

# REFLEXÕES SOBRE METODOLOGIAS DE PESQUISA: PERSPECTIVAS DE COLABORAÇÃO EM INVESTIGAÇÕES CRÍTICO-EDUCACIONAIS

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## Resumo

Escrito em três línguas – embora suas partes não sejam traduzidas em todas as línguas que o constituem – esse texto tripartido tem dois objetivos: primeiramente, busca fornecer uma ideia geral do curso - três cursos em um - que foi oferecido durante a primavera europeia e o outono brasileiro de 2021 por três professoras em parceria para os seus alunos de mestrado e doutorado, ou seja, para estudantes, em sua maioria, das três universidades onde elas lecionam, promovendo uma discussão densa e uma visão ampla acerca do tema do curso, qual seja, Metodologias Críticas de cunho colaborativo, especialmente as que se embasam nos estudos histórico-culturais, conforme discutidos por L. S. Vigotski (1924-1934). O curso foi organizado a partir da ideia inicial e central de uma oportunidade para aprofundar a compreensão dos aspectos que aproximam e diferenciam os trabalhos das três pesquisadoras - Clínica de Atividades, Pesquisa-Trans-Formação, Pesquisa Crítica de Colaboração - e de seus grupos de pesquisa, especialmente no tocante às metodologias empregadas e ao seu trabalho com profissionais da educação. Os resultados das discussões demonstram que as três metodologias se apoiam, em maior ou menor escala, em conceitos tais como contradição, trabalho colaborativo, instrumento-e-resultado, dialética, totalidade-unidade, sentido e significado (ou significação), entre outros. Alguns autores foram também convidados para contribuir com sua visão sobre aspectos específicos da teoria histórico-cultural e/ou possibilidades metodológicas que podem ser desenvolvidas a partir desses estudos. Já outros autores que contribuíram com esse número temático da Revista *Psicologia da Educação* foram participantes do curso em si – como professores convidados ou como estudantes – e apresentam suas visões sobre o que foi discutido nas semanas de trabalho, i.e., as metodologias de pesquisa e suas bases ou as ideias principais que surgiram nas discussões e contribuíram com a elaboração dos componentes metodológicos de suas teses ou dissertações.

**Palavras-chave:** Teoria Histórico-Cultural; Metodologias Críticas; Clínica de Atividade; Pesquisa-Trans-Formação; Pesquisa Crítica de Colaboração.

## *Reflections about Research Methodologies: Collaborative Perspectives in Critical-Educational Investigations*

## Abstract

Written in three languages – though not translated into all of them – this tripartite text's aim is twofold: First and foremost, it aims at providing an overview of a course - three courses in one - delivered over the European Spring and Brazilian Autumn of 2021, in partnership by the three authors to their Master's and Doctorate students, i.e., to participants of the three universities where they lecture, providing a sound discussion and broad overview of critical collaborative research methodologies, especially those that are developed bearing in mind the cultural-historical studies as per L. S. Vygotsky (1924-1934). The course was organized from the initial and central idea of creating an opportunity to deepen the understanding of the aspects that bring the work of the three researchers closer and differentiating the work of the three researchers - Activity Clinic, Trans-Formation Research, Critical Collaboration Research - and

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their research groups, especially regarding the methodologies employed and their work with education professionals. Results show that the three methods are, to a greater or lesser degree, supported by concepts such as contradiction, collaborative work, instrument-and-result, dialectics, totality-uniqueness, sense and meaning (or signification), among others. Secondly, this paper aims at briefly explaining that the thematic issue of the Journal *Educational Psychology* has also received contribution from other colleagues - whilst some authors were invited to contribute with their view on specific aspects of the cultural-historical theory and/or the methodological possibilities that can be developed from these studies, other writers who have contributed to this thematic issue took part in the above mentioned course, and either provided a text on their view of what was discussed, the research methodologies and their bases, or on the main ideas arising from the debates for their thesis/dissertation thesis' methodological organization.

**Keywords:** Cultural-Historical Theory; Critical Methodologies; Clinic of Activity; Trans-Formation Research; Critical Collaborative Methodology.

## *Réflexions sur les méthodologies de recherche: perspectives collaboratives dans les investigations critiques en éducation*

### Résumé

Cet article trilingue s'inscrit dans le prolongement d'un cours donné conjointement par trois universités (deux brésiliennes, une suisse) en 2021. A cette période, les mesures liées à l'épidémie de covid nous forçaient à donner nos cours à distance. Transformant cette contrainte en ressource pour faire ce que nous désirions faire depuis longtemps, c'est-à-dire enseigner ensemble, nous avons construit ce cours comme une opportunité importante de co-enseigner, malgré les distances géographiques, et de permettre aux étudiant-es de deux continents, vivant dans des pays et contextes très différents, de se connaître et de collaborer. Le cours s'adressait ainsi aux étudiant-es de master et aux doctorant-es des trois universités. Des professeur-es invité-es et des étudiant-es d'autres universités ont rejoint ponctuellement le cours. L'objectif était de comprendre et de discuter les approches de recherche collaborative critiques d'inspiration vygotkienne portées par les trois organisatrices. Le cours offrait ainsi un cadre pour explorer ces trois approches, ainsi que leurs convergences et divergences, ce dont cet éditorial garde trace. L'entrée dans la réflexion était principalement méthodologique. Cette comparaison méthodologique met en évidence l'importance des concepts de contradiction, dialectique, collaboration, totalité-singularité, sens et signification, approche instrumentale, en particulier. S'appuyant sur les mêmes textes théoriques de Vygotskij et de son école, qu'elles déclinent dans des contextes et avec des objectifs différents, nos trois approches présentent des convergences fortes, avec des vocabulaires et conceptualisations différents, nécessitant un travail précis de compréhension théorique et de traduction. Cet éditorial présentera donc brièvement les trois approches et les similitudes que nous avons relevées. Les articles qui composent ce numéro spécial du journal *Educational Psychologist* ont été écrits suite à cette expérience collective, scientifique et pédagogique. Nous avons invité certain-es auteurs/trices à développer certains points méthodologiques centraux, d'autres ont poursuivi dans ce cadre la réflexion entamée dans leurs mémoires et thèses, d'autres encore ont élaboré leurs réflexions sur certaines idées débattues ensemble.

**Mots-clés:** Psychologie Historico-culturelle; Méthodologies critiques; Clinique de L'activité; Recherche Trans-Formation; Recherche Collaborative Critique; Transformation sociale.

## Introduction

*The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.*

(Marx & Engels, 1888/1969)

We speak from different places, both geographically and professionally, and this may be an important contextual information with which to begin this text. Two of us work in the State of São Paulo, Brazil – one

is a psychologist, supervising Master's and Doctorate thesis and dissertation thesis, as well as Scientific Initiation works and Post-doctoral Fellowships at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), in the fields of Education, Teacher Education, and carrying out her<sup>4</sup> own investigation in the Education of school educators (i.e., teachers, coordinators, principals

<sup>4</sup> Because we are speaking about our own work, yet, at the same time, about each other's works, we will often use the first and the third persons of speech in this text.

and their deputies). The other works at the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP), at a campus situated in a rather poor neighborhood in the outskirts of the city. Her work focuses primarily on the education of educators who have students with specific educational needs in their classrooms<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, her Master and Doctorate supervisees are investigating aspects of inclusive education, as are her Scientific Initiation and Post-Doctoral Fellowship supervisees. She is an Applied Linguist. The third is a French researcher working in Neuchâtel, Switzerland. She is a long-standing companion of the Activity Clinics research team in Paris, where she did her PhD in work psychology and began her academic career. She is now supervising Master and Doctoral students in the field of Psychology & Education, with the specificity that each of them also studies another discipline in social sciences – therefore, psychology and education at her university are very integrated with linguistics, geography, philosophy, history, or anthropology for example.

We have known each other's work for some time and, in 2020, each of us delivered a class in a course organized at UNIFESP, focusing on different methodological perspectives and backgrounds. As a result of these classes, we became more interested in finding out how much of what we employed methodologically resembled what the other was doing, especially considering that the three types of investigations were culturally-historically based, i.e., were theoretically founded on Vygotsky's (1924-1934) work. A partnership was established then, resulting in a course delivered over the months of April – June, 2021 for Master's and Doctorate students of the three institutions, as well as people from other institutions and states that might be interested in the subject, including a couple of professors and post-doctoral researchers that were invited to take part and even co-deliver some of the classes.

After the course was finalized, we were invited by the editors of a PUC-SP Journal – *Educational Psychology* - to co-organize this special issue, which presents papers from course participants and a few other researchers that were invited to contribute with

papers on specific topics that might even generate further discussions on the webinars that we intend to organize in the near future.

We have organized this editorial paper in three languages and with one main objective, i.e., to present a brief understanding of each of the three methodologies that brought us together in this investigative work. To meet this main objective, we have decided to write in the three languages in which the course was taught. We must clarify, though, that the course was primarily taught in English. However, a lot of the discussion was held in Portuguese and in French (especially Portuguese since the majority of participants spoke either Portuguese or English). In the classes, when someone spoke Portuguese or French, their speech was interpreted into English by one of the participants. This however, will not be done here. We will keep the three languages of interaction, constituting perhaps the first tripartite text (in terms of language) that the journal has ever published. We dare say that it might be the first – or at least one of the very few – published in three languages in Brazil. Besides, it is worth mentioning that one of the texts in this thematic issue is written in Portuguese, and is also followed by a link to the text in Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) – another innovation of this thematic number (and the first time that the journal will publish a paper in Libras<sup>6</sup>).

The text (language) order will be the one of authorship, i.e., we will first have the text in French, with specific aspects of the Clinic of Activities (CA), and written by the first author; followed by the text in Portuguese about Trans-Formation Research (PTF<sup>7</sup>), written by the second author, and then by Critical Collaborative Research (PCCol)<sup>8</sup>, which will be discussed in English written by the third author. This part of the text will be finalized with what we have identified as some of the similarities and differences, and will be written by the three authors.

## Clinique de l'activité

La clinique de l'activité est une approche théorique et méthodologique qui s'ancre dans le champ

5 For a discussion on the reason for using the terminology specific educational needs rather than person with disability, see Fidalgo et aliae (2020a); Fidalgo et aliae (2020b) and Magalhães et aliae (2022).

6 We refer here to the paper by Hollosi and Vieira.

7 We have left the initials as they are used in Portuguese, i.e., *Pesquisa Trans-Formação*, ergo PTF.

8 We have left the initials as they are used in Portuguese, i.e., *Pesquisa Crítica de Colaboração*, ergo PCCol.

de la psychologie du travail. Elle a été développée en France par Yves Clot et son équipe, à partir des années 1990 (voir Clot, 1995, 1999), au sein du CNAM (Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers), à Paris, qui est une institution particulière dans le champ de l'éducation et de la formation en France. En effet, le CNAM accueille non des étudiant-es mais des auditeurs/trices, qui ont presque tous pour caractéristique de reprendre des études tout en poursuivant une activité professionnelle en parallèle. La formation délivrée au sein de la chaire de Psychologie du travail et clinique de l'activité est ainsi une formation en psychologie du travail, destinée à former des intervenant-es en reconversion professionnelle, dans le champ de l'analyse de l'activité, de la formation professionnelle, de la validation des acquis de l'expérience, ou de de la santé au travail, par exemple.

Dès ses débuts, la clinique de l'activité a construit une équipe de recherche originale dans le monde universitaire, car elle associait très étroitement dans ses séminaires de recherche des "chercheurs professionnels" (enseignants-chercheurs de diverses disciplines, psychologues surtout mais aussi philosophes ou linguistes, par exemple, ainsi que les doctorants de l'équipe et visiteurs étrangers) et des "professionnels chercheurs" (enseignant-es de collège et lycée, formateurs/trices, conseillères d'orientation, médecin du travail, ingénieur-es, par exemple), mobilisés conjointement par l'analyse clinique, théorique et méthodologique, d'interventions réelles dans des situations de travail complexes. Ce modèle de fonctionnement institutionnel original - peu encouragé dans le monde universitaire - reflète les rapports dialectiques entre théorie et pratique, et la place fondamentale de l'action dans l'élaboration théorique, telle que soulignée par L. Vygotski<sup>9</sup> (1999). Il s'accorde aux modalités d'intervention de l'équipe dans les milieux de travail, qui ont toujours un double objectif d'action (par la transformation de l'organisation du travail) et de connaissance (dans une démarche scientifique). Ce courant de recherche s'ancre dans la continuité des travaux en psychologie historico-culturelle du psychologue russe, ainsi que dans la tradition de psychologie et d'ergonomie du travail francophone (Lahy & Pacaud, 1947; Pacaud, 1949; Ombredane & Faverge, 1955; Wisner, 1962, 1985, 1997; Leplat, 1993). Cette dernière construit

elle-même une réflexion sophistiquée sur les rapports entre connaissance et transformation du travail (voir par exemple l'ouvrage de référence de Guérin, Laville et Daniellou, 1997) et fait de l'analyse de l'activité des travailleurs le point nodal de la réflexion sur les rapports entre santé au travail tout au long de la vie, formation, efficacité du travail et conception de l'organisation du travail. La tradition d'intervention est ainsi largement présente dans le monde francophone via l'ergonomie et l'analyse de l'activité, mais la clinique de l'activité s'en empare sous un jour original, qui est celui du développement, posé à la fois comme objectif et comme méthode (Vygotski, 1927/1999). Le concept de développement est ainsi au centre de ses préoccupations: l'intervention se donne comme but premier de développer *le pouvoir d'agir* des professionnels, un terme repris de Spinoza, dans une démarche qui prolonge les réflexions du médecin Canguilhem, pour qui la santé suppose non seulement l'adaptation aux normes existantes, mais la re-normalisation, c'est-à-dire la production de normes propres pour vivre. Le pouvoir d'agir "mesure le rayon d'action effectif du sujet ou des sujets dans leur milieu professionnel habituel, ce qu'on appelle le rayonnement de l'activité, son pouvoir de récréation" (Clot, 2008, p. 13). Les transformations de l'organisation du travail sont avant tout entre les mains des professionnels, d'où l'importance de soutenir le développement de leur pouvoir d'agir en situation: "on peut aujourd'hui considérer que les transformations ne sont portées durablement que par l'action des collectifs de travail sur eux-mêmes" (Clot, 2008, p. 102). Le dialogue, orchestré par les chercheurs dans l'intervention, devient "un instrument de développement de la pensée, source de développement potentiel de l'expérience" (Clot, 2008, p. 220) – les chercheurs se positionnant du coup non comme experts du travail lui-même, mais comme "artisans du cadre dialogique" (Scheller, 2003) pour le mettre en discussion et réflexion dans les collectifs constitués pour l'intervention.

Le renouvellement revendiqué de cette tradition d'analyse de l'activité francophone s'inscrit dans cette perspective développementale, autour de la prise en compte de la fonction du collectif dans le développement à la fois des individus et des situations de travail: "Nous cherchons à contribuer au renouvellement de la tradition francophone d'analyse de l'activité. On sait que celle-ci nous a transmis l'identification classique de l'écart entre le prescrit et le réel. Or, il nous paraît

9 In French, the transcription has been Vygotski in the publications of the last 20 years, but we also find the transcription Vygotskij in a recently published book (Vygotskij, 1930/2021)

nécessaire d'aller au-delà de cette description traditionnelle du travail. Selon nous, il n'existe pas d'un côté la prescription sociale et de l'autre l'activité réelle; d'un côté la tâche, de l'autre l'activité; ou encore d'un côté l'organisation du travail et de l'autre l'activité du sujet. *Il existe, entre l'organisation du travail et le sujet lui-même, un travail de réorganisation de la tâche par les collectifs professionnels, une recréation de l'organisation du travail par le travail d'organisation du collectif.*

L'objet théorique et pratique que nous cherchons à cerner, c'est précisément ce travail d'organisation du collectif dans son milieu, ou plutôt ses avatars, ses équivoques, ses succès et ses échecs, autrement dit son histoire possible et impossible. Il y a donc entre le prescrit et le réel un troisième terme décisif que nous désignons comme *le genre social du métier, le genre professionnel*, c'est-à-dire les "obligations" que partagent ceux qui travaillent pour arriver à travailler, souvent malgré tout, parfois malgré l'organisation prescrite du travail. Sans la ressource de ces formes communes de la vie professionnelle, on assiste à un dérèglement de l'action individuelle, à une "chute" du pouvoir d'action et de la tension vitale du collectif, à une perte d'efficacité du travail et de l'organisation elle-même. (Clot & Faïta, 2000, p. 8, c'est nous qui soulignons).

La fonction psychologique du collectif, du titre du livre du même nom (Clot, 1999) se cristallise dans les deux concepts de genre professionnel et de stylisation, qui s'articulent et se complètent:

Celui ou ceux qui travaillent agissent au travers des genres tant qu'ils répondent aux exigences de l'action. Du coup, quand c'est nécessaire, ils ajustent et retouchent les genres en se plaçant également en dehors d'eux par un mouvement, une oscillation parfois rythmique consistant à s'éloigner, à se solidariser, à se confondre selon de continuelles modifications de distance qu'on peut considérer comme des créations stylistiques. C'est d'ailleurs ce travail du style qui produit une stylisation des genres susceptible de les "garder en état de marche", c'est-à-dire *de les transformer en les développant*. Les styles ne cessent de métamorphoser les genres professionnels qu'ils prennent comme objets de travail sitôt que ces derniers se "fatiguent" comme moyens d'action. Il y a donc une intériorité réciproque des styles et des genres professionnels qui interdit de faire du style un

simple attribut psychologique du sujet, comme on le fait encore assez systématiquement en psychologie (Amalberti, 1996; Huteau, 1987).

Le style participe du genre auquel il fournit son allure. *"Les styles sont le retravail des genres en situation, et les genres, du coup, le contraire d'états fixes. Mieux, ils sont toujours inachevés."* (Clot & Faïta, 2000, p. 15, c'est nous qui soulignons). La stylisation par chacune de l'action, dans les limites du genre professionnel qui l'encadre (sous peine de transgression), permet le renouvellement du genre professionnel par re-création en situation de façons d'agir singulières, portées par l'histoire et les compétences de chacune. La vitalité de l'action de chacun et du genre professionnel dépend donc de leur articulation et de leur recréation en situation: "le style de l'action singulière affranchit le sujet non pas en niant le genre mais par la voie de son développement" (Clot & Faïta, 2000). L'histoire du métier relève ainsi d'une architecture dynamique, dans laquelle se répondent l'activité personnelle, interpersonnelle, transpersonnelle (par le genre professionnel qui les traversent) et impersonnelle (par l'organisation du travail et la définition des rôles et des tâches).

En trente ans d'existence, la clinique de l'activité s'est déployée sur des terrains très variés, qu'il nous est impossible de répertorier dans cette introduction. Les chercheurs en clinique de l'activité interviennent la plupart du temps en réponse à des demandes émanant de milieux professionnels, instruisant "commande" et "demande", sur le modèle des pratiques d'intervention de l'analyse du travail dans le monde francophone. Les méthodologies développées en clinique de l'activité sont originales. L'instruction au sosie et les auto-confrontations croisées ont été présentées dans la littérature francophone et anglophone<sup>10</sup>, et nous ne reviendrons pas en détail sur ces deux méthodes ici. Toutefois, nous aimerions souligner deux choses: d'une part, ces deux techniques d'entretien, en dépit de leurs différences apparentes (l'une travaille à partir de la seule parole, avec un dispositif ludique où l'expert instruit l'intervenant-sosie qui cherche à le remplacer, bien naïvement, dans sa situation de travail; l'autre mobilise des enregistrements vidéo de situation réelle d'activité professionnelle soigneusement sélectionnées et commentées selon des instructions précises dans des

10 Voir par exemple pour les auto-confrontations croisées (Kloetzer, 2020), et encore l'article de Vergara & Kloetzer dans ce numéro spécial.

contextes sociaux qui varient), partagent beaucoup de principes théoriques et méthodologiques dans leur conception. Par exemple, ces deux méthodes s'appuient sur un modèle de l'activité comme simultanément adressée à soi-même, aux autres et aux objets du monde (Clot, 1995) dans une perspective dialogique, qui fait de l'adresse à autrui l'occasion d'un possible développement. On retrouve ainsi l'idée forte de Vygotski, pour qui la conscience est avant tout un "contact social avec soi-même" (Vygotski, 2017). L'autre - et plus largement, le collectif de métier auquel le professionnel s'adresse - sont donc au fondement de ces méthodes. D'autre part, ces méthodes ont trop souvent été reprises ou commentées en dehors du cadre méthodologique dans lequel elles s'inscrivent, et qui est transformatif ou développemental. Ces techniques d'entretien ne sont que des moments singuliers, certes particulièrement attrayants, ou des outils, d'un processus global de recherche qui se déploie habituellement sur un long horizon temporel (de 18 mois à plusieurs années) et construit une collaboration étroite avec des professionnels volontaires dans différents comités (un collectif de recherche associé pour les professionnels de terrain, un comité de pilotage pour les directions, syndicats et autres commanditaires). Ce processus global amène à repenser et restructurer l'ensemble de la démarche de recherche en fonction de ses objectifs d'action (Kloetzer, 2020).

Pour conclure cette brève introduction à la clinique de l'activité, nous aimerions enfin souligner les évolutions que cette dernière a connu depuis sa création. Pour ce faire, nous nous appuyerons sur une lecture du dernier ouvrage d'Yves Clot (Clot et al., 2021). La controverse professionnelle sur les critères du travail bien fait est devenue un objet central de l'intervention en clinique de l'activité. L'analyse de l'activité devient un outil politique de transformation des milieux de travail : en organisant, avec beaucoup de soin, l'analyse collective de situations de travail prototypiques ou problématiques dans des cadres dialogiques sophistiqués, l'intervention ouvre une opportunité de transformer à la fois (a) la façon dont ces problèmes (et le travail des professionnels) est vue, (b) les rapports de force sur la conception de l'organisation du travail et les processus de décision sur cette dernière au sein de l'organisation, (c) les modalités ordinaires du dialogue dans les milieux professionnels.

Ceci est illustré, par exemple, par l'analyse détaillée d'une séquence avec les éboueurs d'une grande ville française autour des bennes à ordures :

(...) au cours de ce comité, les "petits problèmes" deviennent "grands". Les problèmes repérés par les agents, qui "empoisonnent" leurs journées, sont instruits, même partiellement, dans le jeu des objections répétées qui se réalisent dans le dialogue avec la hiérarchie. C'est une forme de coopération spécifique qui s'inaugure entre eux, qu'on pourrait appeler, avec le syndicaliste italien Bruno Trentin (1926-2007), une "coopération conflictuelle", faisant, même "en petit", du conflit de critères le point de départ des échanges, à la recherche de quelque chose de neuf. La discussion est poussée dans ses retranchements jusque dans les détails pratiques les plus fins, jusqu'à ce que la banalité du quotidien soit prise au sérieux. (Clot et al., 2021, p. 115)

Et: Cette démarche vise à "revitaliser le conflit social en le rattachant au réel du travail":

Le degré de vérité qu'une organisation peut supporter dans son rapport au réel, loin d'être seulement défini par la hiérarchie, fonctionne dans un champ de forces exposées à la déréalisation. Ce risque de déconnexion appelle la construction et l'expérimentation d'une autre voie pour affecter le dialogue social déjà institué: un développement instituant qui enrayer ces processus. Nos résultats sont de ce côté: le collectif, en faisant autorité dans le rapport au réel noué autour de l'objet même de l'activité auquel les agents sont attachés, pousse le travail syndical et le travail de direction à "reprendre racine" (Clot et al., 2021, p. 127).

Le travail avec différents collectifs, hiérarchiquement distincts, d'une part le collectif de métier, d'autre part les directions, syndicats et commanditaires de la recherche, est au cœur de l'intervention : présent dès le début de la clinique de l'activité par le travail de négociation de la commande et de la demande, il a été renforcé par l'expérience répétée de la difficulté à promouvoir des transformations organisationnelles durables, au-delà de l'intervention, et de la nécessité d'instituer les nouvelles modalités de dialogue et de collaboration dans les fonctionnements ordinaires dans les milieux de travail. Bien sûr, cette direction n'est pas la seule que l'équipe clinique de l'activité ait empruntée. Forte depuis sa création d'une quarantaine

de membres permanents ou associés (dont une dizaine seulement d'enseignants-chercheurs titulaires rattachés au CNAM), elle a développé des objets de recherche et des terrains d'intervention variés. Mais cette double préoccupation d'instiguer et d'étudier le développement produit dans et par le dialogue nous semble fondamentale dans cette approche.

## A Pesquisa-Trans-Formação

Sabemos que os problemas na área da educação não são novos e não pretendemos discuti-los neste momento, mas eles representam o desafio necessário para fazer com que nós, pesquisadores, pensemos em formas de superação comprometidas social e eticamente.

Assim, um ponto que esteve presente e fortaleceu a unidade dos três cursos<sup>11</sup> foi a compreensão da crítica e da autocritica como essenciais em nossas pesquisas. Mas não crítica pela crítica, mas a *crítica da Crítica Crítica*, parafraseando Marx e Engels (Marx & Engels, 1844/2010), aquela que nos impulsiona e gera movimentos transformadores radicais, que se tornam práxis. Com isto afirmamos que é a realidade objetiva, com todas as suas contradições, que nos convoca para produzir conhecimento, sendo a força das demandas sociais impulsionadora dos objetivos das propostas de pesquisa apresentadas no curso em questão.

Mas como seguir este caminho?

Acreditamos que não se alcançam tais intentos de modo aleatório, por meio do senso comum, ou utilizando quaisquer propostas teóricas e metodológicas. Isto justifica a opção feita pelas três professoras de adotar – mesmo que com nuances e ênfases diferentes – o Materialismo Histórico Dialético como Método e a Psicologia Sócio Histórico Cultural<sup>12</sup> como referência teórica. No caso das aulas por mim ministradas, tivemos a intenção de apresentar o Materialismo Histórico Dialético (MHD) como orientador da nossa perspectiva metodológica e a Psicologia Sócio-histórica (PSH) como arcabouço teórico da psicologia da educação,

com a finalidade de sermos coerentes com o referencial proposto e enfatizando a proposição de Marx em sua tese 11 de que “Os filósofos têm apenas interpretado o mundo de diferentes maneiras. O que importa é transformá-lo”, apontamos a Pesquisa-Trans-Formação como a práxis a ser construída no processo de construção de nossas pesquisas.

Apoiados nesses pressupostos vemos a possibilidade de exercer a crítica como princípio metodológico, como afirma Mészáros (2010) e, assim, em nossas pesquisas, a não nos contentarmos com a superfície da realidade, indo para além da aparência, focando os processos, as mediações constitutivas dos fenômenos, as contradições, caminhando na direção da saturação das determinações que constituem a realidade estudada.

Mas quais elementos teóricos e metodológicos nos dão o suporte para efetivarmos este percurso de pesquisa?

Para desenvolvermos, mesmo que de modo breve esta questão, iniciamos afirmando como Netto (2011, p. 53), que “O método - o Materialismo Histórico e Dialético - implica, para Marx, uma determinada posição (perspectiva) do sujeito que pesquisa: aquela em que se põe o pesquisador para, na sua relação com o objeto, extrair dele as suas múltiplas determinações.”

Sabemos da impossibilidade, dado o contexto e porte deste artigo, de nos aprofundarmos na exposição do MHD; no entanto, optamos pela apresentação de algumas de suas categorias, entendendo que será o pensamento categorial que nos guiará em todo o processo de pesquisar-trans-formar, no caso focando a realidade educacional. Destacamos inicialmente o entendimento de **categoria** para o MHD:

The categories are theoretical constructs, abstractions that express the apprehension of the movement of the studied phenomenon. They shed light on and explain a certain zone of reality. It is safe to say that the categories guide our process of apprehension of the reality beyond appearance, helping us to produce knowledge beyond ideology which, like a “smokescreen”, conceals it and makes it “opaque” in its superficiality. (Aguiar et al., 2020, p. 232).

Concordando com Lefebvre (1975, p. 172), afirmamos que em nossas pesquisas buscamos os movimentos, as “transições”, o que nos exige um pensamento vivo, jamais estático, que apreenda as relações na sua complexidade dialética.

11 Esclarecemos que foi um curso dividido em três partes. Foi um porque todos discutiam as similaridades e diferenças. Foram três, porque cada um discutiu suas opções metodológicas. Por isso, por vezes, nos referiremos ao evento como um curso. Em outras vezes, como três.

12 Esclarecemos que, como cada autora segue uma tradução para o nome da teoria, o leitor encontrará aqui, a terminologia Psicologia/Teoria Sócio Histórico Cultural, ou Sócio-Histórica ou Histórico-Cultural.

Para dar conta desta empreitada recorreremos a algumas categorias do MHD, como: contradição, mediação, historicidade e totalidade. A categoria contradição, juntamente com outras, será responsável pela compreensão do humano como histórico, social e singular ao mesmo tempo. Apoiados em Aguiar e Ozella (2006, p. 224), destacamos que:

O sujeito, constituído na e pela atividade, ao produzir sua forma humana de existência, revela - em todas as suas expressões- a historicidade social, a ideologia, as relações sociais, o modo de produção. Ao mesmo tempo que expressa sua singularidade, o novo que é capaz de produzir. 'O que também nos leva a afirmar sua subjetividade historicamente construída'.

Isto posto, apresenta-se diante de nós uma realidade complexa a ser apreendida; Lefebvre (1975, p. 249) indica a necessidade de acompanharmos o movimento do real, sendo que tal movimento implica "continuidade e descontinuidade, aparecimento e choque de contrários, saltos qualitativos e superação."

É papel das categorias iluminar o movimento do real e, neste caso, ao recorrermos à categoria contradição, criamos melhores condições de nos afastarmos das compreensões dicotomizantes, naturalizantes, que advogam em prol da meritocracia, tão presente na nossa realidade educacional. Esta é a condição metodológica de entender e superar as dicotomias objetividade-subjetividade, social-individual, pensamento-linguagem, afeto-cognição etc., compreendendo que, na realidade concreta, existem relações que não são de identidade, nem de oposição irreconciliável, mas contraditórias. Deste modo, podemos pensar, com Vygotski<sup>13</sup>, que o humano "é quase social" e que nos cabe buscar a "gênese social do individual". Podemos, assim, em nossas pesquisas, analisar os participantes não como um reflexo passivo das condições sociais, mas um ser ativo, agente, como aquele que, mediado por uma subjetividade dialeticamente constituída pelas e nas relações sociais, é capaz de transformar as condições materiais.

Tal movimento alude à categoria **mediação**, que nos permite compreender as relações em que os indivíduos, ao serem afetados pela realidade social, não o são de modo imediato. As determinações sociais,

que nada mais são do que produtos humanos, devem ser entendidas como elementos da materialidade que se tornam, no processo de constituição do humano (objetivação-subjetivação), elementos essenciais do ser, configuradas criativamente por ele. Assim, no encontro com o indivíduo, a realidade do mundo social é mediada pela subjetividade histórica. Nos referimos a um tipo específico de relação de mediação: a relação dialética, em que os polos são diferentes, não mantêm uma relação de identidade, mas ao mesmo tempo se constituem mutuamente.

Para entendermos este movimento constitutivo do humano, de modo crítico, superando a dicotomia subjetividade-objetividade, compreendendo-as como pares dialéticos, outras categorias devem ser agregadas, como **historicidade**. Esta categoria nos permite abandonar como questão central "O que é a realidade", substituindo-a por "Como ela se transformou?", "Como se desenvolveu?" (Aguiar & Machado, 2016).

Vygotski, nos manuscritos de 1929, faz um alerta para a importância e o cuidado necessários para se trabalhar com a categoria historicidade. Ele afirma que não podemos nos deter na compreensão da cronologia dos fatos para o entendimento dos indivíduos, que devemos compreender a história como "Dialética geral das coisas". Ainda seguindo o autor, para a compreensão histórica do ser humano, precisamos ter claro que o seu processo de desenvolvimento ocorre de forma dialética, ou seja, contraditoriamente, e sempre em relação à totalidade social. Esta categoria tem a intenção de explicitar que os fenômenos da realidade não se constituem numa simples sucessão cronológica de fatos, num movimento sem rumo, desgovernado. Pelo contrário, trata-se de um movimento determinado por relações de forças, dialeticamente articuladas, que se constituíram no decurso da existência de tal objeto (Lukács, 1979).

Esta categoria, articulada às outras, próprias do MHD, permitiram que Vygotski desenvolvesse sua concepção de desenvolvimento, essencial em nossas pesquisas e intervenções. Para ele é impossível a compreensão de desenvolvimento humano sem a noção de dialeticidade, contradição e historicidade, sendo que o autor deixa clara a sua crítica ao pensamento etapista linear e fragmentado. Vejamos:

Dominados pela noção de mudança evolucionária, a maioria dos pesquisadores em psicologia da criança ignora aqueles pontos de viragem, aquelas mudanças

13 No Brasil, tem sido comum, nos últimos anos, se grafar o nome do autor com i; no entanto, é comum, encontrarmos Vygotski, Vigotski (além de outras variações). A opção da autora e seu grupo de pesquisa é por esta grafia.

convulsivas e revolucionárias que são tão frequentes no desenvolvimento da criança. Para a mente ingênua, evolução e revolução parecem incompatíveis, e o desenvolvimento histórico só está ocorrendo enquanto segue em linha reta. (Vigotski, 2007, pp. 80-81).

A concepção acima crítica, na radicalidade, a visão positivista de ciência e defende a necessidade da explicação dos fenômenos, superando análises meramente descritivas, que não apreendem as transições e suas mediações.

Recuperando o termo meritocracia já mencionado e a necessidade não apenas de que este seja negado, mas que seja explicitada sua falácia, avaliamos que não é difícil sermos seduzidos por ele se não trouxermos para nossa análise a categoria **totalidade** – sempre articulada às outras. A categoria totalidade, cumprindo seu papel de categoria, de ser uma lente que nos auxilia a apreender a realidade para além da sua aparência, nos alerta que o ponto de vista da totalidade é negar que a realidade seja estática, fixa, mas movimento constante, e que as partes se movimentam por contradição e se constituem formando novas partes que alteram o todo; que não podemos analisar um fato, um sujeito, descolado da totalidade social que dialética e historicamente o constitui. É importante lembrar que não existe uma totalidade absoluta, estática. Como afirma Luckács (2013), “**Totalidade é complexo de complexos**”. Assim, em nossas pesquisas com professores, a análise deve se dar à luz da totalidade possível de ser apreendida no momento: características da escola, projeto político pedagógico, políticas públicas para educação, condições sociais e econômicas etc., lembrando que, a todo momento, novos elementos surgem nessa totalidade, ao mesmo tempo em que gestam novas partes.

Considerando tais colocações, reiteramos a necessidade de explicitarmos e explicarmos a realidade se quisermos compreendê-la. Não sem motivo, lembramos da conhecida afirmação de Vigotski (1930/2000, p. 83), parafraseando Marx: “se as coisas fossem diretamente o que parecem, não seria necessária nenhuma pesquisa científica. Essas coisas deveriam ser registradas, contadas, mas não pesquisadas”. Se fosse assim, ressalta o autor, “toda ciência seria supérflua”. Mas como efetivar nossas pesquisas? Por onde começar o processo de apreensão do sujeito?

Nosso ponto de partida são as “significações” (Aguiar et al., 2020, 2021) produzidas pelos sujeitos, aqui entendidas como a articulação entre sentidos e significados, sendo nossa meta a apreensão do processo de constituição das significações e ressignificações. Lembramos aqui, baseados nas categorias do MHD e dos ensinamentos de Vigotski (1930/2000), que nos cabe analisar processos e não produtos.

O fato de não tratarmos o indivíduo de modo dicotomizado, fragmentado, nos leva a buscar formas de apreendê-lo na sua totalidade, historicidade e unicidade. Assim, consideramos impossível iniciar o processo analítico sem o entendimento de que todas as suas expressões são individuais e sociais ao mesmo tempo, que todas revelam sua singularidade e historicidade constituídas mutuamente.

Com este entendimento partimos das falas dos sujeitos, entendidas como significações; como objetivações que contêm os significados sociais como elementos constitutivos e, ao mesmo tempo, as idiosincrasias, afetos, elementos individuais próprios de cada indivíduo. Tais elementos coexistem e se constituem mutuamente, sem perder suas identidades, ou seja, configuram uma unidade de contrários.

Ainda que não seja o mote deste artigo (trataremos em outro artigo nesta mesma edição), destacamos que a forma de pesquisar coerente com os pressupostos teórico-metodológicos apresentados denomina-se Pesquisa-Trans-Formação, tendo por procedimento analítico os Núcleos de Significações.

### PCCol – Critical Collaborative Research

It is important to begin by mentioning that, in Brazil, the critical collaborative approach to research was first discussed by Magalhães (1990/2006) who has been investigating this methodology for over thirty years, usually as part of projects in the field of educators’ education. This can be confirmed by looking at the vast amount of published texts about this topic, both alone (Magalhães, 1998, 2007, 2018) and with colleagues and followers (Celani & Magalhães, 2005; Magalhães & Liberali, 2004; Magalhães & Fidalgo, 2010, 2019; Magalhães, Ninin & Lessa, 2014; Ninin & Magalhães, 2017; Jones & Magalhães, 2020, to quote but a few). Many professionals who, today work with the complexities of what we have come to know as PCCol (from the Portuguese, *Pesquisa Crítica de Colaboração*, or Critical Research of Collaboration, in a

word-for-word translation), have initially worked with Magalhães, as colleagues, collaborators, supervisees, or in all of these positions at some stage in their professional lives. Many are Critical Applied Linguists, which means that they work with language matters (taking language as object and instrument), and analyze them in terms of their scope for organizing critical reasoning, which Magalhães and Fidalgo (2010, p. 329) have defined as a critical-reflective-thought-organizing type of language (CReThOTLa) – whose word choice clearly shows that our bases to think this linguistic instrument is Freire (1970, 1992, 1996) and Vygotsky<sup>14</sup> (1924-1934). The former is followed here due to the notion of critical reflection as means to transforming society; the latter due to the idea that language organizes thought throughout our existence (Vygotsky, 1934/2009). The CReThOTLa is the first of four concepts that I will further discuss in this paper.

Most of PCCol's works are carried out in teacher education environments in which participants are either learning what kind of language this CReThOTLa is, or are mastering its use. Having – in most cases – been educated in transmissive undergraduate programs throughout the country, they often have the belief that it is the university's job to think of theories that should solve practical problems, and it is the school teachers' job to put these theories into practice (the classical *thinker* versus *doer* dichotomic view on professional development and research paradigm).

In order to try to move past this view, PCCol focuses on (linguistic) actions in the school, research, university environments (the social settings *per se*), probing into the words with a view to requesting for clarification or expansion (Ninin, 2018) in such ways that everyone can feel respected, heard whilst experiencing moments of sense-meaning resignification – which, in turn, promotes a locus where everyone can and probably will undergo some kind of critically-reflective-based transformation, and should promote *loci* of transformation for the others, through inter-agency engagements (Magalhães et aliae, 2021), speaking at any time, and knowing that the listeners are maintaining a responsive attitude. In Russian, one might refer to this as *слушать* rather than *слышать*.

14 As discussed in a previous footnote, this author's name has received different spelling patterns in Brazil – especially in Portuguese. In the English version of our texts, we maintain the English spelling, i.e., Vygotsky.

Here, we have another important term, i.e., responsive attitude, which results from attentive listening. This is a concept based on Voloshinov (1929/2017), which the research groups working with PCCol<sup>15</sup> understand as listening in order to really make sense of what is being said, and collaboratively use it in the meaning/knowledge construction process. It is different from (and even the opposite of) simply hearing or listening with a view to waiting for the other's turn to finish in order to take the turn and speak (in a movement that resembles a competition for the floor, a competition to prove who has the best answer, the strongest speech. This does not foster collaboration). PCCol is also against the notion that those in the University Academic World are the sole producers of knowledge that they then transmit to those in the School Academic World. As Freire stated time and time again in his work, people hold different 'knowledges'. One is not better than the other, and together, both can bring about the change that is needed and desired in a given community.

With this view in mind, we clarify that responsive listening requires full attention and probing into words (i.e., asking questions about what is said) in order to better clarify what is not yet clear. Thus, it leads to the co-construction of signification and knowledge production. We stay as far away as possible from the idea that one person (the teacher, the teacher educator, for example) should bring a readymade concept that will be used by the entire group because this often leads to parroting rather than knowledge production. As such, it cannot lead to the transformation of practices either – and this is the ultimate goal that we chase in PCCol. I will not say much more about the importance of language in the PCCol framework,

15 Though, I understand that there are many groups nowadays working with PCCol in Brazil – and even groups that have been following some sort of PCCol variation abroad –, I refer here mainly to three groups (the first, coordinated by Maria Cecilia Camargo Magalhães and Fernanda Coelho Liberali at PUC-SP; the second, coordinated by Angela B. C. T. Lessa and Sueli S. Fidalgo – at PUC-SP and UNIFESP – and the third, coordinated by Sueli S. Fidalgo and Maria de Fátima Carvalho – at UNIFESP), because these are the groups that I follow more closely and with which I am somehow involved. All three are accredited by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and by the Universities where their coordinators work. The first is called LACE - Language in Activity of the School Context –, the second is ILCAE – Linguist Inclusion in Settings of Educational Activities – and the third is ISEF – Social and Educational Inclusion and Teacher Education.

as Fidalgo and Magalhães's paper in this special issue focuses mostly on this aspect of the methodology, and does so by bringing examples from the course taught – i.e., examples of interactions and how knowledge is co-constructed within these.

Transformation of practices is the third concept that *PCColers* use – actually, it is what they pursue. When explaining the dialectical law of transformation of quantity into quality, Konder (1981/2014, p. 38) states that,

The transformation of the whole is only actually carried out after an accumulation of changes in the parts that compose it. Sector, quantitative changes occur, and then there is a critical moment that points to the qualitative transformation of the totality.

The whole is therefore transformed when each of its components has been transformed as well – (and a “vice-versa “ can apply here). *PCColers* look at this idea in more than one level – as does Konder (1981/2014, p.38),

(...) the transformation of the whole is more complicated than the transformation of each element that composes it. And we must also highlight something else: Each totality has its own way of changing; transformation conditions vary depending on the characteristics of the totality and of the specific process.

When I state that Konder's view is similar to that of researchers working with *PCCol*, it is because the latter also see levels of possibilities of transformation. The idea is that the totality would change, i.e., the entire school, all the participants in an investigation/educator education setting (including the researchers themselves). However, it does not happen all at once, for all the participants – especially because each participant is a changeable unit, undergoing their own processes of development that will, at the same time, promote transformations on others (by means of questions and other types of interventions (Ninin, 2018)), and therefore, on the whole. There are changes within changes, and these ultimately transform the whole.

At the specific, individual level, transformation seems to follow steps such as the following for most people:

(1) They firstly, reject what they hear and see because they often think that *'It is precisely what they have been doing for many years – i.e., there is nothing new*

-." This mostly happens when a researcher enters the school with a project to be developed there. It is not so common when the project was designed with all the members of the community, which will also carry it out, participating on every step of the way. Still, it is a possible stage seen in the transformation process, especially because some researchers are pressed by time constraints that will not allow for the project to be co-designed by all members of the researched community.

(2) Then, participants begin to understand the difference or the benefits of the new process/ideas/project proposed by the group of colleagues with(out) researchers – which are often actually outsiders, working their way through the paths of acceptance in the school environment. And because the method requires that researchers (when outsiders) firstly try to understand the needs of the community (the other participants), by what Freire (1970) called an immersion in reality, most people eventually feel comfortable to voice their expectations, their fears, and propose themes for discussion, etc. As participants begin to understand, they also begin to repeat concepts in their speeches, which seems to be a way of checking if they have really understood these new meanings that are being constructed.

(3) Here, each of them, at their own pace, seems to have internalized the ideas produced by the group – and is, at this point in time, and agent of change (Magalhães *et al.*, 2021) as well; i.e., they are collaborating with the individual changes of colleagues, are actively engaged in their own changing process, and this is becoming very evident in the community – i.e. the totality is changing – in theory, in the way participants speak. However, not everyone can already implement the changes that they advocate for. So, practice may not have (fully) changed yet.

An example of this is the following: in the classroom, teacher A's actions (lesson plans, lesson deliveries, the way they deal with students' mistakes, assessment forms) may still be the same as before, showing their strong foundation on transmissive teaching approaches, which Freire referred to with the banking metaphor (1970), even though this very teacher may be quite eloquent in defending more inclusive, collaborative, agentive, democratic and decolonizing classroom practices. In other words, a participant speaks very fluently of aspects and benefits of the new ideas

constructed by the group through the collaborative dialectical process that organizes PCCol, but no change is yet seen in their individual practice *per se*, mainly because this person has not totally internalized the transformation that they now support.

(4) Eventually, the project's participants will see that unit-totalities are changing, and so is the entire community or system (the school, for example). However, this totality is not very often seen in Master's or even Doctorate's projects due to the time constraints – which, in Brazil is of two and four years respectively. It is much more common in long-term projects and partnerships between members of the group (for example, in school support groups, in school-university jointly designed projects).

Due to the scope and constraints of a paper such as this one, it is not possible to discuss all the concepts that compose the PCCol methodology especially considering that it is such a complex research and educator's education methodology. So, some selections have to be made. And I have selected to close my part in this paper with the *Reflective Cycle* (Smyth, 1992) – which is a very important instrument that enables responsive listening, the use and development of the critical-reflective-thought-organizing type of language, and therefore, will allow for transformation to take place – being actually an instrument that allows us to see in which of the above mentioned stages each participant is. Smyth argues that there are four stages to the reflective cycle: *Describing, Informing, Confronting and Reconstructing* – and we must emphasize that, precisely because it is envisaged in a dialectical perspective, the cycle is not linear, i.e. participants are not expected (actually should not) follow from one stage to the next – but move *to* and *fro*, reacting responsively to each other's questions and answers (responsive listening).

Smyth (1992, p. 296) argues that:

The rationale [behind the describing stage] is that if teachers<sup>16</sup> can create a text that comprises the elements of their teaching as a prelude to problematizing it, then there is a likelihood that they will have the basis upon which to engage in dialogue with one another so as to see how their consciousness was formed and how it might be changed.

16 Smyth's cycle was primarily thought for the work with/of teachers, but we have since used it with other professionals and even children and their parents, though most of our participants are in the teaching area.

Liberali (2008) explains that the language that is most common in the description phase is one that aims at discovering what the person does, through the analyses of facts that occur. This, however, should not include judgements, i.e., analyzing the context and the actions takes place through the concrete description of the action with a view to seeing what underlies them. Some common linguistic tools used here are questions that ask for exemplification and expansion (Ninin, 2018). The latter includes action verbs – *how did you explain X; what were the students' tasks* – as well as contextual elements – *how many students were there in the class? How were they seated? How old are they?*

Smyth (1992, p. 297) also says that:

By whatever term we choose to describe them, when teachers engage in the activity of analyzing descriptions of their teaching in order to make a series of "it looks as if..." statements, then they are really recapturing the pedagogical principles of what it is they do.

*Recapturing, retrieving or understanding the pedagogical principles* of what it is that we do is what *Informing* – the second phase – is all about. And this can be fulfilled when the group revisits the Describing phase with a view to understanding what kind of theories participants have constructed throughout their lives (and follow either consciously or not), i.e., with a view to understanding how these theories influence the way they act. According to Liberali (2008) in this stage we seek to discover what the meanings of our actions are. We could say that we aim at discovering where these actions are rooted.

As for the third stage, Smyth (1992, p. 299) argues that:

Theorizing and describing one's practice is one thing, but being able to subject those theories to a form of interrogation and questioning that establishes something about their legitimacy and legacy is altogether another matter. Yet, if we are to be clear about what it is that we do as educators and why we do it, then it is imperative that we move to this stage. Above all, we need to regard the views we hold about teaching not as idiosyncratic preferences, but rather as the product of deeply entrenched cultural norms of which we may not even be aware.

The *interrogation and questioning* to which we subject our practices in this phase aim at finding out if the practices actually allow for the students that

we have before us to be the critical citizens that we had in mind when we planned the course, the lesson. What are the effects on the others before us, and on ourselves as well?

The fourth stage may be an almost natural consequence of all the others (though there is no linearity in the four stages, as I have stated previously). As the group moves forwards and backwards between each phase, they begin to think of different ways of action. To Smyth (1992, p. 299-300),

Being able to locate oneself both personally and professionally in history so as to understand the forces that have come to determine one's existence is the hallmark of a teacher who has been able to harness the reflective process so as to begin to act on the world in a way that amounts to changing it. This amounts to being able to see teaching realities not as immutable givens but as realities defined by others and as essentially contestable.

By following this path, this frame, PCCol aims at identifying the contradictions that cannot be captured simply by taking part in a meeting without a clear focus on the language that is constituting each step of the meeting's organization – and the many layers of this language. As Konder (1981/2014, p. 43) puts it,

In order to recognize the totalities in which the reality is actually bound (...) the dialectical thought is forced to a patient work: it is forced to gradually identify, at great effort, the concrete contradictions and the specific mediations that constitute the "tissue" of each totality, what actually brings each totality to life.

Por restrições de espaço, o enfoque desta seção do presente artigo não poderá tratar de todas as nuances que constituem a PCCol. No entanto, outro texto neste mesmo volume, escrito por Fidalgo e Magalhães, traz outros aspectos importantes, podendo, portanto, esclarecer um pouco mais sobre a metodologia e os procedimentos adotados, além de suas bases teóricas. Em seguida, trataremos dos pontos em comum entre as três metodologias discutidas nesse artigo e, posteriormente, de algumas das diferenças que identificamos.

## Convergences

### Social transformation as the horizon of research

A starting point common to all three approaches is that they see research as a process of transformation of the social world, carried out by the actors in the field, including researchers and other participants. The means by which we provoke transformation may be different, but the three approaches do not hesitate to create situations that 'destabilise', that call into question, generate conflicts, 'conflictual cooperation', and this with an intentionality, a direction, an emancipating perspective. In terms of Activity Clinics, the aim is to expand the power of acting of the professionals. PCCol does the same by organizing a locus in which participants are the very agents of change, probing into each other's words, thus working collaboratively, and taking charge of the speeches, the projects, the movements, the transformation itself. Transformation Research seeks to provoke movements of re-signification that ultimately aim at political and human emancipation of the participants. As one can see, the three investigation methodologies focus on very similar – almost identical ideals of change generated by non-vertical or dictated, or even top-down knowledge construction. Much to the contrary, they all seek to work **with** the communities where the research is conducted, and not **on or for** these communities.

This starting point has many consequences. For example, the theoretical frameworks we mobilise emphasise the *historicity* of social practices: they are analysed as the dynamic product of human beings' action (or activities...) in institutions. This approach to their historical reality opens up perspectives for analysis and transformation. What has been, and what could be, are part of the analysis in the same way as what is. What is, what has been and what could be, are fluid realities, with a certain plasticity, and several internal possibilities of development. Contradictions are at the heart of the development process of systems, and the role of research teams is to identify these contradictions with the actors in the field in order to increase consciousness and outline alternative representations and actions.

Furthermore, the complexity of our objective (i.e., relying on collaborative research to co-transform social practices) implies the development of specific methodologies that are anchored in an articulated

research method and strong concepts. In our experience, it is useful to have a strong conceptual structure, developed throughout our interventions, to be able to carry out this double task of social transformation and knowledge building.

Finally, this horizon of social transformation means that the research we carry out has a dual dimension of action and knowledge building: it is simultaneously about understanding the world and transforming it. This approach, in which the perspective of action and the perspective of knowledge construction are closely intertwined, is original in the academic world, which is often still dominated by a positivist ideal of neutrality and detachment camouflaged as an ideal of objectivity. This notion of objectivity is reworked in our three approaches, since we refuse the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity, on the basis of our dialectical and historical approach to social realities, as well as to the psyche, as dynamic and in perpetual transformation. The brief introductions in this editorial to these three critical and collaborative approaches allow us to understand how these two fundamental movements (of transformative action and knowledge construction) are articulated and mutually nourished. In all three approaches, precise analyses work on the current ways of doing and saying of the professionals and with them, based on their detailed documentation and then their close discussion in groups, makes it possible to identify and then critically evaluate, on an individual, collective and finally institutional bases, the tensions, conflicts, contradictions or controversies, of which these ways of doing and saying are the visible trace. Contradictions/conflicts/dilemmas cross both the material activity and the professional languages (which are, in a way, also materiality, especially when we work with educators).

Of course, experience teaches us that the desired transformations are often modest, and begin with transforming the usual ways of feeling, thinking and acting in a professional environment, using the research process. The researchers are in an instrumental position, in which their work hopefully contributes to the development of the professionals' activities. The critical approach here involves an awareness of the issues and possibilities that run through each of us and inhabit our daily lives. The research process is thus a mutual learning process, where both researchers and professionals are affected by what is jointly discovered in the ordinary details of the activity.

In this transformative perspective, transdisciplinary collaboration is also central to all three approaches. Since the transformation of activity, at the personal, collective and institutional levels, is an important goal of the research, and since this transformation is in the hands of professionals and institutions, the construction of specific relations with the actors of these institutions is indispensable. In all three approaches, the research responds to a request, or "demand" from the field (which can be jointly discussed, i.e, the researcher may approach the field with an idea of the need that the community has, and discuss this with the other participants, thus collaboratively fine-tuning the project). A few examples are seen in this special issue of the journal. This is the case of Carvalho's and Liberali et alii papers (using PCCol); Magalhães and Aguiar' work (using Transformation Research) and Vergara & Koetzer's paper (using Activity Clinics). This approach to transdisciplinary collaboration is aligned with a certain **research ethics**, in which we seek to construct a joint object of investigation between researchers and professionals, so that the research is mutually beneficial. The construction of this joint object of investigation takes time. Co-analysis takes time, as collaboration also takes place in data co-analysis with the professionals. While the researchers provide analytical tools and propose a selection of data and a view of the latter, particularly through their interpretations, the data, analyses and interpretations themselves are subject to critical reflection and improvement by the professionals, who can and do, in many cases, carry out their own investigations. After all, it is critical reasoning that is being pursued and critical reasoning is the main ingredient for the kind of study that we carry out. There is a back-and-forth movement in the analysis and interpretation of data between professionals and researchers. The professionals are also involved in the reporting of the research in their professional environment and in scientific publications when they wish. In the patient construction of the project, the data, the interpretation and the instruments for reporting the research, everyone learns. We might highlight that the process of collaborative and critical research itself brings as much (perhaps more) to everyone as does the final report – in a paper, a thesis, a presentation. This commitment to a transdisciplinary collaborative approach reflects an ideal of research and a vision of

knowledge that integrates everyday, empirical, experiential, professional knowledge into the construction of more theoretical knowledge, and vice versa.

### Taking language as an object and as an instrument for social transformation

Language, as used by professionals in their daily activities, and dialogue, staged in our research approaches, are at the heart of our reflections. Our theoretical and methodological choices lead us to think of language in its social and historical constitution, beyond the ideologies inscribed in the discourses of a professional field (that of teachers or school principals, for example). The language used can capture and reflect contradictions regarding the reality. Therefore, listening carefully to speeches is an entry point into a deeper understanding of the reality. At the same time, dialogues (in the frame offered by the research process) may serve as instruments of transformation of one's own senses – i.e., understandings, thoughts and possibly actions. For this reason, the emphasis on the analysis of language in our approaches requires making links – or working along the boarder with different disciplinary fields: psychology and pedagogy, on the one hand, socio and applied linguistics on the other are probably the most common examples. Coming from different backgrounds, we maintain different relations with these disciplinary fields. In Activity Clinics, researchers turn towards linguistics, especially Bakhtinian dialogism or pragmatics, to find resources to analyze the collected data and understand some psychological movements of actual, potential or prevented development. The same applies to PCCol, Bakhtin and the Circle being one of the main linguistic frameworks in the the group's field of education and knowledge production – i.e., Applied Linguistics. Language, as stated in the PCCol section of this very paper, is the most important pursued focus. There is no collaboration, no identification of contradiction, no conflict, no negotiation and therefore, no change if not through language. Language is the object of analyses, and also the instrument by which actions (linguistic actions) are analyzed. In Trans-formation, the object of analyses is subjectivity – at the same time, a unique, singular and historical dimension. However, in order for this dimension to be apprehended, researchers look at signification, i.e., language is the path taken in order to understand the studied reality. In all cases,

language is not analyzed independently from the social or material situation. Language is historically situated, and its analyses ought to follow a historical perspective. It is analyzed as a human product (i.e., a social, cultural and historical product). In order to do so, we resort to the notion of units of opposites, category that was discussed by Vygotsky, from his study of Marx's writings. This category allows us to understand that language expresses, at the same time, the uniqueness of subjects and the social reality, with all the contradictions that these may exhibit. Just as social reality, language too constitutes the human beings and is constituted by them. Perhaps Vygotsky's words can better clarify this notion:

In our opinion the right course to follow is to use the other type of analysis, which may be called analysis into units. By unit we mean a product of analysis which, unlike elements, retains all the basic properties of the whole and which cannot be further divided without losing them. ... [the living cell] What is the basic unit of verbal thought ?... word meaning. ... The conception of word meaning as a unit of both generalising thought and social interchange is of incalculable value for the study of language and thought (Vygotsky, 1934, *apud* Blunden, 1997).

Therefore, we understand that the conception of word meaning as a unit is of incalculable value for the study of the constitution of human beings – and for their pursuit of individual-social transformation, development, growth. Still, it is an area that requires a lot of thought and investigation since, as Vygotsky (1934, p. 249-250) puts it:

When we attempt to realize this goal [the understanding of the relationship between thought and language in the development of consciousness], a grand and extraordinarily complex picture emerges before us, a picture that surpasses in subtlety the architectonics of researchers' richest expressions. In the words of Tolstoy (1903, p.103), "the relationship of word to thought and the formation of new concepts is the most complex, mysterious, and delicate process of the spirit."

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