenophobia, discrimination, and intolerance, through pedagogical practices having in view the education of citizens who can recognize their role in society, with place for the different "otherness". In the second part, viewing the Curriculum as the embodiment of the culture whose socio-historical legacy is intended to be transmitted to new generations and having as methodological lenses of analysis, critical and post-critical theories of the curriculum, namely the postcolonial theories, the communication draws the conclusion that it is the school's responsibility to fill the gap that separates and differentiates dominant cultures from (and against) the others, in a hegemonic process of cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious superiority.

Keywords: school, democratic citizenship, postcolonialism, cultural studies

Clarification of Concepts

While in Portuguese, we only have a single noun, "inclusion", and the corresponding adjective "inclusive", in English, we have three nouns: inclusion[1], inclusiveness[2], and inclusivity[3].

Inclusion can be understood as a deliberate and conscious process, in terms of policy and practice, of including and being included within a group or structure, which seeks to involve and value the differences between individuals and groups, i.e., recognizing the potential of cultural diversity. In what way? Regarding the role of education, providing equal opportunities for access and success (we are talking about equity, and not pure and hard equality) to all individuals, regardless of their identity. Differences are thus seen in a positive light, as a force that helps create a culture that connects and empowers individuals.

Inclusiveness, or inclusivity, is the result of the inclusion process. Both terms mean the full integration—in the system, in decision-making processes, and in actions—of all members, especially those historically excluded, because of race, gender, sexuality, abilities (those with physical or mental problems), or belonging to minority

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[1] "Inclusion", according to the Macmillan Dictionary, is "the action of including someone or something in a group, arrangement, document, etc."
[2] "Inclusivity", in that same dictionary, Macmillan Dictionary, is "a policy or practice that deliberately attempts to involve all types of people". And according to the Cambridge Dictionary, it is "the quality of trying to include many different types of people and treating them all fairly and equally".
[3] "Inclusiveness", according to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, is "the fact of deliberately including people, things, ideas, etc., from all sections or society, points of view, etc."

groups, once marginalized. I speak of the past, because in evolved societies, negative discrimination through marginalization is strongly condemned, this is not to say that it does not exist. But this marginalization has two levels: that of explicit and declared prejudices (difficult to assume, given the external pressure) and that of implicit and hidden prejudices (explicit and implicit biases, according to Vela et al., 2022), the latter being more difficult to deconstruct.

Although inclusiveness and inclusivity are practically synonymous, if we want to break it down a little further, we can say that while inclusiveness is the passive state of being inclusive, inclusivity is its active state.

As Talmage and Knopf say, "Inclusion uses diversity as a resource to enhance inclusiveness" (Talmage & Knopf, 2017, p. 17). It is the rewriting of implicit prejudices, calling into question the idea that different means inferior.

Transnational Policies

The existence of a public school, as a public service provided by the State, has to do with everyone's right to education, because public schools must be universal, compulsory, and free. This is why the issue of inclusion and cultural diversity gains greater relevance in this context of public education. It is part of the DNA of the most developed countries in the world, resulting from political choices on human development, more focused on well-being than on the net wealth of their populations.

This degree of development is translated, as we all know, by the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI is a statistical index that places the 191 countries recognized as such by the United Nations, distributed across four categories (very high, high, medium, and low development), on a scale that goes from 1.000 to 0.000, resulting from a (complex) formula created by the economists Mahbub ul Haq (Pakistani) and Amartya Sen (Indian), which measures three essential aspects: health (through life expectancy and other elements), education (through the years of schooling expected upon entering the system), and per capita income.

In the latest list of countries by HDI, published in September 2022, but referring to 2021, Portugal continued to have a very high HDI, occupying the 38th place, while Brazil maintained a high HDI, in the 87th place in the world ranking, despite have lowered three places. But what I come here to defend is that transnational regulatory policies all target inclusion and cultural diversity.

Having declared the decade 2020-2030 the "Decade of Action", the United Nations defined priorities around 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among which I highlight Goals 4 and 10.

SDG 4 refers to the need to:

> Ensure access to inclusive, quality, and equitable education, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

To do this, it is necessary to:

> Eliminate gender disparities in education.
> Ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood care and development.
> Ensure equal access to all levels of education for the most vulnerable, including people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations.

SDG 10 warns to the need to:

> Reduce inequalities within and between countries.
> Empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of everyone, regardless of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other condition.

Ensure equal opportunities.
Reduce inequalities in outcomes by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices.

Also at European level, the recommendations all go in the same direction.

Within the broader scope of the Council of Europe, which currently comprises 46 Member States, the Charter of the Council of Europe on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights was adopted by all of them, which states, in particular, that "Education also contributes to preventing human rights violations, establishing limits to growing violence, racism, extremism, xenophobia, discrimination, and intolerance."

And speaking now of the 26 current member states of the EU, the European Parliament, the Council, and the Commission also proclaimed, along the same lines, the European Pillar of Social Rights in 2017, at the Gothenburg Summit, bringing together 20 fundamental principles, as a framework for orientation "towards a strong, fair, inclusive social Europe full of opportunities in the 21st century."

It is also worth mentioning here that the European Commission launched the second edition of the European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Award, taking into account the work carried out, by cities or regions, in favor of inclusion and non-discrimination, seeking to give visibility to practices that can serve as an inspiration to other European cities in creating more inclusive and diverse environments for their citizens, in terms of gender, age, disability, LGBTIQ identity, religion, and ethnic/racial origin, thus contributing to inclusive policies and systems and creating a sense of belonging for all its citizens.

With this framework, I intend to reaffirm that national educational policies cannot be formulated, disconnected from a global, I would even say planetary vision, and in our case, European vision, which support the so-called traveling, transnational policies.

Inclusive Curriculum Policies

Always in a chain, we know that educational policies are reflected in the curricular policies of a country, a region, a municipality, etc., depending on the degree of decentralization of administrative power. In this third part, I intend to present the theoretical foundation for inclusive curricular policies.

And what are curriculum policies? What is the Curriculum? Very briefly, I understand it as the embodiment of a culture whose socio-historical legacy is intended to be transmitted to new generations. Back in 2015, in an article about "The Curriculum and cultural identity", I stated:

> … The school assumed as its mission the passage, through the curriculum, of this accumulated cultural repository, understanding it as essential for the active insertion of 'educated' citizens in society. Curriculum and culture are thus inextricably linked. Since it is established that the curriculum embodies culture, as it gives it substance and configuration, it is legitimate for curriculum studies to question the type of culture that is conveyed by the curriculum... (Sousa, 2015, p. 172)

Culture is much more than knowledge in the restricted sense of program content. When we talk about socially valid knowledge, it is a whole that naturally encompasses these contents, but also attitudes and values, as well as skills, which articulately confer the so-called competencies, which the future citizen will need. In this combination, there has been talked lately of another essential element: "the will", the willpower, wanting.

Within the scope of curricular theories, the critical perspective, triggered by the Frankfurt School, in the thirties of the last century, where names such as Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), Erich Fromm (1900-1980) pontificated , Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), Jürgen Habermas (1929-), and Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), had the ability to question and relativize the knowledge conveyed by the Curriculum,

when seeking to interpret the deep reasons that underlie educational arrangements, leading to socioeconomic inequalities.

Several authors have focused on the role of the school as a reinforcer of these same inequalities dictated by the economy, on the assumption of a stable world, perennially organized into social classes with low mobility, and therefore the greatest concern is centered on the social differentiation reinforced by the school, according to the Bourdieusian studies from the 60s and 70s of the last century, such as Bourdieu and Passeron (1964; 1970; 1979) and their disciples Baudelot and Establet (1971), while, in the USA, Bowles and Gintis (1976) equally discussed the relationship between school and capitalism.

Cultural identities were constructed based on identification with (or distance from) the cultural models of those who held economic and social power, these being normally guided by national values. That is, in modern societies, regardless of genetic and hereditary factors, identities were explicitly fed by the culture of nationality, through the Curriculum.

The predominance of certain more abstract forms of thought and corresponding vocabulary, based on historical, linguistic, artistic, and behavioral references, which presupposedly characterized the "refined" taste of a certain social stratum, constituted the cultural capital that some held and others did not, conferring "distinction" to some and not others, and leading to the separation of classes, which was not only the result of the socioeconomic structure, but essentially of the cultural or symbolic system that each person was subjectively internalizing, through habitus.

Basically, what was at stake was a struggle between dominators and dominated, exploiters and exploited, oppressors and oppressed (cf. Freire, 1971/1975, among others), an object of concern for critical theories with a neo-Marxist bent.

But in addition to the deterministic readings that characterized the first sociological studies, such as the theories of social reproduction, some other authors focused on the way in which the individual and collective unconscious reinforced hegemonic processes. Althusser (1970/1983) drew our attention to the way ideology operates, at the level of the unconscious, giving us the illusion that we are responsible and that we freely choose to believe in what we believe. Gramsci (1971) refers to hegemony, as consensual domination, when studying the reason why the dominant class manages to convince other classes that their interests are the interests of everyone, not through the exercise of brute force, or active persuasion, but through a more subtle and apparently inclusive power over state apparatuses such as schools and the media. Foucault even states the following: "Power comes from below; that is, there is no binary and all-empassing opposition between ruler and ruled at the root of power relations." (Foucault, 1980, p. 93).

This and other authors had the power to alert us, based on scientific evidence, how these processes unfold, largely at the unconscious level the so-called implicit biases.

As we saw above, in homogeneous societies, marked by tradition and strong nationalism, characteristic of modern times (Greenfeld, 1998), the difference was based on having or not having. But with the advancement of globalization, under the aegis of technologies of information and communication, and the growing trend of people's mobility, the issue of difference has broadened its scope, accentuating the micro-identities associated with gender, race, ethnicity, color, religion, sexual orientation, or others. Whether we call it late modernity (Giddens, 2000), liquid modernity (Bauman, 2006), hypermodernity (Lipovetski, 2004), or post-modernity (Lyotard, 1984), our time is now different, as we can feel it. And post-critical curriculum theories, which include post-colonial theories, continue to produce reflections in this broader field.

Even at the level of the object of study of critical theories, that is, that of social class differentiation, the post-critical movement of "cultural studies" emerged, triggered by Henry Giroux and other authors (1988; 1989; 1993; 1997), paying special attention to the little space that popular culture has in the curriculum considered "legitimate".

And currently the phenomenon of migration, which in our Portuguese case is essentially originating from the former colonies, raises other, much more complex questions, by also bringing into equation the predominance of Western values, associated with logical-abstract thinking, of the white, heterosexual man, of high social status, healthy, with urban habits, from a specific country, which are reflected in a hegemonic way in the curriculum itself.

Only in this way can we understand the strength that, at this moment, Post-colonial Curricular Theories are beginning to gain, by denouncing the presumption of a single, Eurocentric knowledge, considered the norm, natural, and universal (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013).

In this Eurocentric vision (which went from the center to the periphery), if European colonialism was based on the presumption of the superiority of the colonizer (the civilized) compared to the colonized (the primitive and barbaric), to justify the hierarchical relationship that then existed (Ashcroft et al., 2013), also in the current migratory movement in the opposite direction—from the periphery to the center—the same processes of exclusion remain. As Tomaz Tadeu da Silva and others say, the difference "is not established in isolation and independently. It depends on processes of exclusion, border guarding, and division strategies. Difference is never just and purely difference, but also and fundamentally hierarchy, valuation, and categorization." (Silva, 2001, p. 26).

The colonizers, as a dominant group, then configured the field of truth, imposing knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and values on the dominated groups, assuming that these would be universal, through a "conscious and unconscious process by which Europe and European cultural assumptions are constructed as, or assumed to be, the normal, the natural or the universal." (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. 107).

The organization of colonial relations was thus constructed through discourse and practices, so that everyone, dominant and dominated, in a conscious or unconscious process, accepted the superiority of European thought. Sousa Santos and Meneses even refer to the existence of "an epistemological domination, an extremely unequal relationship of knowledge-power that led to the suppression of many forms of knowledge typical of colonized peoples and/or nations" (Sousa Santos & Meneses, 2010, p. 13).

It would, however, be naive of us to think that with the end of colonization, this unequal relationship would have disappeared. New forms of colonialism, more insidious and more difficult to detect than the control exercised by classical colonialism, are exercised both by former colonial powers and by recent emerging superpowers, such as the United States of America, through other instruments of indirect control, like the IMF or the World Bank, for example.

And the school, with its official curriculum, has a preponderant role in this process of inclusion of students from the periphery, normally associated with the geography of the South. The alternative to inclusion always ends up being exclusion, or ostracization.

In the "Europe for Citizens" Program for the period 2014-2020, the following questions are raised:

• When can we consider that a category of the population is being ostracized?

• How can we recognize a "scapegoat" and dismantle the discourse that leads to their exclusion and marginalization?

• How can we deal with political discourses that appeal to fears, prejudices, and hatred against certain categories of the population, and how can we construct counter-narratives?

• How can we fight against hate speech spread through social media and the Internet?

• What are the educational instruments and legal instruments at European and national level to fight against racism, xenophobia (such as anti-Semitic, anti-Romani, anti-Muslim sentiment, etc.), as well as against homophobia and ostracism of other minorities?

I therefore consider it necessary to analyze the Curriculum, not only the express one, but also, and mainly, the hidden Curriculum, from the point of view of the student's insertion in the social hierarchy, based on their identification or distancing from the dominant models.

These and many other questions, more in the context of the Hidden Curriculum, as we see, help us to understand how, through alienation, dismissal, or even unconsciousness, the (public) school acts as an ideological apparatus of the State (Althusser, 1983), reinforcing submissive identities, with low self-esteem, in some students, while promoting stronger and more confident identities, in others. It is in this political arena that, through disciplinary organization and forms of school functioning, as well as through the contents taught (the subjects of History, Geography, and Social Studies are more permeable than others to the defense of certain values), students are building their identities and their place in the social hierarchy.

Just as Althusser (op. cit.) referred to (dominant) ideology, social hierarchization is insidiously installed, with the consent of everyone, dominant and dominated (we speak here of socialized subjectivity), unanimously accepting what the elite constructed them as legitimate forms of cultural expression. These authors reflect the studies on the psychic unconscious, then debated, with inspiration in the personal unconscious of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the collective unconscious of Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), and the social unconscious of Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), which we will not go into further here.

Curricular studies must fit into a new paradigm. As Morin (1990) says, we are facing a new order, which also includes disorder. "A new order that rejects the Manichaean and Cartesian division, organized into reason and emotion; on right and left; in man and woman; in black and white." (Sousa, 2020, p. 341).

Can the public school assume the certainties and security conveyed to date, through a "scientific and technological" curriculum, disciplined and designed from a single ethnic, racial, cultural, economic, and sexual orientation reference, if we are in a time of "ethical-philosophical, political and ideological miscegenation"? (Sousa, 2016, p. 22).

It is, therefore, also the responsibility of the public school, through the Curriculum, to combat the gap that separates and differentiates, categorizing and hierarchizing dominant cultures compared to others, in a hegemonic process of cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, or other superiority.

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