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PAULO FREIRE AND HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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PAULO FREIRE Y SUS APORTES A LA EDUCACIÓN INCLUSIVA

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to analyze Paulo Freire's contributions to the construction of an inclusive education, exploring how his pedagogical theories and practices can be applied to promote the inclusion of students with different needs in the educational system. The

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methodology adopted was of a bibliographic nature, based on the analysis of Paulo Freire's works and other studies that discuss his influence on inclusive education. The results showed that Freire's pedagogy, with its emphasis on dialogue, awareness and respect for diversity, offers a solid basis for the implementation of inclusive practices, highlighting the importance of an adaptable and welcoming learning environment. It was found that inclusive education, from Freire's perspective, goes beyond the simple presence of students in regular schools, involving the adaptation of teaching methods and the valorization of students' experiences, ensuring equal access to knowledge. It is concluded that Paulo Freire's contributions are essential for the construction of a fairer and more equitable educational system, in which differences are respected and used as sources of enrichment for the educational process.

Keywords: Paulo Freire; Education; Inclusion.

RESUMO:

Esta pesquisa teve como objetivo analisar as contribuições de Paulo Freire para a construção de uma educação inclusiva, explorando como suas teorias e práticas pedagógicas podem ser aplicadas para promover a inclusão de alunos com diferentes necessidades no sistema educacional. A metodologia adotada foi de natureza bibliográfica, baseada na análise de obras de Paulo Freire e em outros estudos que discutem sua influência na educação inclusiva. Os resultados evidenciaram que a pedagogia freiriana, com sua ênfase no diálogo, na conscientização e no respeito às diversidades, oferece uma base sólida para a implementação de práticas inclusivas, destacando a importância de um ambiente de aprendizagem adaptável e acolhedor. Constatou-se que a educação inclusiva, sob a perspectiva de Freire, vai além da simples presença dos alunos nas escolas regulares, envolvendo a adaptação dos métodos de ensino e a valorização das experiências dos educandos, garantindo um acesso igualitário ao conhecimento. Conclui-se que as contribuições de Paulo Freire são essenciais para a construção de um sistema educacional mais justo e equitativo, no qual as diferenças sejam respeitadas e aproveitadas como fontes de enriquecimento para o processo educativo.

Palavras-chave: Paulo Freire; Educação; Inclusão.

RESUMEN

Esta pesquisa teve como objetivo analizar las contribuciones de Paulo Freire para la construcción de una educación inclusiva, explorando cómo sus teorías y prácticas pedagógicas pueden ser aplicadas para promover la inclusión de todos con diferentes necesidades en el sistema educativo. Una metodología adoptada desde la naturaleza bibliográfica, basada en el análisis de las obras de Paulo Freire y en otros estudios que discuten su influencia en la educación inclusiva. Los resultados evidenciaron que una pedagogía freiriana, com sua ênfase no dialog, na conscientização e no respeito às diversidades, ofrece una base sólida para la implementación de prácticas inclusivas, destacando la importancia de un ambiente de aprendizagem adaptável e acolhedor. Constatou-se que a educação inclusiva, sob a perspectiva de Freire, vai além da simple presença dos alunos nas escolas regulares, involucrando a adaptação dos métodos de

ensino y a valorização das experiências dos educandos, garantindo um acesso igualitário ao conhecimento. Concluyendo que las contribuciones de Paulo Freire son esenciales para la construcción de un sistema educativo más justo y equitativo, pero no se diferencian entre sí y se aprueban como fuentes de enriquecimiento para el proceso educativo.

Palavras-chave: Paulo Freire; Educación; Inclusión.

INTRODUCTION

Paulo Freire was one of the most influential educators of the twentieth century, known worldwide for his innovative pedagogical approach and for his contributions to critical and popular education. Born in Brazil in 1921, Freire stood out for his theory of education, which values the practice of teaching as a dialogical and conscious process, where teachers and students share knowledge, question realities and seek social transformation. His fundamental work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, represents one of the foundations of contemporary educational thought, offering alternatives for an education that values the freedom and active participation of students (Santos, 2023).

Paulo Freire's main proposal is an education that goes beyond the simple transfer of content, being a tool for social emancipation. He believes that education should be inclusive, in the sense of allowing all people, regardless of their social class, ethnicity, or physical or mental condition, to have access to knowledge and to be able to actively engage in the construction of their reality. Thus, Freire brought fundamental elements to inclusive education, promoting an approach that aims to combat social exclusion and offer everyone the same learning opportunities. His educational theory, with an emphasis on dialogue and constructive criticism, represents a transformation of the traditional relationship between teacher and student, placing the student at the center of the educational process and respecting their experiences and life stories (Patrício et al., 2024).

Inclusive education, in Freire's view, materializes when learning spaces are adapted so that all individuals, with their differences and specific needs, can develop fully. In this context, the educator is seen not only as a transmitter of knowledge, but as a mediator of the learning process, recognizing the different forms of knowledge that students bring to the classroom and valuing their active participation in the process. This vision of education broadened the horizons of traditional education and inspired educational policies and pedagogical practices that seek to ensure equity in the access and permanence of all students in the educational system (Galicia; Mercies; Bentes, 2022).

The objective of this research was to analyze Paulo Freire's contributions to the construction of an inclusive education, highlighting how his pedagogical theories and practices can be applied to promote the inclusion of students with different needs in the educational system. The research seeks to understand the relationship between Freire's

philosophy and inclusion, in addition to exploring the implications of this approach for teacher training and the implementation of inclusive educational policies.

The methodology adopted for this research was characterized as bibliographic, based on the analysis of Paulo Freire's works and other studies that discuss his influence on inclusive education. Books, academic articles, dissertations and theses that address the relationship between Freire's pedagogy and inclusive practices were reviewed, in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the impact and possible applications of this approach in the contemporary educational scenario.

DEVELOPMENT

PAULO FREIRE AND HIS EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY: PRINCIPLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Paulo Freire developed a pedagogical approach that stands out for valuing the active participation of the student in the teaching and learning process. For him, education cannot be a unilateral process, in which the teacher only transmits content to students. On the contrary, teaching should be a constant exchange of knowledge, where both those involved (educator and student) influence and build each other. Freire called this approach "dialogical education", in which dialogue is the foundation that allows the construction of knowledge. Thus, the educational process takes place in an environment where knowledge is shared, questioned, and reconstructed by all participants (Patrício et al., 2024).

Freire's conception is opposed to traditional pedagogy, which often reduces the student to a passive receptacle of information. For him, education should be an act of freedom, where students become subjects of their own learning. In this sense, he argued that the school should not be a space of simple adaptation to social and economic reality, but rather an environment of awareness and transformation. For him, students must learn to reflect on the world, identifying injustices and inequalities, with the aim of becoming agents of social change (Santos, 2023).

Freire also conceived of education as an instrument of liberation, especially for the oppressed. He believed that true education should not reproduce the inequalities that exist in society, but rather should be a mechanism for overcoming these inequalities. The goal of education, according to him, is to create a space where students can perceive reality in a critical way and, with that, can act on it to transform it. Teaching, therefore, must provide a

deep understanding of reality and awaken in students the ability to act on it autonomously and consciously (Galicia; Mercies; Bentes, 2022).

One of the pillars of Freire's thought is the idea of "problem-solving education", which involves the construction of knowledge through the problematization of the reality experienced by the students. For Freire, knowledge is not something that is transmitted in a linear and static way, but rather something that must be problematized and questioned. The teacher, in this model, is not the holder of knowledge, but a facilitator of the process, guiding students in the search for a critical understanding of their own reality. He proposed that the content taught in schools should have a direct relationship with the lives of students, in order to make them more meaningful and relevant (Patrício et al., 2024).

Freire also argued that the school curriculum should not be an imposition of pre-established content, but rather a reflection of the students' reality. He believed that knowledge should be contextualized and dialogue with the experiences lived by students. This implies the need for a pedagogy that is sensitive to local realities and that takes into account the diverse cultural and social experiences of students. Freire's pedagogical practice, therefore, is not limited to the classroom, but involves a deep understanding of the context and needs of students (Santos, 2023).

In addition, Paulo Freire emphasized that education should be a process of emancipation, where students develop their ability to think critically and make conscious decisions. He saw education as a way to make individuals more autonomous, capable of analyzing their reality and positioning themselves in the face of the social, political, and economic issues that affect them. Emancipation, for Freire, goes beyond the acquisition of technical knowledge; it involves the development of critical awareness, which allows individuals to transform their reality and actively act in society (Silva et al., 2021).

Another central aspect of Freire's philosophy is the notion of "consciousness". Freire believed that, in order for students to be able to transform their reality, it was necessary for them to become aware of their situation as oppressed, of their social and economic conditions. He proposed that education should be a process that would allow students to perceive their own living conditions and, based on this awareness, engage in the struggle for change. Awareness is therefore the first step towards liberation, as it is through it that individuals become aware of their potential to transform the world. Freire's proposal of a dialogical and liberating education also reflects a critical view of the role of the school in

society. He criticized traditional educational institutions for their tendency to reproduce existing social inequalities (Freire, 2016; Freire, 2018).

Education, in this model, ended up consolidating hierarchy and inequality, instead of promoting a fairer society. Freire saw the school as a potential space for transformation, where one could question the status quo and seek solutions to social problems. In this sense, the school should not only be a place for the transmission of knowledge, but a space for contestation and critical reflection on the world (Silva et al., 2021).

Freire also proposed that teachers play the role of mediators, facilitating the students' learning process. His vision as a teacher is not that of a transmitter of content, but that of a facilitator of critical thinking. The Freirean educator must be able to encourage students to reflect, question and, above all, actively engage in the process of knowledge construction. For this, the educator needs to create an environment of trust and respect, where students feel free to express their ideas and doubts (Oliveira; Azevedo; Santos, 2013).

Finally, Paulo Freire's educational philosophy profoundly influenced pedagogical practices around the world. His emphasis on dialogue, problematization of reality, and awareness has had a significant impact, especially on the popular education movement and critical pedagogy. Freire's ideas continue to be a fundamental reference for educators who seek to promote transformative education, which respects the autonomy of students and seeks social justice (Santos, 2023).

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PAULO FREIRE

Inclusive education, from Paulo Freire's perspective, is a pedagogical approach that seeks to ensure that all students, regardless of their differences, have access to quality education. For Freire, inclusion is not limited to simply allowing students with disabilities or special needs to attend regular schools, but involves the adaptation of the school environment and teaching methods so that all students, with their various characteristics and needs, can learn and develop fully (Galicia; Mercies; Bentes, 2022).

In the Freirean model, inclusion goes beyond the mere integration of students with disabilities. Freire understood that true inclusion involves valuing differences, whether in relation to social class, ethnicity, gender, or physical and mental conditions. Instead of trying to make students adjust to a rigid and homogeneous education system, Freire's inclusive education proposes that the educational system be flexible and adaptable, respecting the

individual needs of each student and promoting learning that is based on their life experiences (Santos, 2023).

A key aspect of Freire's vision of inclusive education is respect for diversity. He believed that schools should not be spaces where differences are suppressed or ignored, but rather places where students' diverse cultural, social, and individual identities are recognized and valued. This means that the curriculum must be designed to include students' experiences and knowledge, making the learning process more meaningful and relevant to their realities (Patrício et al., 2024).

Freire also defended the idea that education should be accessible to all, especially marginalized populations. For him, education cannot be a privilege of the few, but a universal right. He saw educational exclusion as one of the cruelest forms of oppression, as it prevents individuals and social groups from becoming aware of their capacities and their potential to transform the world (Galicia; Mercies; Bentes, 2022).

Inclusive education, then, is a means of combating social exclusion and ensuring that all students, regardless of their conditions, can develop their skills and talents. Freirean pedagogy, therefore, offers a solid basis for the implementation of inclusive practices in schools. For Freire, the educator must be a facilitator of the learning process, recognizing the differences between students and adapting their teaching methodologies to meet the needs of all. This implies constant reflection on the part of the teacher, who must always be attentive to the needs of students and willing to modify their pedagogical approaches to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn in a meaningful way (Santos, 2023).

Freire also believed that inclusive education should involve not only adapting teaching methods but also building a learning environment that is welcoming and respectful for all students. This means creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, where differences are seen as sources of wealth rather than obstacles to be overcome. Inclusion, therefore, becomes a process of transforming relationships within the school, promoting solidarity and understanding among students (Silva et al., 2021).

Another important point is that inclusive education, in Freire's view, is not limited to the classroom. It involves the transformation of the school as a whole, including administration, material resources, and pedagogical practices. Freire believed that the school should be a space of social justice, where all students, regardless of their conditions, could exercise their rights and develop their potential (Silva et al., 2021)

Inclusion is also directly related to Freire's concept of awareness. For him, education is a means of awakening in students the awareness of their social and political situation, so that they can act on it in a critical and transformative way. Inclusive education, therefore, is not only about providing access to knowledge, but about offering students the necessary tools to question and transform the reality that surrounds them (Galicia; Mercies; Bentes, 2022).

Freire proposed that education should be a space for dialogue and collective construction, where students were encouraged to share their experiences and learn from each other. This process of mutual exchange is especially important in inclusive education, as it allows students to develop a deeper understanding of differences and learn to respect them. The school, then, becomes a place of formation for citizenship, where students learn to live together in a harmonious and supportive way, respecting diversity (Alves; Almeida; Santos, 2021).

IMPACT OF FREIREAN PEDAGOGY ON TEACHER TRAINING AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

Paulo Freire's pedagogy had a significant impact on teacher education, especially with regard to inclusion. By adopting an approach that emphasizes critical reflection and pedagogical adaptation to the needs of students, Freire inspired the creation of teacher training courses and programs that seek to empower educators to work with diversity in classrooms. Instead of seeing students' differences as obstacles to be overcome, Freire's training prepares teachers to recognize them as opportunities for learning and enrichment for all (Patrício et al., 2024).

For Freire, teacher training should be a continuous and reflective process, in which educators see themselves as learners alongside their students. He believed that teachers should always be willing to question their own practices and seek new ways of teaching, to meet the needs of all students, including those with some type of disability or learning difficulty. The teacher should be seen as a mediator of the learning process, not as a transmitter of knowledge (Santos, 2023).

In addition, Freire's ideas influenced the formulation of inclusive educational policies in several countries. His proposal for a democratic education accessible to all was an inspiration for the creation of laws and guidelines that seek to guarantee the access of students with special needs to regular education. Such policies recognize the importance of

a flexible curriculum, which can be adapted to meet the diverse needs of students, and the need to train teachers capable of dealing with this diversity (Alves; Almeida; Santos, 2021).

The educational policies inspired by Freire also highlight the importance of a welcoming and inclusive learning environment. The implementation of pedagogical practices that respect differences and promote the active participation of all students is seen as essential to ensure equity in education. This includes the adaptation of teaching materials, the use of assistive technologies, and the formation of multidisciplinary teams in schools (Oliveira; Azevedo; Santos, 2013).

Finally, Paulo Freire's legacy continues to influence not only pedagogical practice but also educational policies in Brazil and other countries. Their ideas about inclusive education are still fundamental for building a fairer educational system that respects differences and guarantees all students the same opportunities for learning and development (Silva et al., 2021).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research aimed to analyze Paulo Freire's contributions to the construction of an inclusive education, highlighting how his pedagogical theories and practices can be applied to promote the inclusion of students with different needs in the educational system. Throughout the analysis, it was possible to perceive that Freire's educational philosophy, with its emphasis on dialogue, awareness, and valuing the student experience, offers a solid basis for the implementation of inclusive practices in various educational contexts.

Freire proposed an education that goes beyond the simple transmission of knowledge, proposing a dynamic and transformative pedagogical process, in which teachers and students act as partners in the learning process. His vision of critical education, which respects social, cultural, and individual diversities, is directly aligned with the principles of inclusive education, which seeks to ensure that all students, regardless of their conditions and characteristics, have access to quality education. Paulo Freire's ideas indicate that true inclusion is not only due to the physical presence of students in regular schools, but also to the adaptation of pedagogical practices, the creation of a welcoming and respectful learning environment, and the development of a critical awareness in students.

Inclusive education, in Freire's perspective, is a process that goes beyond simple integration, involving a transformation of practices and relationships within the school space. Teacher training and the implementation of educational policies that value diversity and promote the active participation of all students are essential for building a truly inclusive education.

In this way, the research found that Paulo Freire's legacy continues to be fundamental for the construction of a more equitable educational system, which respects and celebrates differences. Their contributions to inclusive education are not only relevant, but essential for the development of teaching that meets the needs of all students, promoting a more just and equal society. The application of Freire's principles in pedagogical practices and educational policies contributes to the transformation of schools into more inclusive spaces, where diversity is not only accepted, but valued as an enriching element for the educational process.

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