SCHOOL CONFLICT, CONFLICT DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION: POST-PANDEMIC INTERSECTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

CONFLITO ESCOLAR, DIÁLOGO E MEDIAÇÃO DE CONFLITOS: INTERSEÇÕES E CONTRIBUIÇÕES PÓS-PANDEMIA

CONFLICTO ESCOLAR, DIÁLOGO DE CONFLICTO Y MEDIACIÓN: INTERSECCIONES Y CONTRIBUCIONES POST-PANDÉMICAS

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ABSTRACT: This study, which proposes an analytical and interdisiplinary approach, provides for the possibility of using conflict mediation – fostering dialogic exercise –, as a subsidiay method of treatment of conflicts arising from scholl life. It is the analysis of the use of dialogic exercise as affirmative action, with an emancipating and transformative purpose. It proposes the diffusion of a cultural change in pedagogical practices, with a differentiated methodology of conflict approach, in favor of pacification and confrontation to violence in schools. Regarding the methodological aspect, regarding the techniques, a bibliographic and descriptive research is carried out, in an interdisciplinary approach. In conclusion, as a result of this activity, the need to create spaces for listening and dialogue as an alternative to pacification in contemporary schools.

KEYWORDS: Scholl culture. Scholl violence. Mediation. Dialogue.

RESUMO: *Este trabalho, que se propõe analítico e interdisciplinar, dispõe sobre a possibilidade da utilização da mediação de conflitos – fomento do exercício dialógico –, como método subsidiário de tratamento dos conflitos oriundos do convívio escolar. É a análise do uso do exercício dialógico como ação afirmativa, possuindo finalidade emancipadora e transformativa. Propõe a difusão de uma mudança cultural nas práticas pedagógicas, com uma metodologia diferenciada de abordagem do conflito, em prol da pacificação e enfrentamento à violência no âmbito escolar. No tocante ao aspecto metodológico, atinente às técnicas, realiza-se uma pesquisa bibliográfica e descritiva, numa abordagem interdisciplinar. Concluindo, como resultado desta atividade, a necessidade da criação de espaços de escuta e diálogo, como alternativa para a pacificação na escola contemporânea.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Cultura escolar. Violência escolar. Mediação. Diálogo.*

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RESUMEN: *Este trabajo, que se propone ser analítico e interdisciplinario, aborda la posibilidad de utilizar la mediación de conflictos - fomentando el ejercicio dialógico - como método subsidiario para abordar los conflictos derivados de la vida escolar. Es el análisis del uso del ejercicio dialógico como acción afirmativa, con finalidad emancipadora y transformadora. Propone la difusión de un cambio cultural en las prácticas pedagógicas, con una metodología diferenciada para abordar el conflicto, a favor de la pacificación y el enfrentamiento de la violencia en el ámbito escolar. En cuanto al aspecto metodológico, relacionado con las técnicas, se realiza una investigación bibliográfica y descriptiva, con un enfoque interdisciplinario. Concluyendo, como resultado de esta actividad, la necesidad de crear espacios de escucha y diálogo, como alternativa a la pacificación en las escuelas contemporáneas*

PALABRAS-CLAVES: *Cultura escolar. Violencia escolar. Mediación. Diálogo.*

Introductory Horizons

Dialogue, as an intrinsic element to the human condition and essential to social relations, becomes indispensable to the "human being" when facing other humanization processes. It becomes an aspect of utmost relevance in the societal and pedagogical world, especially in contemporary times.

The purpose of this paper is to analytically and theoretically resume this social and humanistic ideology. For this verification, with the purpose of bringing elements that can positively help in the pedagogical routine, through a contextual approach, a conceptual deepening, and a specific pedagogical proposal, we discuss conflict mediation as a subsidiary practice from an essentially dialogical perspective.

Through these considerations, we seek to answer the following challenge: How to create space for the exercise of educational dialogue in the school microsystem, taking conflict mediation as a reference, in a context of monologue and silencing?

The present work puts itself right into this problematic, bearing in mind that conflict mediation is an instrumental means that can be useful for the reality of today's society, so marked by conflict, fear, insecurity, intolerance, hate speech, and fragility of human relationships. It is to bring the mediation of conflicts as a subsidiary instrumental to stimulate the dialogical exercise, as a contribution and tool of education and school for the human formation in the current times.

In this work, the theme of conflict mediation is seen in a broader sense, not only as an attempt to reach an agreement or understanding between the parties. It has a broader meaning, aimed at stimulating communication, the recreation of bonds, and changes in the attitudes of those involved. It can be a pedagogical subsidy for all those who are called on a daily basis,

when performing their duties on the school ground, to the challenge of managing conflicts and facing acts of violence in a humanized and non-violent way.

The starting hypothesis is to identify conflict mediation, when well applied, as a triggering tool for the promotion of another culture and logic. It adopts the perspective of an emancipating and transformative education, in which the reflection of the human condition - of oneself and of the other - is present. A culture that values and prioritizes consensus over confrontation, dialogue over silencing, understanding over punishment. A built space oriented to the stimulation of dialogue and tolerance to diversity. Seeking to replace "vertical systems of imposition, characterized by the abusive use of power, for which dialogue and alliances arouse no interest" (MUSZKAT, 2008, p. 09, our translation).

To develop the theme, the reflection presented conjugates sources of diverse knowledge, having an interdisciplinary inspiration. Methodologically, regarding the techniques, the qualitative approach was chosen, justified "[...] above all, for being a suitable way to understand the nature of a social phenomenon" (RICHARDSON, 2010, p. 79, our translation). Under the support of the bibliographical research, according to Lima and Mioto (2007), it is an important methodological procedure in the production of scientific knowledge capable of generating the postulation of different hypotheses or interpretations that will serve as a starting point for further research.

At the limit of its theoretical horizon, the suggested proposal is not to make abrupt changes at school, nor to replace one culture by another totally foreign one, but to rescue the dynamics and the exercise of dialogue and tolerance with dissent and diversity. It analyzes conflict mediation as a strategy to stimulate dialogical practice, providing an opportunity for a better treatment of school conflict and, consequently, a way to confront and reduce its violence rates. It can be a way to create more humane relationships, with healthier, more respectful, more involving, more fruitful connections. Creating "new forms of communication less competitive and rivalry than those that have been used" (MUSZKAT, 2008, p. 11, our translation)

In this way, the present theoretical exercise, far from being conclusive, intends to present itself more as a contribution to the expansion and opening of spaces for debate, bringing to light dialogical and restorative practices - especially conflict mediation - as a basis and pedagogical form of confronting violence and improving the school climate.

Problematizing Scenario: Conflict, Violence and Dialog

In Brazil, the issue of school violence occupied a place of concern during the period before the pandemic. This concern was recurrent for decades. And in that period, according to data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), after a global survey conducted in 33 countries, Brazil ranked top in the ranking of violence in schools[3].

However, in the year 2020, with the pandemic caused by the contagion of the Coronavirus - Covid-19 - whose force of nature affected the entire planet and ignored all cultures - everything had to be re-signified and reinvented. In Brazil, schools stopped working and, consequently, the coexistence among students was abbreviated, and the distance education modality, remotely, occupied space in many schools. Remote work, synchronous and asynchronous classes, hybrid system, availability of material through digital platforms or in printed form for the students, became part of the routine and vocabulary of education in pandemic times (CONCEIÇÃO; PEREIRA; SOUZA, 2021).

Consequently, as a school alternative to the health crisis and with the use of mobile devices, the universe of interpersonal relationships among students, teachers, managers, and employees, in the face of the imposed physical social distance, were much smaller. Nevertheless, multiple losses and human dramas were felt. But the return to face-to-face activities in schools, in this time, acquires an educational horizon.

And when it happens, even if we don't know for sure the dimension and consequence of the impact of confinement in the individual and collective aspects of each subject, everything will be a new period of relearning and overcoming. A reality apart from all the others (behavioral, structural, pedagogical, political, health, etc.) and possible combinations. A new old path that must be relearned. Even because, remembering the words of Paulo Freire (2014, p. 35, our translation), in his centennial, "no one walks without learning to walk, without learning to make the path by walking, remaking, and retouching the dream for which he set out to walk.

Bearing in mind, too, that the Coronavirus pandemic - Covid19 - has exposed scenarios of serious structural realities in Brazil: misery, hunger, fear, multiple deprivations, insecurity, unpredictability, vulnerability (social, psychological, economic), etc. Nothing is certain and definitive about what the post-pandemic will be. There are more doubts than certainties, more

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3   Available: https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2014/08/140822 _salasocial_elements _ocde_ valorizacao_professores_brasil_daniela_rw. Access: 10 Jan. 2020.
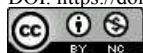
questions than answers. But moments of crisis are potentially promising for change, and the challenge is there.

However, it can be affirmed in the face of the projective scenario, with the opening of schools in the post-pandemic, the relationships between students, teachers and between peers, within the school universe, will happen again. Perhaps not in the same way, or perhaps yes, because everything is uncertain and undefined about the future. But the "ties or networks of ties that link and interconnect people's actions among themselves" (TAVARES, 2004, p. 32, our translation), will tend to return. Even because our formation as a social and essentially political subject also depends on interpersonal relationships.

In this sense, these existentially necessary human relationships will always be permeated with subjectivity and expectations. And at the moment these bonds are created and social interaction is established between the 'selves' and the 'others' - subjects with different beliefs, values, interests, perspectives, feelings, emotions, and experiences -, it is not rare that misunderstandings also arise between them, triggering conflicts. There is no way to ignore this common and natural phenomenon in interpersonal relationships, inherent to the human condition and part of the educational process.

> The school is the scene of a diversity of conflicts, including relationship conflicts, because people of various ages, backgrounds, genders, ethnicities, and socioeconomic and cultural conditions live together there. Thus, everyone in the school must be prepared to face heterogeneity, differences, and tensions inherent in school relationships, which can often generate dissent, disharmony and even disorder (NUNES, 2019. p. 16, our translation).

Nevertheless, it is important to predict that conflict is not violence, they are truly distinct phenomena. Justifying this understanding, it is in this context that the theoretical studies of researcher Jares (2002) are presented, bringing the differentiation between conflict and violence, incorporating the positive perspective for conflicts.

> The confusion occurs because one equates violence with conflict. When violence is only one of the means of resolving the conflict, destroying the other. Violence tends to suppress the conflict, aiming at the elimination of the adversary. Violence is a means, conflict is a state of fact (JARES, 2002, p. 141, our translation).

The common sense understanding of conflict is that it is something negative, socially reprehensible, and sometimes even mistakenly associated with violence. But in a more critical and in-depth analysis, conflict is understood as a condition "consubstantial and inevitable to

human existence. [...] one of the motivating forces of social change and an essential creative element in human relations" (JARES, 2002, p. 135, our translation).

In other words, conflict can be seen as a normal, ordinary, inherent, and even necessary element of society, including the school world. A society without conflict, without different perspectives on the reality that surrounds it, tends to be a resigned, static, colorless world, without utopia. In this sense Chrispino (2007, p. 15, our translation) corroborates the idea of conflict as an integral reality of the social environment:

> [...] Conflict, then, is an integral part of life and social activity, whether contemporary or ancient. Still in the effort to understand the concept, we can say that conflict originates from differences in interests, desires, and aspirations. One notices that here there is not a strict notion of right or wrong, but of positions that are defended against different ones.

This analytical framework captures the essence of the debate about the positive view of conflict. And given the centrality of the object under analysis, Escudero (1992) rightly warns that it is necessary to view conflict at school as a value, since it serves as a basis for pedagogical criticism. It is to face the conflictive phenomenon as an opportunity, making the words of Ceccon *et al*. (2009, p. 28, our translation) pertinent:

> The first indispensable condition for dealing with conflict and preventing violence is to recognize that it exists. Then, it is necessary to differentiate conflict from violence. And finally - and this takes more time - to develop the necessary skills to transform conflicts into opportunities for learning and change.

Making it worthwhile that the strange or contrary positions may give rise to debates and articulate profitable educational practices. And that many of these conflicts can be effectively positive and beneficial in the possibility of significant changes, whether in the personal sphere - between subjects, or in the school environment and organizational climate.

With this emphasis, bringing the identifying dimension of conflict in confrontation with violence, with greater gain in reflexive depth, the words of Izabel Galvão (2008, p. 15, our translation) are opportune:

> [...] seen as negative and destructive, conflict is necessary to life, inherent and constitutive of both psychic life and social dynamics. Its absence indicates apathy, total submission and, in the limit, leads to death. Its non-exploration can lead to violence. Even though it may be confused with it, conflict is not synonymous with violence. Violent can be the means of resolution or the acts that try to express a conflict that cannot be formulated, made explicit.

In this experience of fusion and theoretical analysis, the idea that there is a substantial difference between conflict and violence is formed. Violence, as a rule, even in the school setting, is preceded by conflict. In other words, if in the first moment there may be conflict, there is not necessarily violence. However, poorly resolved and inadequately handled conflict can lead to violence.

The argumentative opinion of Ortega and Del-Rey (2002, p. 143, our translation) is complemented in this regard by claiming that "A conflict is not necessarily a phenomenon of violence, although when it is not dealt with adequately, it can even deteriorate the climate of peaceful coexistence and generate a multiform violence in which it is difficult to recognize the origin and nature of the problem.

In summary, although conflict and violence are phenomena always present in human history, they are distinct and cannot be confused. For the purposes of this study, it must be emphasized that conflict is certainly not an obstacle to social pacification.

When it comes to violence, it is always a complex and multifaceted theme. The term itself is polysemic, involving multiple variables and issues. There is not a single type of violence, but many types, putting the term in the plural - violences (ABRAMOVAY, 2019; NUNES, 2019).

However, it seems plausible to state that "when violence is trivialized or is not identified as a symptom of social pathology, there is a risk of turning it into a cultural value that can be assimilated by children and young people as a way of being, a mode of self-affirmation" (LEVISKY, 1998, p. 27 apud PEREIRA, 2011, p. 14, our translation).

It is necessary to create a learning environment in which, even in the face of a disagreement or conflict, the subjects can dialogue, aware that the expansion of disagreement will not benefit anyone. Nevertheless, although the present time is marked and influenced by social networks, an accelerated world whose language prizes conciseness, it is understood that the dialogical practice, in a way denser and more subjective, continues to occupy a relevant place in relation to the contemporary world. Dialog is, therefore, constitutive to societal life. And the more communicative exercise in front of a qualified conversation, the tendency is less conflict and less school violence.

It can be seen, as far as school violence is concerned, that it manifests itself in the most diverse ways. But for the purpose of this paper, even at the risk of simplification, we can assert that school violence is a badly elaborated response to a conflict. Sposito (1998) states that there is a direct link between violence and the breakdown of dialog. For the author, "violence is every act that implies the rupture of a social link using force. Thus, it denies the possibility of the

social relationship that is installed through communication, using words, through dialog, and through conflict" (SPOSITO, 1998, p. 3, our translation).

Following this path, corroborating in the same line of understanding: "The conflict, and then the violence, arise from the denial of the word and the dialogue in the school space" (CHRISPINO; DUSI, 2008, p. 599, our translation). Thus, there is the dimension and effectiveness of the value of dialogue, as a facilitator of social relations in the school environment.

These delineations mirror, according to Guimarães (2004), that when the word is suppressed, castrated, consequently, the human condition is denied, and violence tends to prevail. And to restore and reverse this situation it is necessary to give back the right to the word, to provide an opportunity for the "expression of the needs and claims of the subjects, by creating collective spaces for discussion, by the healthy search for dissent and difference, in short, by changing educational relations" (GUIMARÃES, 2004, p. 03, our translation).

The arguments gathered in this topic conclusively fulfill the theoretical role of evidencing that it is only through the construction of alternative paths, in face of the inefficiency of the current model, that one can think of the exercise of dialogue - mediating conflicts as an option. Creating spaces for the exercise of listening and speaking, enabling children and adolescents to express their anxieties, feelings, pains, traumas and dreams through dialogue, seeking to learn, from an early age, "that violence cannot guide human relationships and should not be used to solve conflicts" (NUNES, 2019, p. 28, our translation).

Certainly not everything can be solved through mediation, but certainly a lot can be done through dialogue and listening. A possibility to establish and legitimize oneself in recognizing the "selves" and the "others", in an attitude of dialogic openness added to a listening capacity, which can be a possible and alternative way to deal with conflicts and a way to confront violence, fostering dialogic practice.

From School Conflict to Compositional Dialogue

The analysis of school conflict outlined here goes back to the pre-pandemic Covid-19 scenario. It does not contemplate and account for schools in pandemic times. In addition to many being physically closed, others are temporarily no longer attended. But in this temporal transit, between the present, the past, and the future, the scenarios and their historical facets - among them school conflict and violence - have existed and will certainly remain to exist in the post-pandemic.
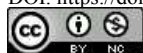
Thus, the past time observed, with all the dialectics involved, becomes a matrix of inquiry for the present time, and a reflective and speculative exercise of prospecting the future, integrating the times that follow. The school is not unscathed by this reality present in all times and spaces. Regarding the school space, in the words of Aquino (1998, p. 7-8, our translation)

> The image, already almost idyllic among us, of the school as a *locus* for fostering human thought - through the recreation of the cultural legacy - seems to have been replaced, most of the time, by the diffuse vision of a field of small civil battles; small but visible enough to cause a kind of collective uneasiness among Brazilian educators.

A recurrent reality in the last decades, with Brazil ranking among the most violent countries when it comes to the school environment. These observations support Boaventura de Sousa Santos' thought when he states that society is at a crossroads. There are two possible options ahead, namely: celebrate the society that exists, keeping it as it is, or submit it to a radical critical analysis, "transgressing the social, cultural, political, epistemological and theoretical frontiers in order to fulfill the emancipatory potential of the promises of modernity" (SANTOS, 2014, p. 6, our translation).

Indeed, there are many reports from teachers and managers about the inability and operational impotence in the face of conflict and violence in schools. Many feel totally insecure, unprepared, and powerless for possible interventions, "a kind of feeling of 'hands tied' when faced with atypical situations" (AQUINO, 1998, p. 9, our translation). And not rarely, in the daily school life, the treatment of problems of violence is referred to agents outside the school.

> From this perspective, the watchword becomes "referral". Referrals are made to the coordinator, to the principal, to parents or guardians, to the psychologist, to the police officer. In a borderline situation, that is, when referral is impossible, the decision, not rarely, is the purge or the veiled exclusion under the form of "transfers" or even the "invitation" to self-dismissal (AQUINO, 1998, p. 8, our translation).

At school, it is necessary to make room for the exchange of experiences and expression of feelings, emotions, interests, contributing to the reflection and formation process of the subjects. In other words, if the school has these instruments and resources, we can see the essential viability of the "dialogue that takes place in the encounter of existences, which are subjects that have the right to their own words, in a relationship of otherness, solidarity, trust. A dialogue that takes place in an encounter of people to be more" (LUCENA; SANTOS, 2019, p. 186, our translation).

It should be stressed that contemporary school culture has not become receptive to language, to fruitful dialogue, to communicative action, to the various forms of expression of the learners. Besides disregarding "youth culture, which is characterized by being dynamic, diverse, flexible, and mobile" (ABRAMOVAY, 2019, p. 26, our translation), it has also made a more effective, participatory, interactive, dialogic, and creative educational process unfeasible consequently.

In effect, it is the educational system reproducing, daily, the culture of silencing, of withdrawal, and of invisibility. It does not collaborate to increase the respect for differences and diversity, the stimulation of dialogue and the sense of otherness, being a generator of worries and frustrations. Structural realities that "are sources of conflicts that also potentiate violence in schools" (ABRAMOVAY, 2019, p. 26, our translation).

Contemporarily, in face of so many complex and challenging scenarios that are unfolding, of a humanity revealing itself to be more and more distant from its own humanity, of the difficulty to dialogue, of the monologic discursive reality overlapping the dialogic one, besides old formulas and methods that no longer seem to provide satisfactory answers, it becomes necessary to reflect and look for alternatives that can subsidize eventual actions that reach to face this uncomfortable context also present in the school scene.

It is important to emphasize, according to Aquino (1998), that the school also produces its violence. There must be a look at its institutional practices, demanding for these some theoretical and methodological decisions. The author mentions three of them: (i) to abandon a totalizing reading, not being able to "conceive the question of violence in the school context as if we were analyzing violence in the family, in prisons, in the streets, and as if all of them were peripheral symptoms of the same irradiating 'center'" (AQUINO, 1998, p. 11-12, our translation); (ii) locate and trace, in the school scenario itself, the scenes of violence experienced; (iii) "describe and analyze the marks of the phenomenon taking as basic device the institutional relations that feed it back" (AQUINO, 1998, p. 12, our translation).

For this to be feasible, it is necessary to bring into the school the experiences, feelings, emotions, interests of its agents and a new way of acting. The school is still far from this dialogical, inclusive, welcoming, and participatory perspective. It embodies a culture of norm and order, reproducing the state's features, through the dissemination of punishment. A focus only on the norm, little open to dialogue, being short of the students' interests and problems. It is the old and colonial authoritarian culture, based on the old refrain: 'it's as simple as that, one tells the other to obey'. Hence the excessive silencing, the absence of dialogue, and the existence of violence that could be avoided.
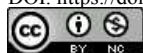
In Brazil today, since ancient times, there remain antidialogical ingredients of our historical past that have not been overcome. A societal culture with roots in slavery, colonialism, authoritarian and perversely unequal violence, in which antidialogical relations remain its hallmark. It is true that there have been changes in recent times, but it has always been a tortuous path, of historical advances and setbacks, marked by broken lines, by fractures and recesses, utopias, and dystopias.

These contextual notes and outlines, the ideas and questions brought by contemporary thinkers in their multiple and complex empirical facets, with all the links and intersections that intertwine, seem to elucidate that the world tends to gain contours of the need for other scenarios, renewed, differentiated. Even because, according to Bauman (2000, p. 14, our translation)

> As the late Cornelius Castoriadis put it, the trouble with our civilization is that it has stopped questioning itself. No society that forgets the art of questioning or lets that art fall into disuse can hope to find answers to the problems that beset it - certainly not before it is too late and when the answers, however correct, have already become irrelevant.

Because the art of questioning and qualified dialogue has fallen into disuse. Therefore, it is necessary to have the ability to redefine paths, to break the imprisonments that blind us. In which the qualitative can prevail over the quantitative, in which the human being and his relations with the other are also valued, in which space is found for his communicational and dialogical humanity. As Morin (2015, p. 33, our translation) states, "the gigantic planetary crisis is the crisis of humanity that cannot reach its state of humanity".

It seems to be the perspective of the societal 'crisis' situation as a conjuncture of opportunity or threat, redemption, or damnation. And in the attempt to transform a crisis scenario into an opportunity, one possible path is to project a beam of light on instruments that can rescue the humanization of people from the school universe, to improve a more promising, healthy, and balanced coexistence, finding among them the option for dialogical exercise.

In a dystopian moment in which humanity is increasingly more distant and difficult to dialogue; in which the monologic discursive reality overrides the dialogic one; in the face of so many authoritarian and complex scenarios that are unfolding; in the "times in which the structural crisis of the market economy extends threatening shadows over the enforcement of fundamental human rights worldwide" (KROHLING, 2010, p. 60, our translation); in the face of old methods and cultural formulas (punishment, expulsion, etc.) that no longer seem to provide satisfactory answers. 60); facing old methods and cultural formulas (punishment,

expulsion, etc.), which no longer seem to provide satisfactory answers, it is urgent, today on our ground, to reflect and seek alternatives that may subsidize eventual actions that reach to face this uncomfortable historical context, present also in the school scene. And that goes through the justifiable need to (re)open paths in this inhospitable tangle, sometimes dystopian.

It is trying to give time to thought, to provocative reflection, to dialogical exercise, to humanism. Trying to analyze what still bothers us or astonishes us, what uninstalls us from resignation, what we believe in, what we can still do. Even because conformism seems to be another characteristic of this time

> The result is postmodern indifference, indifference by excess and not by lack, by hyper-solicitation and not by deprivation. What still manages to astonish or scandalize us? Apathy responds to the plethora of information, to its rotational speed; as soon as it is recorded, an event is immediately forgotten, pushed out by even more sensationalist ones. More and more information, always faster [...] (LIPOVESTSY, 2005, p. 22, our translation).

In this way, education can help in the purpose of the retaking, of the reencounter, of the renewal, of the reconnection - *religare*. Recalling Arendt (2011, p. 247, our translation):

> Education is the point where we decide whether we love the world enough to take responsibility for it and, by such a gesture, save it from the ruin that would be inevitable were it not for the renewal and coming of the new and the young. Education is also where we decide whether we love our children enough not to drive them from their own resources, nor to snatch from their hands the opportunity to undertake something new and unforeseen for us, but instead to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing the common world.

It is to go beyond conflict to compositional dialogue, as the subtitle of this topic. Enabling the school to offer not only a monolithic response to conflict and school violence - punishment/punishment, but to have alternatives and more adequate and contemporary responses that help in the complexity of the phenomenon.

The whole preceding topic, despite its theoretical necessity, can point to a mapping-descriptive character around restorative practices, among them conflict mediation, which "should be encouraged from an early age in schools" (NUNES, 2019, p. 18, our translation). An instrument that can help strengthen interpersonal relationships, enabling the construction of a culture of dialogue, empathy, and humanization in the school environment with repercussions in the community at large.

The dialogical school - the dialogue 'in' and 'of' school

Clinging to the categorizations proposed by Charlot (2002) when referring to violence 'in' 'to' and 'from' school, but in an exercise of readjustment and particular reinterpretation, molding them to the dialogical exercise to meet the interests of the present study, we can perceive distinct dimensions and specificities of the dialogue inside the school.

From this perspective, taking the proposal of the triad of Charlot (2002), readjusted to a pair, one can understand the dialogue 'in' school, as that which occurs in everyday school life, being practiced daily among students, teachers, managers, employees, etc. On the other hand, the dialogue 'of' school would be the one practiced by the institution itself, the dialogical relationship that takes place between the school - established power - and its agents: students, teachers, collaborators.

In both - 'at' and 'from' school, it is not unusual to find faults and noise in these communications. Therefore, the question is not unreasonable: why, with so many languages and pedagogical knowledge, has the school lost the ability to dialogue?

However, it is necessary to evoke and emphasize that when we talk about dialogue, we are not referring to the simple act of talking to the other, of an informal conversation or chat. Dialog, in its relational dimension, surpasses the conversation or chat that touches only the surface. For the purposes of this study, it can be said that dialogue is a more qualified, enhanced conversation, carrying senses and meanings of the moment; that seeks deeper and essential reasons of the human condition itself; that recognizes the 'other' and contributes to change behaviors and actions of the 'selves' and the 'others'.

This previous contextualization signals, with due proportions, the Freirean element of the exercise of dialogicity consolidating itself by the "[...] meeting of interlocutor subjects who seek the signification of meanings" (FREIRE, 1997, p. 69, our translation). Added to the concept, also Freirean (2010), of "being more", in which education should evoke freedom, creativity, autonomy, empowerment and not imposition.

> It is necessary to create spaces for action-reflection, reflection-action that allow the 'being more' to emancipate itself, because this is inscribed in the nature of human beings. [Autonomy, as the maturing of the being for itself, is a process, a becoming. It does not occur on a set date. It is in this sense that a pedagogy of autonomy must be centered on experiences that stimulate decision and responsibility, that is, on experiences that respect freedom (FREIRE, 2010, p. 75-107, our translation).

It is seen here, concerning the school routine, in all its dynamics of relationships, that it remains a privileged space of sociability, interaction and experimentation for the dialogical

exercise. A fertile space that unites laboratory and (co)existential essay, theory and practice, active formative dimension, subjective. Far beyond the functionalist or positivist aspects, it can be a favorable and useful environment for the increase of exercises that favor dialog. Enabling a human relational communication with oneself and with others, with social pedagogical and educational procedures that are more dialogical and less imposing.

> Educators, managers, and school leaderships must have competencies and skills to prevent and manage more serious conflicts through constructive and restorative practices, privileging the principles that guide peaceful ways of preventing and resolving conflicts, such as: horizontality in relationships, mutual respect, the option for dialogue and, above all, the practice of restorative meetings in their schools (NUNES, 2019, p. 21, our translation).

Nevertheless, returning to the problematic pointed out, in a context marked by so many narcissisms, isolationisms, intolerances to diversity, generalized insecurity, antipathy, hate speeches and intolerance, the question remains: how to raise dialogical relations in a monologic and silencing educational environment? For sure "there are no infallible and one hundred percent effective answers; nobody has a magic wand, but rather, there are intervention proposals, whose effects have already been experienced on several occasions, which can be used or not to face a more difficult relationship" (COSTANTINI, 2004, p. 21-22, our translation).

In this scope, the obvious needs to be said, however, in inhospitable, dystopian times: to understand that we inhabit the same common home; that (co)existential places are woven by human relations and everyone and everything is interconnected; that we are essentially equal; and that, dialogue, can give a greater meaning to educational activity, contributing to the experience of humanization.

> In this space [at school], dialog is constituted as a procedure that could contribute to the existential meaning of the human being and, in this way, dialog would help people to live, to coexist and to live well, with themselves and with others. The possibility for dialogue to collaborate with a project that points to the meaning of life, the same should be based on new relationships and drive so that such relationships could be based on responsibility to oneself, to others and to nature (SÍVERES; LUCENA, 2019, p. 12, our translation).

It is to recall Freire when he says that "dialogue imposes itself as the path through which men gain significance as men. Therefore, dialogue is an existential demand" (2014, p. 93). Dialogue is an indispensable element in human and societal relations. It has relevance in the daily lives of people, including at school, as evidenced by Freire:

> It is not in the silence that men are made, but in the word, in the work, in the reflection-action, in this perspective, dialogue only becomes possible between divergent thoughts that converge and seek to establish a pact for conflict resolution, especially at school, the proper place for listening, hearing and speaking. We understand that Democratic Management as a public policy can be re-signified through the perceptions and actions of the school manager and the community (FREIRE, 2014, p. 75, our translation).

The Freirian dialogical view, which dialogues with the principles of conflict mediation, proposes an education centered on dialogicity, on action-reflection, built through the problematization of reality. An education of the being in communion with the 'other', with its 'selves', mediated by the world. In effect, the exercise of dialog takes an improved step forward in relation to the dynamics and exchange of experience and experiences:

> The same [exchange of experience] can provide an encounter with something that is experienced, and, through this bond, the subjects are touched, affected, or surprised. From this relationship, reflection is triggered, an aspect that can contribute to the formation process, because "the knowledge of experience takes place in the relationship between knowledge and human life". This recognition is defined, in a special way, by the reflective potentiality and by the existential quality, contributing with the originality of feeling and with the dialogic possibility between theory and practice, transforming itself into passion. In this sense, experience potentiates passion which, in turn, triggers compassion for a person, a project or a reality to be transformed (SÍVERES; LUCENA, 2021, p. 23, our translation).

It is the school as a privileged *locus of* learning and socialization, a formative center par excellence. It is constituted as a potential and fertile space for a formation process in which dissent and diversity can be understood, values and visions of different worlds can be confronted, collaborating to increase respect for differences and the sense of otherness, positively influencing the formation of individuals.

From this perspective, conflict mediation can be a pedagogical instrument that favors school dynamics, without necessarily excluding the elements that already exist there. In this vein, as Abramovay (2019, p. 30, our translation) states: "A facilitating device for social relationships in the school environment is dialogue. Knowing the other requires the use of the word, of conversation, which provides the establishment of bonds between these school actors".

It is to bring dialogue first to the focus of the debate, and then use its instrumental elements, such as conflict mediation, keeping in mind that "dialogue is a dynamic inherent to the human condition. Therefore, every human being is born through a loving dialogue, goes on developing through existential dialogues and ends his human journey dialoguing with transcendence" (SÍVERES; NEVES JÚNIOR; LUCENA, 2019, p. 124, our translation). Essentially, we are beings dedicated to dialogue.

Conflict Mediation and Dialogical Experience

There are not a few scholars who have focused on dialogical interactions and their value to society. In current times, the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1929-) brings his theory of communicative action, based on the understanding that "communicative acts enable the development of emancipatory actions. [...] This connection between language and action is an essential aspect of the theory of communicative action" (AUBERT *et al.,* 2018, p. 83, our translation). And dialogue, according to Habermas, can be an exceptional possibility, to get out of prisons, opening doors to interact with the world of life, in a freer, more rational, cooperative, and democratic way.

The commitment to dialogue is also in the work and thought of the Austrian philosopher, writer, and pedagogue Martin Buber. Author of numerous works, Buber (2001) brings important contributions on a primary theme in his studies - dialogue. In his work, the dialog in the (co)existential attitude of the 'I' with the 'you' guides his reflection. Life is based on the encounter, that is, on a relationship between the "I-Thou".

However, from this perspective, according to Buber (2001), when the 'I' puts itself in the place of the 'other', it seeks to understand human behavior, establishing a true dialogue and learning between the parties. That is, the existential condition of the human being, with all its greatness, potential, precariousness, limitations, fears, and frailties, is brought as a path and an existential dialogical enterprise.

In dialogue there is a relational posture between subjects, of an attitude of recognition of the other, of responsibility, respect and reciprocity between the 'I' and the 'you', potentiating the community and democratic dimension (SÍVERES; NEVES JÚNIOR; LUCENA, 2019).

It is to keep in mind the exercise of dialogicity, anchored in the Freirian proposal, as its relational human dimension and as an existential requirement, potentially contributing to a more liberating, transformative education, in which subjects can "be more", consolidating the "[...] meeting of interlocutor subjects who seek the meaning of meanings" (FREIRE, 1997, p. 69, our translation). A conceptual and conjunctural Freirian perspective, which dialogues perfectly with the procedural proposal of conflict mediation.

To this extent, much has been written and documented about conflict mediation. Its characteristics, importance, structure, guiding principles, etc. have become strong arguments, supported by scholars on the subject and by successful experiences in several countries around the world. In Brazil, especially in the last decade, most of the discussion and theoretical construction has arisen in the legal field (although mediation was not born there). However,

over time, this theme has gained other spaces and approaches, transcending the judicial field and, with reasonable flux, entering the educational and pedagogical field as well.

It must be emphasized, throughout history and literature, that there are few expressions and forms that refer us to the confrontation of situations of conflict and violence, either in the school space or in social reality. There are also few alternative, differentiated, and non-violent forms, of which we can mention some: restorative practices, conflict mediation, dialogue circles or peace building circles, systemic pedagogies, family constellations, school of forgiveness and reconciliation, family group conferencing, South African Zwelethemba methodology (*Ubuntu*[4]), among other forms and expressions.

All these practices deal with a differentiated intervention to deal with the social dimension of conflict, supported by principles such as the culture of peace, consensus, restoration, cooperation, and solidarity among human beings (GOMES PINTO, 2005).

Unlike the traditional repressive-disciplinary model, where the school assumes all the management of the conflict, seeking at the end the application of a sanction-punishment, the restorative methodology, including conflict mediation, follows a different flow. It emerges seeking to establish a new perspective in relationships - making dialogue, otherness, empowerment, empathy, a non-violent form of resolution possible. Values and practices so necessary and vital nowadays.

It is another way of dealing with the human, with the school subjects and their interpersonal relationships, so as not to feed back the spiral of conflict and violence. In this aspect, with a new perspective on conflict resolution, restorative practices hold a prospective look, aiming at the future and not the past. According to Nunes (2019), when dealing with how to restore peace in schools, he understands that:

> The repressive violent confrontation is replaced by a non-violent form of resolution through restorative practices, which end up becoming pedagogical actions, as should really be done at school, which is a place for socializing and learning a culture of peace. [...] Through traditional resources, a student who commits an infraction is punished, but this punishment does not provoke, in general, a reflection on the causes that are at the origin of the conflict. Through restorative practices, by contrast, the parties are heard and can address the causes of the conflict, restoring dialogue and preventing similar behavior in the future. (NUNES, 2019, p. 21, our translation).

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[4] Term with no exact definition in Portuguese. South African practice used to work through the conflicts associated with *apartheid*. It is understood that a person who has *ubuntu* is someone who is generous, helpful, and caring. Thus, to state that a person has ubuntu is a compliment. The fundamental mark of the South African process clings that in this culture an illicit-crime will never be an isolated process, but rather a fact that involves the entire community and threatens the stability of the group (SICA, 2007, p. 103).

Not for another reason, the Practical Manual on Restorative Justice for School and Community Mediator Teachers, prepared by the Public Ministry of the State of São Paulo (2012)[5] , assumed restorative practices as a possibility of a public policy in the state school network. Referred manual attests its importance, illustrating some aspects that restorative practices help. They are:

> **Restorative practices...**
> - *help young people in (re)discovering their self-esteem and the value they have for themselves, their families, and the world around them;*
> - *are excellent for young people to take individual responsibility for their behavior and their lives;*
> - *develop in the young person critical thinking, problem-solving skills, assertiveness, and empathy for others;*
> - *improve the relationships in the school environment and the relationships between student and teacher, student and family;*
> - *improve the classroom environment by reducing tensions;*
> - *develop a cooperative environment and a sense of community at school;*
> - *solve problems that interfere with the school climate and educational processes, unlike punitive methods that do little to reduce recidivism or negative behavior in schools;*
> - *allow the teacher more time to take care of the tasks for which he or she has been trained.*

In particular, the proposal we open to discussion and theoretical study, among other restorative practices, is conflict mediation. To understand this compositional means, we bring some of its theoretical assumptions and specific methodological details.

The considerations in this paper converge to the need to create spaces for studies and intervention procedures based on more constructive theoretical and methodological foundations, such as restorative practices. It is also important to emphasize the need for the training of teachers who seek to develop strategies for the resolution of conflicts in a non-violent way in the school routine.

> The challenge is to build a multicultural pedagogy that respects differences and does not reproduce stereotypes, exclusions, and social patterns incompatible with respect for diversity. The school must include in its agenda a creative and inclusive education (NUNES, 2019, p. 21, our translation).

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[5] Available: http:///http://www.educacao.sp.gov.br/spec/. Access: 10 Feb. 2019.

In this quality, the viability of a more effective, participatory, democratic, and humanized educational policy is in force, as already occurs in other states in Brazil. It becomes a possibility of a new approach to an old challenge of our school.

Indeed, among the many analytical avenues, conflict mediation has been the subject of much research and controversy. If conflict permeates society since its very beginning, so too has mediation been part of societal life for a long time. Its emergence can be linked to the first civilizations.

Inscribed in various cultures and traditions for several centuries, according to Moore (1998, p. 32, our translation), conflict mediation has permeated almost every culture in the world: "Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and many indigenous cultures have long and effective traditions in the practice of mediation."

In a simplified way, mediation can be understood as a method or technique, where a third person who is not part of the conflict, called mediator, facilitates the dialogue between the subjects in conflict to try to reach an acceptable resolution of the problem by both parties. For Nunes (2019, p. 81, our translation) "mediation is a meeting between the mediator and the parties involved aimed at reestablishing dialogue between the parties, seeking to build solutions from the needs of those involved."

The expression mediation means to be in the middle, in the center, symbolically equivalent to the point of equilibrium. It is up to the mediator, the one who stands in the middle of the subjects in conflict, and it is up to him to exercise the role of "[...] reestablishing the interrupted communication between the conflicting parties, fostering dialogue, allowing the creation of options generating a suitable response(s) to the demand" (SPENGLER, 2018, p. 104, our translation).

However, it is important to consider that everyone should be involved in the same purpose. It will be difficult to mediate if one of the parties does not accept or if the school structure does not guarantee dialogue.

> The school must develop a context of meaning congruent with mediation. It will be of little use that children and young students are sensitized and trained for a culture of dialogue, listening and pacification of interpersonal relationships, if the discourse of educators and teachers is inconsistent with this stance (MORGADO; OLIVEIRA, 2009, p. 50, our translation).

Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, it should be noted that conflict mediation cannot only be understood as a technique or alternative procedure to reach an agreement. It is necessary to keep in mind a broader sense of mediation, as a communicational means, which

for Beleza (2011, p. 53, our translation), conflict mediation can go beyond a simple mode of conflict resolution, becoming a "process of multiple orientations: creation and recreation of the social bond, regulation of everyday conflicts, changes (or exchanges) between people or institutions, and improvement of relationships in general."

Once the mediation of conflicts is situated at the theoretical level, it is necessary to apprehend its principles and practical contours for a better understanding. Of course, there are dozens of models and currents that can be followed with conflict mediation, but in essence the procedure is deeply marked by flexibility. It is possible to point out its constitutive informative principles.

The notes collected in this topic, results of incursions from bibliographic studies in fields of knowledge such as Law and Pedagogy, fulfill a role of synthesis of principles of conflict mediation that have been consolidated as guidelines. Although there is no consensus as to the number of principles spheres, with variations from author to author, we understand the four cited below as essential. They are: i) informality, ii) dialogic participation, iii) mediator impartiality, iv) commitment to confidentiality.

i) When **informality**, conflict mediation facilitates dialogue between the parties without sterile formalisms, and there are no fixed, rigid, and insurmountable rules for the conduct of the procedure. The intention is to create a calm, relaxed environment in which the subjects feel as uncomfortable as possible and open to listening and dialogue.

ii) **Dialogic participation** results from the commitment made by those involved to speak sincerely and in good faith about their difficulties and expectations regarding the conflict they are experiencing. It focuses on the empowerment of the subjects. And the questions and answers brought up must lead to everyone's reflection. To this end, one should speak more in the first person: "I feel", "I would like", "I think", thus avoiding accusations and judgments (MUSZKAT, 2008). They should also allow themselves to listen to each other, avoiding abuse, verbal insults, or attacks of any kind. In addition to making efforts to resolve the disagreement jointly.

iii) **Impartiality** arises from the need for the mediator not to take sides or to privilege any of the parties involved. Avoiding preferences, prejudices, value judgments and ensuring parity of opportunities, acting impartially, without giving differential treatment to any of the parties, that is, treat everyone equally. "Everyone there is equal and should be treated with dignity and mutual respect" (NUNES, 2019, p. 83, our translation). It is also recommended that the mediator does not have personal and close ties with the parties, exercising greater independence and avoiding being labeled as partial.

iv) As for the **commitment to confidentiality**, the mediator must undertake to keep confidential the content of the conversations developed there, not transmitting information to third parties, not even to superiors. Thus creating a friendly, safe and reliable climate for all, enabling "that people feel comfortable to reveal intimate, sensitive information [...] that certainly do not externalize in a procedure guided by publicity" (TARTUCE, 2016, p. 211, our translation).

Conflict mediation does not necessarily seek for the parties to reach an agreement or a definitive resolution of the problem that involves them, but it has the scope for the subjects to understand the value of dialogue, of looking at it from the other's point of view. It is a change in attitude that can help avoid the creation of new conflicts.

This posture is healthy and formative, since the beginning of living together in society, for many, happens through the interaction in the school community. It is in these first formative and informative steps, in front of the 'other', that one begins to learn to exercise respect, otherness, and 'learn to be together and to live together' (DELORS, 1996).

Final considerations

From the discussions we present in this paper, through theoretical references, we intend to point out the restorative practices - especially conflict mediation - as an alternative way to promote a culture of social pacification, having an emancipating, transforming, and liberating purpose. The restorative ideology, through dialogical exercise, allows a different look for the treatment of conflicts and confrontation of violence in the school environment.

In fact, through conflict mediation, it is possible to offer the opportunity for students to listen, express themselves, and build a dialogue, so that the subjects involved can express themselves openly. It is the (re)meeting of the 'selves' and the 'others' who accept and recognize each other with rights and duties. It does not seek punishment or reprimand, but otherness, proposing the restoration of lost harmony and the bonds recompositing. It is the fostering of a pedagogical and educational practice that helps, subsidiarily, in the daily life and school climate.

And as for school violence, theoretically, we have it as a complex phenomenon and that is commonly triggered by the breakdown of dialogue and use of force between subjects. The resumption of dialogue is a more appropriate alternative to mitigate acts of violence. The dialogical exercise, aided by conflict mediation, enables the problematization of the reality experienced and the possibility of transforming this reality through behavioral change.

For sure, we must emphasize that conflict mediation is not only a technical procedure, but it transcends this, and can be contemplated as a differentiated vision of societal culture starting at school, in the initial formative years of future citizens. A procedure that can create a new ethic in relationships, based on alterity, on respect for difference, with resonance in the democratic ideals.

To conclude, without wishing to close any perspective, this work was produced with an eye to the future. In the expectation that it may awaken, in some way, the interest of professionals and academics in the subject. Pointing out that restorative practices, especially conflict mediation, persist as an alternative, subsidiary form, and should be adapted to local peculiarities, but that it can be a legitimate and possible bet for the planning of interventions and treatment of conflicts.

Thus, we close this work invoking an ancient Latin expression of relevant humanistic importance: "*Discere, docere, seminare*" (Learn, teach, sow). In this spirit, we try to learn and teach something that we consider favorable for contemporary times, in face of a multifaceted and emerging culture; to sow a new action in defense of humanities and their dignity, searching for instrumental realities that are less excluding, but more humanly dialogic and pacifying. In which other relational forms, nuanced by the resonances and dissonances that are anchored in the different humanities, allow us to overcome fear and dystopian scenarios, enabling visions and projects of hope.

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