

## THE CONVERGENCE BETWEEN THE TEACHINGS OF PAULO FREIRE AND THE PRINCIPLES OF DECOLONIAL EDUCATION: PATHS TO EMANCIPATION AND RESISTANCE TO EDUCATIONAL COLONIALISM



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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the convergence between the principles developed by Paulo Freire throughout his trajectory as a theorist of education and the foundations that characterize decolonial education. We recognize that educator Paulo Freire has always been committed to the education of socially, economically and culturally disadvantaged populations. In addition, he sought to implement educational models that aimed to overcome hierarchy in the classroom, criticizing "banking education" and placing the subjective experiences of students and educators at the center of pedagogical discussions. In this sense, Freire sought to transcend an "objectified" education, going beyond capital, with the aim of promoting social emancipation. In view of this, we ask: how do Freire's principles converge with those of decolonial education? To answer this question, we theoretically use works by Paulo Freire, such as "Education as a Practice of Freedom" (1967), "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (1974), "Awareness" (1979), "Pedagogy of Indignation" (2000) and "Pedagogy of Autonomy" (2011), as well as literature on decolonial education. Methodologically, we adopted a qualitative approach, based on the contributions of Haguette (1995) and Minayo (2001), and carried out a bibliographic research according to Gil (1999), employing a comprehensive analysis inspired by Weber. We conclude that Freirean and decolonial principles converge to the extent that both promote a liberating, critical education committed to social transformation, valuing the knowledge and cultures of the oppressed and seeking to overcome the power structures imposed by colonialism.

**Keywords:** Decolonial Education. Paulo Freire. Social Emancipation. Liberating Education.

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## INTRODUCTION

### DECOLONIAL EDUCATION AND FREIREAN PEDAGOGY: CONVERGENCES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF CRITICAL AND EMANCIPATORY LEARNING

The creation of an education focused on the subjects who are part of the context requires a break with the traditional model, which has historically been linked to a Eurocentric and hierarchical logic of knowledge. Paulo Freire criticized this structure when he stated that "[...] banking education, by trying to maintain the immobility of the students, transforms them into empty containers to be filled with the dominant ideology" (Freire, 1974, p. 68). Thus, education that proposes to be critical and liberating must consider the subjects in their totality, recognizing their knowledge and experiences as central to the learning process. This perspective is aligned with decolonial thinking, which seeks to dismantle the structures of power and knowledge imposed by colonialism, promoting an education based on dialogue and the appreciation of epistemological diversity. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos reinforces, "[...] valid knowledge is not only that which follows Western scientific parameters, but also that which emerges from the experiences of historically marginalized groups" (Santos, 2009, p. 23).

Modern Western thought is abyssal thinking. It consists of a system of visible and invisible distinctions, with the invisible ones being the basis for the visible ones. The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two distinct universes: the universe 'on this side of the line' and the universe 'on the other side of the line'. The division is such that 'the other side of the line' disappears as reality, becomes non-existent, and is even produced as non-existent. Non-existence means not existing in any form of being relevant or understandable. Everything that is produced as non-existent is radically excluded because it remains outside the universe that the accepted conception of inclusion itself considers (Santos, 2007, p. 23).

Decolonial education emerges as a response to the colonality of knowledge, which imposes a homogeneous model of knowledge and invalidates local and ancestral knowledge. According to Quijano (2015), "[...] Eurocentrism is not only a cognitive perspective of Europeans, but a hegemonic imposition that naturalizes the experience of individuals and prevents them from questioning this structure" (p. 85). Freire's pedagogy and decolonial education converge in the valorization of historically subordinated knowledge, promoting an education rooted in the experiences of the subjects. By emphasizing the importance of dialogue and problematization, Freire reinforces the need for an education that not only informs, but also forms critical citizens engaged in the transformation of reality. In this sense, Walsh's (2006) approach highlights that "[...] critical

interculturality must be understood as a political project of resistance and reconstruction, not only as a recognition of diversity" (p. 38).

Decolonial education and Freirean pedagogy are not hermetic ways of thinking about education. They are not limited only to university circles. On the contrary, they seek, above all, to dispute common sense, the ways in which social subjects give intelligibility to their social and cultural practices. Thus, such thoughts seek to install themselves in people's daily lives, experiences and culture. For Freire, education is a practice of freedom, and as such, it should enable subjects to be agents of their own history. Interculturality means a dynamic process that involves permanent relationship, communication and learning between cultures, considering mutual legitimacy, symmetry and equality, as well as an exchange that is built between culturally different people, knowledge and practices. Thus, interculturality requires as much space for negotiation and translation, unveiling social, economic and political asymmetries, as well as power relations that need to be recognized and confronted (Walsh, 2001, p. 10).

In this sense, the construction of a curriculum that integrates the knowledge of native peoples, quilombola communities and urban peripheries is fundamental for a truly emancipatory education. As Walsh (2021) points out, "[...] Decolonial education and Freirean pedagogy are not limited only to university circles; on the contrary, they seek to dispute common sense and the ways in which social subjects give intelligibility to their cultural practices" (p. 10). This educational model proposes to break with the dichotomy between educator and student, enabling a continuous and meaningful exchange of knowledge that contributes to the construction of collective critical thinking. As Paulo Freire emphasizes, "[...] teaching is not transferring knowledge, but creating the possibilities for its production or construction" (Freire, 1996, p. 25).

The implementation of an education that respects and values the subjects of the context in which they are inserted requires public policies committed to social justice and the overcoming of educational inequalities. As Walsh (2001) emphasizes, "[...] interculturality requires both space for negotiation and translation and the recognition and confrontation of the power relations that perpetuate coloniality" (p. 10). Thus, for education to become an instrument of emancipation, it must be rooted in the knowledge, struggles, and resistance of historically marginalized peoples, building paths to a democratic society. As Freire points out, "[...] education cannot be neutral; it is a political act and must be at the service of the transformation of reality" (Freire, 1967, p. 101).

Embracing public policies in teacher training is indispensable in dealing with teacher professionalization, so much so that the few curricular components of the teaching degrees that show the contents of the policies in the amendments are neglected by most students. So, I provoke: "what is my perspective of society as an educator?" Disturbing our teaching identity is fundamental to continue the search for forging our

body-territory. A body-territory based on an aversion to public policies tends not to know how to use its condition as the protagonist of its own history, it tends to prioritize the anesthesia of the body-territory. It wastes the potential to criticize and live in a world with democratic perspectives and guarantees of diversity and equality in the face of differences (Miranda, 2021, p. 88).

The object of study of this research focuses on the convergence between Freirean pedagogy and decolonial education, investigating how both share fundamental principles for the construction of a critical and liberating education. Paulo Freire, in his work, highlights that "[...] Education does not transform the world. Education changes people. People transform the world" (Freire, 2011, p. 21). Thus, understanding the intersection between these two theoretical currents allows us to identify pedagogical practices that break with the coloniality of knowledge, promoting learning that values the knowledge of historically marginalized groups. The research seeks to demonstrate that both Freire and the theorists of decoloniality emphasize the need for an education built from the experiences and contexts of the students, ensuring a truly democratic and emancipatory education.

The objectives of this research include analyzing the contributions of Freirean pedagogy to decolonial education, identifying pedagogical strategies that enable the valorization of local knowledge, and understanding how critical interculturality can be incorporated into the educational environment. According to Walsh (2001), "[...] interculturality means a dynamic process that involves permanent relationship, communication and learning between cultures, considering mutual legitimacy, symmetry and equality, as well as an exchange that is built between culturally different people, knowledge and practices" (p. 10). This perspective reinforces the importance of a curriculum that promotes dialogue between different epistemologies, challenging the hierarchies imposed by the Eurocentric model and encouraging the construction of knowledge that reflects the reality of the students.

In this text we propose that there is a way to resist the prevailing model, bringing the concept of 'interculturality' to the school space. This anti-hegemonic concept was born from the political discussions of Latin American social movements and struggles for an action to transform the problem. Epistemologically, interculturality means redefining the relations between society and cultures, according to Walsh (1998): "**Interculturality**<sup>16</sup> (*emphasis added*) tries to break with the hegemony of

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<sup>16</sup> Interculturality is a fundamental concept for the construction of a critical and inclusive education, as it seeks to establish an equitable dialogue between different cultures, recognizing and valuing historically marginalized knowledge. This perspective breaks with the Eurocentric and hierarchical logic of knowledge, promoting a teaching that respects the multiple epistemologies present in society. As Walsh (2001) points out, "[...] interculturality means a dynamic process that involves permanent relationship, communication and learning between cultures,

the dominant culture over the subordinate one, strengthening traditionally excluded identities to build, in everyday life, a coexistence of respect and legitimacy among all groups in society". This concept goes beyond the school, positioning itself in a space of social struggle that seeks to ensure the transformation of the social hegemonic order. In critical interculturality, asymmetrical conditions of power are recognized, highlighting educational conflict as a place of generation of resistance: it breaks the model of banking education and promotes practices of counter-hegemonic resistance, transforming educational practice and overcoming the mechanisms of reproduction of the patterns of the dominant culture (Velez, 2006, p. 107).

The research is guided by the following starting question: in what way do the principles of Freire's pedagogy converge with the foundations of decolonial education? This question seeks to elucidate how both approaches are interrelated in the construction of an education aimed at social emancipation. Freire argues that "[...] no truly liberating pedagogy can remain distant from the oppressed, that is, it can make them unfortunate beings, objects of a humanitarian 'treatment'" (Freire, 1974, p. 43). In this way, the research proposes to examine how education can act in the deconstruction of structural inequalities, providing learning that recognizes the cultural and epistemological diversity of the subjects.

The relevance of this research is based on the need to rethink the current educational model, considering that the coloniality of knowledge<sup>17</sup> still perpetuates exclusions and inequalities. By proposing an approach that values the knowledge of traditional peoples, quilombola communities and social movements, this research contributes to the construction of a less unjust education. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos points out, "[...] valid knowledge is not only that which follows Western scientific parameters, but also that which emerges from the experiences of historically marginalized groups" (Santos, 2009, p. 23).

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considering mutual legitimacy, symmetry and equality" (p. 10). In this way, interculturality is not restricted to the recognition of diversity, but implies a political and pedagogical commitment to overcome structural inequalities, promoting more democratic educational spaces that are representative of diverse cultural identities. See references.

<sup>17</sup> The coloniality of knowledge refers to the imposition of a Eurocentric model of knowledge that marginalizes and disqualifies other forms of knowledge, such as that produced by indigenous peoples, Africans and traditional communities. This concept, developed by Aníbal Quijano, highlights how colonialism was not restricted to political and economic domination, but also perpetuated itself in the sphere of knowledge, establishing an epistemic hierarchy that devalues non-Western knowledge. According to Quijano (2015), "[...] Eurocentrism is not only a cognitive perspective of Europeans, but a hegemonic imposition that naturalizes the experience of individuals and prevents them from questioning this structure" (p. 85). In this way, the coloniality of knowledge continues to operate in school curricula and academic institutions, maintaining the hegemony of Western thought and silencing other epistemologies. Overcoming this logic requires a process of decolonization of knowledge, which recognizes and values ancestral, community and local knowledge as legitimate forms of knowledge production. See: QUIJANO, Aníbal. *Coloniality of power, Eurocentrism and Latin America*. In: LANDER, Edgardo (Org.). *The coloniality of knowledge: Eurocentrism and social sciences*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2015. p. 227-278.



## **QUALITATIVE AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESEARCH IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS**

Qualitative research plays a fundamental role in the educational field, as it allows us to understand the social, cultural and subjective dynamics that permeate the teaching and learning processes. Unlike quantitative methods, which seek generalizations based on numerical data, qualitative research values the depth of the analysis and the interpretation of the meanings attributed by the subjects involved. As Minayo (2007) points out, "[...] qualitative research is especially useful when it comes to understanding complex phenomena, which cannot be reduced to measurable variables" (p. 14). Thus, this approach is essential to explore interpersonal relationships, pedagogical practices, and the challenges faced by educators and students.

Qualitative research answers very particular questions. In the social sciences, it is concerned with a level of reality that cannot or should not be quantified. In other words, it works with the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes (Minayo, 2007, p. 21).

In addition, qualitative research allows for a more in-depth look at educational realities, providing a closer understanding of the participants' experiences and narratives. As Gil (2008) states, "[...] social research, especially in its qualitative aspect, enables the analysis of educational phenomena based on the interaction between subjects and the context in which they are inserted" (p. 26). This means that qualitative research is not limited to describing data, but seeks to interpret the senses and meanings of educational experiences, considering the multiple perspectives involved in the teaching-learning process.

Another relevant aspect of qualitative research in the educational field is its ability to give voice to the research subjects, allowing their experiences and perceptions to be valued in the process of knowledge construction. According to Minayo (2007), "[...] qualitative research has as its fundamental principle the valorization of the narratives and the subjectivity of the participants, respecting their worldview and their ways of interpreting reality" (p. 25).

That said, bibliographic research is a fundamental step in the development of an academic study, as it allows the researcher to build a solid theoretical repertoire on the topic investigated. As Gil (2008) points out, "[...] bibliographic research enables the analysis of educational phenomena based on the interaction between subjects and the context in

which they are inserted" (p. 26). Thus, this approach provides theoretical subsidies that guide the formulation of the research problem, ensuring that the investigation develops from a well-founded conceptual base.

The main advantage of literature search lies in the fact that it allows the researcher to cover a much wider range of phenomena than he could research directly. [...] Bibliographic research is also indispensable in historical studies. In "many situations, there is no other way to know past facts than based on secondary data" (Gil, 2008, p. 51).

In addition, literature search plays an essential role in defining and refining the starting question, which guides the entire investigation. According to Gil (2008), "[...] the first procedure adopted in a bibliographic research, as in any other type of research, consists in the formulation of the problem that one wishes to investigate" (p. 51). This initial stage requires the researcher to critically analyze what has already been produced on the topic, identify gaps in existing knowledge, and formulate a clear and feasible research question.

Another relevant aspect of bibliographic research is its ability to expand the researcher's repertoire, allowing him to understand different perspectives on the object of study. As Minayo (2007) states, "[...] disciplined, critical and broad bibliographic research is one of the pillars of scientific investigation, as it enables the researcher to dialogue with different approaches and deepen his understanding of the theme" (p. 36). This process of literature review not only theoretically supports the research, but also contributes to the construction of a more critical and reflective look at the phenomenon studied.

That said, bibliographic research is indispensable for the organization of the other steps of the investigation, as it provides a methodological structure that guides the collection and analysis of data. As Gil (2008) points out, "[...] strictly speaking, for the proper formulation of the problem, a preliminary bibliographic review is required" (p. 73). In this way, by ensuring that the research is supported by a consistent theoretical basis, the bibliographic review plays a decisive role in the construction of scientific knowledge and in the formulation of new contributions to the educational area.

The comprehensive analysis developed by Max Weber is essential for research in the field of educational sciences, as it emphasizes the importance of understanding the subjective meaning of individuals' actions. For Weber, education should seek to interpret the motivations and meanings attributed by the subjects to their own actions. As Weber (1969) points out, "[...] all human behavior is included as the actor attributes subjective



meaning to it" (p. 110). In this way, comprehensive analysis allows social investigation to go beyond the mere description of phenomena, seeking to understand the internal logic of human actions.

The relevance of this approach to the object of study of this research lies in the fact that understanding education and pedagogical processes requires special attention to the meanings attributed by teachers and students to their experiences. Weber distinguishes between actual understanding and explanatory understanding, the former referring to the interpretation of the immediate meaning of an action and the latter to the analysis of the underlying motives that lead an individual to act in a certain way. According to Weber (1969), "[...] the understanding of human behavior requires capturing the evidence of the meaning of an activity" (p. 110). This perspective becomes crucial to analyze educational practices and their social implications in a deeper way.

## **THE CONVERGENCE BETWEEN PAULO FREIRE'S TEACHINGS AND THE PRINCIPLES OF DECOLONIAL EDUCATION**

The fundamental principles of Freire's pedagogy are based on the idea that education should be a liberating and dialogical process, breaking with the traditional structures that perpetuate oppression and alienation<sup>18</sup>. Freire criticizes the so-called "banking education", in which students are treated as passive recipients of knowledge. According to him, "[...] Banking education, as we have emphasized, implies a kind of anesthesia, inhibiting the creative power of the students. Problematizing education, of an authentically reflective character, implies a constant act of unveiling reality" (Freire, 1974, p. 80). In this sense, Freire proposes a pedagogy based on critical awareness, allowing students to become active subjects in the construction of knowledge and social transformation.

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<sup>18</sup> For Paulo Freire, the concept of alienation is directly related to oppression and the denial of the critical consciousness of the subjects. In the educational context, alienation occurs when the learner is treated as a passive recipient of information, with no room for reflection or active participation in the learning process itself. This teaching model, which Freire calls "banking education", perpetuates a logic of domination, in which knowledge is transmitted in a mechanical and decontextualized way, preventing individuals from critically understanding their reality and acting to transform it. According to Freire (1974), "[...] the alienated man does not reflect on his own condition, because he is immersed in a structure that dehumanizes him and keeps him imprisoned to naïve consciousness" (p. 43). Thus, overcoming alienation requires a liberating education, based on dialogue, problematization and recognition of the student as an active subject in the construction of knowledge and social transformation. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *Education as a practice of freedom*. 17. Ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1974.

The narration, of which the educator is the subject, leads the students to the mechanical memorization of the narrated content. Moreover, the narration transforms them into 'vessels', into containers to be 'filled' by the educator. The more they 'fill' the containers with their 'deposits', the better educator he will be. The more they allow themselves to be meekly 'filled', the better learners they will be. In this way, education becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositaries and the educator the depositor. Instead of communicating, the educator makes 'announcements' and deposits that the students, mere incidences, patiently receive, memorize and repeat. This is the 'banking' conception of education, in which the only margin of action offered to students is to receive deposits, keep them and file them. [...] In this distorted view of education, there is no knowledge. Knowledge only exists in invention, in reinvention, in the restless, impatient, permanent search that men make in the world, with the world and with others (Freire, 1974, p. 66).

Paulo Freire's criticism of banking education is fundamental to understanding his liberating pedagogical project. He argues that this model transforms students into mere passive recipients, making critical reflection and autonomy impossible. According to Freire, "[...] The narration, of which the educator is the subject, leads the students to the mechanical memorization of the narrated content. Moreover, the narration transforms them into 'vessels', into containers to be 'filled' by the educator" (Freire, 1974, p. 66). This teaching model reproduces structures of domination and perpetuates the alienation of students, making them incapable of critically interpreting reality and transforming it.

Faced with this scenario, Freire proposes a problematizing pedagogy, based on the dialogical interaction between educator and student. He emphasizes that "[...] problematizing education, unlike 'banking' education, is based on creativity and stimulating critical reflection, allowing students not only to be spectators, but active agents in the construction of knowledge" (Freire, 1974, p. 80). Freire's proposal aims, therefore, to overcome educational oppression, transforming the school into a space of social and political emancipation, where knowledge is built collectively and not imposed vertically.

Another central aspect of Freire's pedagogy is the relationship between education and awareness. For the theorist, education should enable subjects to understand their position in the social structure and acquire critical awareness. He states that "[...] Literacy and awareness are never separated. A principle that, in no way, needs to be limited to literacy, since it is valid for any and all types of learning" (Freire, 1967, p. 6). In this way, Freire argues that learning should not be restricted to the acquisition of technical skills, but rather promote the ability to interpret and transform the world.

Liberating education, according to him, must also overcome the dichotomy between educator and student, promoting a horizontal relationship based on dialogue. He argues

that "[...] the educator is no longer the one who only educates, but the one who, while educating, is educated, in dialogue with the learner who, by being educated, also educates" (Freire, 1974, p. 78). Thus, the educational process becomes a joint act of learning, in which both educator and student are active subjects in the production of knowledge. This approach breaks with the authoritarian logic of traditional education and reaffirms the commitment of Freire's pedagogy to social emancipation.

Thus, Freire points out that education cannot be neutral, as it is always at the service of a political and ideological project. He emphasizes that "[...] respect for students cannot be based on the concealment of the truth – that of the politicized nature of education and on the affirmation of a lie: its neutrality" (Freire, 2007, p. 40). Thus, education must assume a commitment to social justice and to the formation of critical and active subjects. Freire's pedagogy, therefore, proposes an educational model that values dialogue, awareness, and the transformation of reality, breaking with structures of oppression and promoting a truly liberating education.

Only dialogue, which implies critical thinking, is also capable of generating it. Without it, there is no communication and without it there is no true education. The one that, by overcoming the contradiction between educator and students, is established as a gnosological situation, in which the subjects focus their knowing act on the knowable object that mediates them. Hence, for this conception as a practice of freedom, its dialogicity begins, not when the educator-learner meets the learner-educators in a pedagogical situation, but rather, when the learner asks himself about what he is going to dialogue with them. This restlessness about the content of dialogue is the restlessness about the programmatic content of education (Freire, 1974, p. 97).

Another central principle of Freire's pedagogy is dialogue, which should be the basis of the educational process. For Freire, dialogue is an act of love and humility that enables the exchange of knowledge between educator and student. He states that "[...] The living word is existential dialogue. It expresses and elaborates the world, in communication and collaboration. Authentic dialogue – recognition of the other and recognition of oneself, in the other – is a decision and commitment to collaborate in the construction of the common world" (Freire, 1974, p. 14). In this way, education cannot be an authoritarian practice, but rather a space of mutual interaction, where educator and student learn together and build significant knowledge.

The word is understood here as word and action; it is not the term that arbitrarily indicates a thought that, in turn, discusses itself apart from existence. It is a meaning produced by 'praxis', a word whose discursiveness flows from historicity - a living and dynamic word, not an inert, exanimous category. Word that says and

transforms the world. The living word is existential dialogue. It expresses and elaborates the world, in communication and collaboration. Authentic dialogue - recognition of the other and recognition of oneself, in the other - is a decision and commitment to collaborate in the construction of the common world. There are no empty consciences; for this reason, men do not humanize themselves, but by humanizing the world (Freire, 1974, p. 14).

Paulo Freire's excerpt emphasizes the word as a central element of educational praxis<sup>19</sup>, highlighting that language is not only an instrument of communication, but a means of transforming the world. For Freire, "[...] The living word is existential dialogue. It expresses and elaborates the world, in communication and collaboration" (Freire, 1974, p. 14). This view reinforces the importance of an educational process that is not limited to the transmission of content, but that enables the resignification of knowledge through the active engagement of subjects in the construction of reality. Education, therefore, cannot be a static and immutable practice; it must be rooted in the historicity<sup>20</sup> of individuals and in the social context in which they are inserted.

Within this perspective, dialogue is fundamental for the humanization of the human being. Freire criticizes any form of education that imposes knowledge unilaterally, without allowing the interaction and protagonism of the students. According to him, "[...] there are no empty consciences; that is why men do not humanize themselves, but by humanizing the world" (Freire, 1974, p. 14). This understanding leads to the need for a dialogical pedagogy<sup>21</sup>, in which the subjects of the educational process are encouraged to reflect on

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<sup>19</sup> For Paulo Freire, the concept of praxis is fundamental for liberating education, as it represents the union between action and reflection in the search for social transformation. Different from a simple isolated practical or theoretical activity, praxis requires a critical understanding of reality so that the action is intentional and aimed at the emancipation of the subjects. In this sense, Freire argues that "[...] praxis, understood as the action and reflection of men on the world to transform it, is fundamental for overcoming oppression" (Freire, 1987, p. 43). In this way, education should be a space where educator and students collectively build knowledge, problematizing their reality and becoming agents of social change. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 17. Ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1987.

<sup>20</sup> For Paulo Freire, the concept of historicity is directly linked to the ability of human beings to perceive themselves as historical subjects, capable of intervening and transforming the reality in which they live. Unlike a fatalistic view of history, which sees it as something immutable and determined, Freire emphasizes that history is constructed by human action and, therefore, can be modified by critical praxis. According to the author, "[...] men and women are historical beings because, inserted in a concrete time and space, they can reflect on their reality and transform it" (Freire, 1996, p. 50). In this way, liberating education should foster the historical awareness of students, allowing them to understand the structures that condition their lives and actively act in the construction of a more just and democratic future. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogy of autonomy: knowledge necessary for educational practice*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1996.

<sup>21</sup> Paulo Freire's dialogic pedagogy is based on the principle that knowledge is collectively constructed through dialogue between educator and student, breaking with the traditional hierarchy of banking education. This pedagogical model values the exchange of knowledge and experiences, allowing subjects to recognize themselves as active participants in the learning process. For Freire (1987), "[...] it is in dialogue that knowledge is constituted, in the critical interaction between subjects, in the problematization of reality and in the collective search for transformation" (p. 78). In this way, dialogic pedagogy not only humanizes education, but also strengthens the critical awareness of students, making them agents of change in their communities and societies. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 17. Ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1987.

their realities and to act on them. This means that knowledge cannot be something crystallized and imposed, but must emerge from the dialogue between life experiences and academic content, promoting meaningful learning.

The concept of praxis, present in Freire's thought, implies the inseparability between theory and practice, between reflection and action. Education, in this sense, should enable individuals to critically understand their reality and act to transform it. As Freire points out, "[...] true education makes us aware of the contradictions of the human world, whether structural, superstructural or interstructural, contradictions that impel man to move forward" (Freire, 1974, p. 14). This principle reflects the need for an education that not only provides information, but that encourages the autonomy<sup>22</sup> of students and their ability to intervene in the world in a critical and purposeful way.

Thus, Freire argues that education should be understood as a political act, as it is always linked to a project of society and the struggle for social justice. Educational neutrality, for him, is an illusion, because every pedagogical practice involves ethical and political choices. He states that "[...] education as a practice of freedom" should be a process of emancipation, in which subjects are encouraged to recognize themselves as historical agents capable of transforming their living conditions (Freire, 1967, p. 14). In this way, Freire's pedagogy is opposed to any form of authoritarian and mechanistic teaching, proposing an educational approach that values autonomy, critical thinking, and commitment to social transformation.

Education as a practice of freedom is another pillar of Freire's pedagogy, as he argues that the school should be a space of emancipation, and not of submission. In his work *Education as a Practice of Freedom*, Freire argues that "[...] Literacy and awareness are never separated. A principle that, in no way, needs to be limited to literacy, since it is valid for any and all types of learning" (Freire, 1967, p. 6). Thus, education cannot be restricted to the mere transmission of content, but must enable students to have a critical understanding of their reality, enabling them to act on it and transform it.

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<sup>22</sup> For Paulo Freire, the concept of autonomy is directly related to the student's ability to think critically and act consciously in the transformation of their reality. Liberating education must encourage autonomy, breaking with authoritarian pedagogical practices that reduce the student to a passive receiver of information. Freire states that "[...] teaching is not transferring knowledge, but creating the possibilities for its production or construction" (Freire, 1996, p. 25). Thus, autonomy in education is not restricted to individual independence, but is based on dialogue and the active participation of subjects in the collective construction of knowledge and society. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogy of autonomy: knowledge necessary for educational practice*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1996.

Here is an essential principle: literacy and awareness are never separated. A principle that, in no way, needs to be limited to literacy, as it is valid for any and all types of learning. Literacy deserves to be highlighted because it is the initial field of the author's work, where most of the experiences are found, in addition to being a theme of the greatest social and political relevance in Brazil, as in many other Third World countries. The learning of the techniques of reading and writing or the techniques of handling the plow or using fertilizers (as well as the learning of the ideas of an action program) - in short, all learning must be closely associated with becoming aware of the real situation experienced by the student (Freire, 1967, p. 6).

The relationship between literacy and awareness, as presented by Paulo Freire, reflects one of the fundamental principles of critical pedagogy: education as a dialogical and transformative process. Freire argues that "[...] Literacy and awareness are never separated. A principle that, in no way, needs to be limited to literacy, since it is valid for any and all types of learning" (Freire, 1967, p. 6). This means that learning to read and write should not be a mechanical and decontextualized act, but a process that leads the student to critically understand his reality and act on it. For Freire, literacy is, above all, an instrument of liberation, as it allows historically marginalized subjects to interpret the world and intervene in it.

In addition, Freire's pedagogy emphasizes that learning must be associated with the concrete experience of the students, avoiding a merely technical and alienating approach. As Freire points out, "[...] the learning of the techniques of reading and writing or the techniques of handling the plow or using fertilizers [...] must be closely associated with the awareness of the real situation experienced by the student" (Freire, 1967, p. 6). This principle reinforces the importance of an education linked to the needs and challenges of the social reality, ensuring that the knowledge acquired has a practical and emancipatory meaning.

Freire also rejects any conception of teaching that treats students as mere passive recipients of knowledge, advocating an approach that recognizes them as active subjects of the educational process. He states that "[...] respect for the freedom of students – who are never called illiterate, but rather literate – even precedes the organization of circles" (Freire, 1967, p. 5). This evidences the author's concern with breaking with stigmas that reinforce social and intellectual exclusion, ensuring that students are protagonists of their own learning and develop a critical awareness of their condition in the world.

In this way, Freire emphasizes that education should be a practice of freedom, and not an instrument of domination. He argues that "[...] education as a practice of freedom must break with the mechanisms of oppression that have historically denied the



marginalized the right to knowledge and active participation in society" (Freire, 1967, p. 7). Thus, Freire's pedagogy presents itself as a political and pedagogical project committed to social justice and the emancipation of the oppressed, reaffirming that true education not only transmits content, but transforms lives.

The politicized nature of education is another fundamental aspect in Freire's pedagogy, as he rejects the idea of a neutral education. For Freire, "[...] respect for students cannot be based on the concealment of the truth – that of the politicized nature of education and on the affirmation of a lie: its neutrality" (Freire, 2007, p. 40). The author emphasizes that every educational practice is inserted in a social and political context and, therefore, must assume a commitment to the transformation of reality, combating inequalities and promoting social justice.

Respect for students cannot be based on the concealment of the truth – that of the politicized nature of education and the affirmation of a lie: its neutrality. One of the beauties of educational practice is precisely in the recognition and assumption of its politicized nature that leads us to live real respect for students by not trying, surreptitiously or rudely, to impose our points of view on them. (Freire, 2007, p. 40).

The analysis of Paulo Freire's quote on the politicized nature of education requires the understanding that the educational act is, by its very nature, a political act. Freire categorically states that there is no neutrality in education, as it always carries with it an intentionality, whether it is emancipatory or reproducing the structures of domination<sup>23</sup>. As he points out, "[...] It is impossible, in fact, the neutrality of education. And it is impossible not because 'troublemakers' and 'subversive' teachers determine it. Education does not become political because of the decision of this or that educator. It is political" (Freire, 2011, p. 73).

The attempt to conceal this politicized nature of education configures, according to Freire, a form of oppression, as it seeks to mask reality and prevent students from developing a critical consciousness about the world. He argues that "[...] washing one's hands in the face of oppression is to reinforce the power of the oppressor, it is to opt for him" (Freire,

<sup>23</sup> For Paulo Freire, structures of domination are social, political, and cultural mechanisms that perpetuate oppression, preventing individuals from developing a critical and emancipatory consciousness. These structures operate through banking education, authoritarianism, and the denial of dialogue, keeping the oppressed in a condition of passivity and conformism. Freire argues that "[...] domination is maintained, among other factors, by the internalization, by the dominated, of the ideology of the dominators" (Freire, 1987, p. 34). Thus, to break with these structures, education must be liberating, promoting critical reflection and the transformative action of the subjects about their reality. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 17. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1987.

2011, p. 74). In this way, educators who claim neutrality end up, in practice, perpetuating the dominant logic and reinforcing existing inequalities.

The beauty of the educational practice mentioned by Freire lies precisely in the recognition of this political dimension, which must be assumed with ethical responsibility and commitment to social transformation. For Freire, "[...] Teaching practice, specifically human, is profoundly formative, and therefore ethical. If one cannot expect their agents to be saints or angels, one can and should demand seriousness and rectitude from them" (Freire, 2011, p. 43). This means that educators committed to social justice cannot avoid the role of critical mediators of knowledge and reality.

Furthermore, the refusal to impose points of view in a dogmatic manner, as Freire emphasizes, should not be confused with the omission in the face of injustices. For him, "[...] I cannot deny you or hide my position from you, but I cannot ignore your right to reject it. In the name of the respect I owe to the students, I have no reason to omit myself, why I hide my political option, assuming a neutrality that does not exist" (Freire, 2011, p. 47). Thus, the role of the educator is not that of an indoctrinator, but that of someone who creates conditions for the student to build his own knowledge and critical awareness.

Thus, the politicity of education is intrinsic to its practice, and denying this dimension is equivalent to denying the emancipatory function of teaching itself. Freire summarizes this idea when he states that "[...] If education cannot do everything, education can do something fundamental. If education is not the key to social transformations, it is also not simply a reproducer of the dominant ideology" (Freire, 2011, p. 75). Thus, it is up to the educator to assume his historical responsibility, recognizing that his work does not take place in a vacuum, but in a concrete context of social struggles and disputes.

In view of this, education must be an instrument of awareness and engagement, allowing the oppressed to recognize themselves as historical subjects and protagonists of their own lives. Freire points out that "[...] true education makes us aware of the contradictions of the human world, whether structural, superstructural or interstructural, contradictions that impel man to move forward" (Freire, 1974, p. 14). Thus, Freire's pedagogy presents itself as a path to the emancipation of subjects, promoting an education committed to social transformation and the construction of a more just and democratic world.

Awareness is not based on consciousness, on the one hand, and the world, on the other; on the other hand, it does not want a separation. On the contrary, it is based on the relationship between consciousness and the world. Taking this relationship

as the object of their critical reflection, men will clarify the obscure dimensions that result from their approach to the world. The creation of the new reality, as indicated in the previous critique, cannot exhaust the process of consciousness-raising. The new reality must be taken as the object of a new critical reflection (Freire, 1979, p. 12).

Paulo Freire's quote on the relationship between consciousness and the world emphasizes the need for continuous critical reflection on reality and the creation of new transformative perspectives. He reinforces that awareness "[...] it does not consist in 'standing in front of reality' by taking a falsely intellectual position. Awareness cannot exist outside of 'praxis', or rather, without the act of action-reflection" (Freire, 1979, p. 12).

This dynamic relationship between consciousness and the world implies that subjects must go beyond the naïve view of reality to become critics and protagonists of their history. Freire states that "[...] Awareness is a historic commitment. It is also historical consciousness: it is a critical insertion in history, it implies that men assume the role of subjects who make and remake the world" (Freire, 1979, p. 13). Thus, liberating education should lead the student to understand his condition and act on it.

The creation of a new reality, mentioned by Freire, is not an automatic process, but a continuous construction that requires reflection and action. He observes that "[...] Awareness is not a state, but a process in permanent development. The more men become aware, the more deeply they insert themselves into reality and the more capable they become of transforming it" (Freire, 1979, p. 15). Thus, awareness should not be treated as an end goal, but as a constant means of evolution of human consciousness.

In addition, critical awareness implies the unveiling of the oppressive structures that condition the reality of the subjects. Freire points out that "[...] it is not possible to raise awareness among the people without a radical denunciation of dehumanizing structures, which marches together with the proclamation of a new reality that can be created by men" (Freire, 1979, p. 16). This commitment to social transformation requires an ethical and political position from the educator.

In fact, Freire reinforces the importance of praxis in education, because theory without practice becomes empty. He argues that "[...] education cannot be just a discourse about reality; it must be an instrument of intervention in this reality to change it" (Freire, 1979, p. 18). This conception reaffirms the need for teaching that not only informs, but also forms critical and active subjects.

## PATHS TO EMANCIPATION AND RESISTANCE TO EDUCATIONAL COLONIALISM: FREIRIAN PRINCIPLES AND DECOLONIAL EDUCATION

The liberating education proposed by Paulo Freire seeks to break with the shackles of oppression and promote critical and emancipatory learning. This educational model is based on the idea that education cannot be an instrument of domestication, but rather of liberation. Freire emphasizes that "[...] Education does not transform the world. Education changes people. People transform the world" (Freire, 1996, p. 25). This perspective is directly aligned with the principles of decolonial education, which questions the imposition of hegemonic knowledge and proposes the valorization of local knowledge<sup>24</sup> and epistemologies marginalized by colonialism.

The convergence between Freire's pedagogy and decolonial education occurs in the valorization of knowledge as a liberating practice. Both paradigms criticize the neutrality of education and argue that teaching should be based on the social and cultural context of the students. As Silva and Oliveira (2021) state, "[...] Decolonial education and Freirean pedagogy are not limited only to university circles; on the contrary, they seek to dispute common sense and the ways in which social subjects give intelligibility to their cultural practices" (p. 29). This approach seeks to re-signify the role of the educator, transforming him into a mediator who helps students in the construction of their own critical knowledge.

Social emancipation is thus any action that aims to denaturalize oppression (to show that it, in addition to being unjust, is neither necessary nor irreversible) and to conceive it with the proportions in which it can be fought with the resources at hand. Learned ignorance, the ecology of knowledge and betting are the ways of thinking that are present in this action (Santos & Meneses, 2009, p. 482).

In addition, decolonial education, as well as Freire's pedagogy, denounces the coloniality of knowledge, which perpetuates asymmetrical power relations within educational structures. According to Santos and Meneses (2009), "[...] colonialism was not

<sup>24</sup> Local knowledge plays an essential role in the construction of a decolonial and Freirean education, as it represents historically marginalized knowledge that needs to be valued in the educational process. Liberating education, as defended by Freire, cannot be limited to a Eurocentric curriculum and must recognize the importance of knowledge arising from the experiences of students. As Freire (1974) points out, "[...] there is no more or less knowledge, there is different knowledge" (p. 72), reinforcing that all forms of knowledge must dialogue in the collective construction of learning. In this sense, decolonial education proposes a break with the coloniality of knowledge, which hierarchizes epistemologies and disqualifies popular and traditional knowledge. For Quijano (2015), "[...] the imposition of Eurocentrism as the only legitimate form of knowledge resulted in the invisibility of the practices and knowledge of various peoples" (p. 85). Thus, integrating local knowledge into teaching not only strengthens the identity of learners, but also challenges the structures of domination that perpetuate epistemological exclusion. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *Education as a practice of freedom*. 17. Ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1974; QUIJANO, Aníbal. *Coloniality of power, Eurocentrism and Latin America*. In: LANDER, Edgardo (Org.). *The coloniality of knowledge: Eurocentrism and social sciences*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2015. p. 227-278.

limited to economic exploitation, but extended to the imposition of an epistemology that delegitimizes local knowledge and the ways of life of subalternized peoples" (p. 14). In this way, both approaches seek to reconstruct an education that not only recognizes epistemic diversity, but also promotes the dignity and self-determination of historically marginalized subjects.

Thus, both Freire and the theorists of decolonial education understand education as a political and insurgent act. As Walsh (2013) points out, "[...] decolonial pedagogy is not just a theory, but a practice that commits itself to epistemic disobedience and the struggle for social justice" (p. 62). This means that liberating education cannot be just an abstract proposal, but must materialize in pedagogical practices that challenge the structures of domination and create spaces of resistance and transformation. In this way, education becomes an essential instrument for the construction of a less unjust society.

The coloniality of knowledge is present in the production and dissemination of knowledge in our schools, reinforcing hierarchies and making invisible knowledge that does not fit into the Eurocentric logic. Overcoming this structure requires an insurgent education, which values epistemic diversity and recognizes the power of historically marginalized knowledge (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 35).

Awareness, as proposed by Paulo Freire, is a dynamic and permanent process of unveiling reality, allowing subjects to critically understand the world and act on it. Freire explains that "[...] awareness implies that we go beyond the spontaneous sphere of apprehension of reality, to reach a critical sphere in which reality is given as a knowable object and in which man assumes an epistemological position" (Freire, 1979, p. 4). Thus, education should favor a critical look at social structures, allowing students to understand their historical condition and transform it.

This perspective is aligned with decolonial education, which seeks to break with the coloniality of knowledge and value traditionally marginalized epistemologies. As Santos and Meneses (2009) state, "[...] social emancipation is any action that aims to denaturalize oppression, showing that it, in addition to being unjust, is neither necessary nor irreversible" (p. 482). Like Freire, theorists of decolonial education recognize that social transformation is only possible through critical reflection and action, challenging hegemonic narratives<sup>25</sup> that maintain structural inequalities.

<sup>25</sup> For Paulo Freire, hegemonic narratives are discursive constructions that impose a single view of the world, reinforcing power structures and keeping subordinated subjects in a position of passivity. These narratives, often transmitted by banking education, naturalize inequality and prevent the emergence of other voices and perspectives. Freire argues that "[...] banking education serves the interests of domination, as it minimizes the

Awareness cannot be dissociated from the struggle for the decolonization of knowledge and power. Emancipation only occurs when subjects become aware of the structures that oppress them and organize themselves to transform them. This implies an epistemic and political repositioning that challenges hegemonic narratives and claims the right to exist based on its own cultural references (Walsh, 2013, p. 45).

In addition, awareness must be understood as a historical commitment, inserting subjects in a continuous process of reflection and action. Freire points out that "[...] it is not possible to raise awareness among the people without a radical denunciation of dehumanizing structures, which marches together with the proclamation of a new reality that can be created by men" (Freire, 1979, p. 12). This process dialogues with the decolonial perspective, which proposes the creation of pedagogical alternatives that value local knowledge and the agency of subalternized peoples.

That said, both Freirean pedagogy and decolonial education reinforce the need for an education committed to social justice and the overcoming of oppression. As Walsh (2013) points out, "[...] decolonial pedagogy is not just a theory, but a practice that commits itself to epistemic disobedience and the struggle for social justice" (p. 62). In this way, awareness is established as a path to liberation, allowing historically marginalized subjects to take the lead in the construction of a new educational and social paradigm.

In the face of the educational, but also political, social and economic crisis, there is an urgent need for new ways of thinking and acting, of relating to political-pedagogical practice. Hence the need for epistemic disobedience, because we will not be able to make the new starting from the old. It is necessary, according to **the theorists of the MCD group**<sup>26</sup>, to make a decolonial turn (Mignolo, 2008, p. 288).

Dialogue, for Paulo Freire, is the central axis of a liberating education, allowing the joint construction of knowledge and breaking with the logic of banking education. Freire emphasizes that "[...] only an active, dialogical, participatory method could do it" (Freire, 1967, p. 107). Dialogue is not only a pedagogical resource, but an essential principle for

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creative power of students and reduces them to the condition of objects of a ready-made and finished world" (Freire, 1987, p. 79). Thus, to break with these narratives, a critical and dialogical educational model is needed, which values the multiple experiences and knowledge of students, allowing them to build their own interpretations of reality and act as agents of social transformation. See: FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 17. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1987.

<sup>26</sup> The Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality Group (MCD) is a transdisciplinary network of Latin American intellectuals that emerged in the late 1990s, with the aim of critically analyzing the power relations established since European colonization in the Americas. Among its main theorists are Aníbal Quijano, who introduced the concept of "coloniality of power"; Enrique Dussel, philosopher of liberation; Walter Mignolo, a semiologist who explores the coloniality of knowledge; and Catherine Walsh, a pedagogue who investigates critical interculturality. These scholars, among others, seek to unveil the colonial structures that persist in contemporary societies and promote a decolonial perspective that values the knowledge and experiences of historically marginalized peoples. See: references.



educators and students to share knowledge, critically reflect on their reality and take an active role in social transformation.

Decolonial education reinforces this need for dialogue, as it understands that the production of knowledge cannot be limited to a Eurocentric paradigm, but must value multiple epistemologies. As Walsh and Ocaña (2017) point out, "[...] decoloniality is a process of construction of this non-colonial utopian horizon and we do not want to initiate a new epistemology from the zero point, but rather to combat the processes of epistemicide<sup>27</sup> already enunciated" (p. 129). This perspective resonates with Freire's pedagogy, as both reject the imposition of single truths and promote an intercultural dialogue for the construction of plural knowledge.

An education for the practice of interculturality is proposed as a possibility, where other epistemologies, other knowledge, other ways of being and understanding the world come into play; other ways of learning and living. It is proposed to think about education from different rationalities, often subordinated to modern Western rationality, traditionally seen as the only true and legitimate rationality (Candau, 2008, p. 151).

In addition, Freire highlights that dialogue is the only possible path to a humanizing education, because "[...] dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, to designate it" (Freire, 1979, p. 15). This process is essential for students not only to receive knowledge, but also to actively participate in the construction of their learning. In the same way, decolonial education rejects the vertical transmission of knowledge and proposes a pedagogical practice that allows the collective construction of knowledge.

Furthermore, the convergence between Freire's pedagogy and decolonial education occurs in the valorization of dialogue as an instrument of emancipation. As Mignolo (2008) points out, "[...] There is an urgent need for new ways of thinking and acting, of relating to political-pedagogical practice. Hence the need for epistemic disobedience" (p. 288). Thus, both Freire and decolonial theorists defend an education that not only informs, but also

<sup>27</sup> Epistemicide refers to the systematic destruction or devaluation of certain knowledge and knowledge practices, promoted through the imposition of a Eurocentric logic that marginalizes non-Western epistemologies. This concept, widely discussed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, shows how Western modernity has not only colonized territories, but also delegitimized the knowledge produced by indigenous peoples, Africans, and traditional communities. According to Santos (2007), "[...] epistemicide is one of the pillars of colonial domination, as it imposes the belief that only Western scientific knowledge is valid, disregarding other forms of knowing and existing" (p. 23). Thus, overcoming epistemicide requires valuing plural epistemologies and building an education that recognizes and respects the diversity of knowledge. See: SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa. *The grammar of time: towards a new political culture*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2007.

emancipates and creates spaces for the construction of new possibilities of existence and resistance.

Dialogue is part of the encounter of bodies and these enhance the crossing of experiences, the encounter with the existential baggage of the other and at the same time reinforces that we are beings of cultural incompleteness, therefore, endowed with gaps that can be filled from the life history of the subjects who daily cross our trajectories. Having this dimension leads to awakening our care for other people's experiences and consequently dealing with our own itinerancies. Perceiving oneself as responsible for the other is a critical political act that requires sensitive listening, an attentive eye, and the availability to affect and be affected (Miranda, 2021, p. 110).

Banking education, criticized by Paulo Freire, is a teaching model that treats students as mere passive recipients of knowledge, denying them the possibility of active participation in the educational process. Freire describes this approach as a system in which "[...] the teacher speaks of reality as if it were motionless, static, separated into compartments and predictable; or else, it speaks of a theme foreign to the existential experience of students" (Freire, 1979, p. 4). This conception of teaching reinforces a logic of domination and alienation, preventing students from developing critical thinking about their own reality.

Decolonial pedagogy, as well as Freire's pedagogy, proposes a break with this traditional model, defending an education that values knowledge as a collective construction and situated in the social and cultural contexts of the students. As Candau (2020) points out, "[...] school practices, in this case, favor training for passivity, silence, obedience; while the education of the children of the wealthy classes is composed of countless stimuli, languages and challenges" (p. 22). In this way, decolonial education seeks to break with the hierarchy of knowledge, allowing students to be protagonists of their own learning.

The decolonization of knowledge inevitably begins with the recognition that every human being is a producer of culture, that all human groups have their codes, symbols, and values, and that they must have equal access to the means of communication of knowledge, and this includes the school and the curricular content (Candau, 2020, p. 26).

In addition, banking education not only denies the right to critical knowledge, but also reinforces social inequalities by consolidating an education system focused on the reproduction of power structures. Freire denounces this practice by stating that "[...] The more students exercise themselves in archiving the deposits made to them, the less they

will develop in themselves a critical awareness that their insertion in the world as transformers would result. As subjects" (Freire, 2014, p. 83). Overcoming this model requires an education based on dialogue and the problematization of reality, allowing subjects to become active agents in social transformation.

In time, the convergence between decolonial education and Freirean pedagogy lies in the valorization of a teaching that is not only a transmitter of information, but that contributes to the emancipation of students. As Walsh (2009) points out, "[...] The intention of the decolonial movement is not to undo the colonial or to overcome the colonial moment in favor of the postcolonial. The intention is to provoke a continuous position of transgression and insurgency" (p. 16). This approach reinforces the need for teaching that promotes critical awareness, allowing individuals to challenge oppressive structures and build new forms of existence and knowledge.

The banking conception of education favors the reproduction of power structures while denying students the possibility of becoming critical and transforming subjects. This educational logic has been imposed throughout history as a mechanism of control and domination, reinforcing social inequalities and preventing the construction of knowledge that challenges the status quo (Freire, 2014, p. 83).

Social emancipation, as defended by Paulo Freire, is directly related to the ability of subjects to become protagonists of their own stories and struggles. For Freire, education needs to enable this liberation by promoting a critical consciousness in students. He emphasizes that "[...] critical education considers men as beings in becoming, as unfinished, incomplete beings in an equally unfinished reality and together with it" (Freire, 1979, p. 4). This means that emancipation is not a final state, but a continuous process that allows subjects to question and transform the social reality in which they are inserted.

The perspective of decolonial education converges with this conception, as it also seeks to break with structures of domination that have historically silenced certain social groups. As Santos and Meneses (2009) state, "[...] social emancipation is any action that aims to denaturalize oppression, showing that it, in addition to being unjust, is neither necessary nor irreversible" (p. 482). In this way, both Freirean pedagogy and decolonial education recognize that social transformation requires the valorization of subalternized knowledge and the resignification of power relations in society.

Social emancipation is something like the 'perfectoria art' of the idiotic sage of Nicholas of Cusa, who makes wooden spoons without being able to limit himself to imitating nature (there is no spoon in nature), but also without ever accurately attaining the idea of cochleality (the essence of the spoon that belongs to the 'divine

art'). Social emancipation is thus any action that aims to denaturalize oppression (to show that it, in addition to being unjust, is neither necessary nor irreversible) and to conceive it with the proportions in which it can be fought with the resources at hand (Santos & Meneses, 2009, p. 482).

In addition, social emancipation necessarily involves the problematization of the hegemonic narratives that sustain Eurocentrism in education. According to Walsh (2001), "[...] interculturality requires both space for negotiation and translation and the recognition and confrontation of the power relations that perpetuate coloniality" (p. 10). This process of recognition of epistemic diversity is essential for students to be able to perceive themselves as active historical subjects capable of intervening in the construction of a new social order.

In this sense, the construction of an educational model that enables social emancipation must be rooted in a critical and dialogical pedagogical practice. As Candau (2020) argues, "[...] Decolonial education and Freirean pedagogy are not limited only to university circles; on the contrary, they seek to dispute common sense and the ways in which social subjects give intelligibility to their cultural practices" (p. 29). In this way, education ceases to be an instrument for the reproduction of inequalities and becomes a space for resistance and collective construction of knowledge aimed at social justice.

Schools are seen only as places of education, ignoring that these are also cultural and political spaces, and represent spaces of contestation and struggle between groups differentially endowed with cultural and economic power. The set of hegemonic practices and knowledge of the school curriculum naturalizes inequalities and sustains an ideological dimension of single, authoritarian and Eurocentric education, considering the elements of other cultures as something exotic (Giroux & Simon, 2011, p. 107).

Social transformation, within Freire's perspective, requires an educational practice that goes beyond the simple transmission of knowledge and is committed to the construction of a new social reality. Freire argues that "[...] Education cannot be neutral. It either contributes to the domestication or to the liberation of the subjects" (Freire, 1979, p. 15). Thus, education should be understood as a political act that allows students to question and reconstruct the structures that perpetuate inequality and oppression.

Decolonial education converges with this vision by proposing a pedagogical practice that values historically marginalized knowledge and breaks with hegemonic narratives. As Walsh (2018) points out, "[...] the traditional educational system has been one of the main means of perpetuating social inequalities and the coloniality of knowledge, naturalizing the exclusion of non-Western epistemologies" (p. 350). Thus, social transformation requires an

education that not only includes different perspectives, but also destabilizes the hierarchies of knowledge imposed by colonialism.

In this sense, it is urgent to build pedagogies that make 'oppression and its causes the object of reflection of the oppressed, which will result in their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation, in which this pedagogy will be made and renewed'. In addition, as Candas emphasizes, it is important to guide this debate, and this is the most important of our task, 'education as an engine of social change, more than a mere adaptation of the subject to the world' (Canda, 2020, p. 26).

In addition, the social transformation promoted by education must be rooted in the recognition of cultural plurality and the creation of spaces of resistance. As Candau (2020) points out, "[...] education as an engine of social change, more than a mere adaptation of the subject to the world, must be based on the struggle for justice and for the recovery of humanity stolen from the oppressed" (p. 26). This means that the school cannot be just a space for adapting to the existing society, but rather a place where new possibilities of existence are actively built.

In fact, both Freire and the theorists of decolonial education argue that social transformation will only be possible when education is capable of awakening in students a sense of protagonism and insurgency. Mignolo (2008) reinforces this idea by stating that "[...] the change introduced by the decolonial option disconnects itself from the Western idea that human lives can be discarded in a civilization of death, towards a civilization of reproduction of life" (p. 229). Thus, the education that transforms society must be an education focused on life, social justice and the construction of a world where all voices are valued.

Popular knowledge, defended by Paulo Freire, represents the valorization of knowledge built from the experiences and culture of the students. For the theorist, education needs to break with the hierarchization of knowledge and recognize that "[...] It is not a matter of knowledge donated by specialists and avant-garde groups to the students, as happens in authoritarian proposals. What is sought in Freire's conception is the construction of a knowledge forged with the student" (Freire, 1989, p. 25). Thus, learning becomes a dialogical and emancipatory process, in which knowledge is collectively constructed.

Decolonial education converges with this perspective by emphasizing the importance of traditional knowledge and marginalized epistemologies. As Chassot (1990) states, "[...] the school not only turns its back on popular knowledge, but also despises it in

its courtship of institutionalized knowledge" (p. 105). In this way, both Freire and the theorists of decolonial education criticize the exclusion of knowledge produced by peripheral and traditional communities, emphasizing the need to integrate this knowledge into formal teaching spaces.

Epistemicides, deaths of knowledge considered subaltern, constitute one of the ways to keep coloniality alive. Aníbal Quijano (2015) distinguishes the colonization of antiquity from the colonization of modernity. Roughly speaking, in antiquity, the metropolis sought to plunder the wealth of the colonies, leaving the colonization of the being and knowledge of the colonized in the background. In modernity, the metropolises, with the concept of culture and civilization, sought to colonize the being and knowledge of the settlers (Santos, 2006, p. 27).

In addition, the transmission of popular knowledge occurs through cultural and social practices, often distant from Western scientific models. As a study on quilombola healers points out, "[...] This narrative reveals the importance of the transgenerational character with regard to the transmission of knowledge of blessing. Observing-experiencing, relational presence, and corporeality-affect-cognition are inherent characteristics of the learning process" (Silva, 2021, p. 97). This recognition shows that learning does not occur only through formal schooling, but also in community experience and orality.

In fact, both Freirean pedagogy and decolonial education argue that popular knowledge is fundamental for cultural resistance and the construction of a liberating education. As Lave (2015) argues, "[...] it is necessary to approach 'learning' or 'culture and learning' from its intrinsic relations in political-economic life, in historical struggles and disputes" (p. 45). This understanding reinforces the need to value traditional knowledge and the experiences of students, promoting a more inclusive teaching that is committed to social transformation.

Thus, the notion of situated learning elaborated by Lave (2015) helps us to understand that every sociocultural practice is 'situated in – made of, is part of – relationships between people, contexts and practices' (p. 40). To stay only with the example of the case study analyzed, we understand that the craft of blessing is learned in practice through social relationships established on a daily basis. It is, therefore, through the daily life of the quilombo community that this craft is transmitted (Silva, 2021, p. 97).

Overcoming hierarchy in the classroom, as defended by Paulo Freire, implies a horizontal relationship between educator and student, based on dialogue and co-authorship of knowledge. Freire's approach breaks with the traditional conception of banking education, in which the teacher deposits content in students without considering



their active participation. As Freire (2014) states, "[...] liberating education values dialogical communication between educator and student, breaking the parameters of an oppressive education based on the mere unreflective transmission of contents" (p. 80-81). This approach allows students to be protagonists of their learning, developing criticality and intellectual autonomy.

In decolonial education, this principle is also central, as it seeks to question the power structures present in educational processes. According to Santos (2006), "[...] epistemicides, deaths of knowledge considered subaltern, constitute one of the ways to keep coloniality alive" (p. 27). The maintenance of a vertical relationship between teacher and student reinforces this exclusion, disregarding the knowledge derived from the experiences of students and their communities. Thus, overcoming hierarchy in the classroom is an essential strategy to value historically marginalized knowledge and build truly inclusive teaching.

Decolonial education proposes to overcome the coloniality of knowledge and power, which implies questioning the imposition of a single legitimate form of knowledge and breaking with verticality in the educator-learner relationship. In this sense, educational practice should be guided by dialogue and by valuing the knowledge and experiences of students (Fleuri, 2014, p. 95).

The dialogical relationship defended by Freire presupposes that both the educator and the student learn in the educational process, being both subjects of knowledge. As Freire (1981) points out, "[...] no one educates anyone, no one educates himself, men educate themselves in communion" (p. 126). This conception challenges the traditional view of education, in which the teacher is the only holder of knowledge. In the school context, this means promoting pedagogical practices that encourage the active participation of students, allowing them to share their experiences and collectively build new understandings about the world.

In this way, overcoming hierarchy in the classroom strengthens the emancipation of students and enhances social transformation. As Freire (1989) points out, "[...] systematized knowledge is indispensable to the popular struggle" (p. 25). In this way, an education that values horizontality contributes to the formation of critical subjects engaged in the transformation of their realities. The break with the verticalized logic of education, therefore, is not only a methodological issue, but a fundamental political act for the construction of a more just and democratic society.

Decolonial education seeks to question and denaturalize the power relations present in educational processes, promoting the valorization of historically marginalized knowledge. In this sense, the classroom should be a space for exchange and dialogue, where educators and students collectively build knowledge, breaking with the traditional hierarchical logic (Oliveira & Silva, 2021, p. 29).

Interculturality, in Freire's perspective, involves the recognition and appreciation of the cultures of the students as an essential part of the educational process. For Freire (2005), "[...] there is no more knowledge or less knowledge: there is different knowledge" (p. 72), which implies that education must consider the knowledge and experiences of students in their own cultural contexts. This approach breaks with the imposition of a single form of knowledge and promotes teaching that respects diversity and strengthens historically marginalized identities.

In the field of decolonial education, critical interculturality is also opposed to the hierarchization of knowledge, recognizing the coexistence of multiple epistemologies. As Walsh (2001) points out, "[...] interculturality means a dynamic process that involves permanent relationship, communication and learning between cultures, considering mutual legitimacy, symmetry and equality" (p. 10). In this way, both Freire and decolonial theorists emphasize the need to build an educational environment in which different knowledges dialogue and mutually strengthen each other.

Interculturality tries to break with the hegemony of the dominant culture over the subordinate one, strengthening traditionally excluded identities to build, in everyday life, a coexistence of respect and legitimacy among all groups in society (Walsh, 1998, p. 143).

In addition, critical interculturality challenges the logic of coloniality by questioning the epistemic domination imposed by the Eurocentric model of education. As Walsh (2012) observes, "[...] interculturality will only have impact and value when assumed in a critical way, as an action, project and process that seeks to intervene in the refoundation of the structures and orders of society that racialize, inferiorize and dehumanize" (p. 2). This position shows that intercultural education should not be limited to the superficial inclusion of cultural content, but rather act as an instrument of social transformation.

Thus, Freire's intercultural pedagogy and decolonial education converge in arguing that the school should be a space of resistance and appreciation of subalternized cultures. As Velez (2006) points out, "[...] critical interculturality recognizes asymmetrical conditions of power and highlights educational conflict as a place for generating resistance" (p. 143). Thus, by breaking with the logic of domination and allowing students to play a leading role

in their learning processes, education becomes a means of emancipation and the construction of a more just and egalitarian world.

Resistance to educational colonialism implies the need to deconstruct the Eurocentric logic and promote the valorization of marginalized knowledge. Historically, the hegemonic educational model has imposed a hierarchical structure of knowledge, legitimizing only Western knowledge and relegating to oblivion the knowledge of indigenous peoples, Africans and other traditional cultures. As Meneses (2018) points out, "[...] the Eurocentric rational project created alterity as a previous space/time, where knowledge considered 'inferior' with local reach circulated" (p. 21). Thus, resistance to educational colonialism requires the recognition of epistemic plurality and the promotion of teaching that dialogues with the realities and knowledge of historically oppressed groups.

Decolonial education proposes a break with this paradigm by recognizing that traditional knowledge is as valid as Western scientific knowledge. This position is essential to overcome the coloniality of knowledge, which persists even after the end of formal colonialism. According to Quijano (2015), "[...] Eurocentrism is not exclusively the cognitive perspective of Europeans, but also of all those educated under its hegemony, who naturalize this experience and consider it unquestionable" (p. 85). Thus, decolonial education not only questions this epistemic imposition, but also proposes pedagogical practices that value the diversity of knowledge, breaking with the idea that only modern science has universal validity.

In this sense, Paulo Freire already pointed to the need for a critical and liberating education, which would break with the colonial logic and promote the valorization of subalternized knowledge. As Freire (1987) states, "[...] the awareness of the nature of their situation by the oppressed, as well as the identification of the oppressor, are key elements for involvement in a liberating struggle, based on their strengths, lived experiences and knowledge" (p. 22). This Freirean perspective converges with the decolonial approach by emphasizing that education must start from the realities of the students, allowing them to critically understand their position in the world and act to transform it.

Finally, resistance to educational colonialism requires the construction of a curriculum that contemplates multiple epistemologies and recognizes the centrality of marginalized cultures in the educational process. As Walsh (2018) observes, "[...] decolonial pedagogy does not only seek to include new content, but to profoundly transform the educational structures that perpetuate inequalities and exclusions" (p. 350).

In this way, overcoming the Eurocentric logic in education is a fundamental step towards the construction of fairer societies, where different forms of knowledge can coexist and dialogue on equal terms.

## CONCLUSION

The convergence between Freire's principles and decolonial education highlights the need for a pedagogical practice that breaks with the hierarchy of knowledge and promotes the valorization of historically marginalized knowledge. Paulo Freire emphasizes that education should be a dialogical process, in which educator and student collectively build knowledge. This conception is in line with the decolonial proposal, which questions the coloniality of knowledge and seeks the inclusion of diverse epistemologies. As Quijano (2015) points out, "[...] Eurocentrism is not exclusively the cognitive perspective of Europeans, but also of all those educated under its hegemony, who naturalize this experience and consider it unquestionable" (p. 85).

In addition, both Freire and the theorists of decolonial education share the view that education should start from the realities and experiences of learners, allowing them to critically understand their position in the world and act to transform it. Awareness, a central concept in Freire's pedagogy, reflects the commitment to an education that emancipates subjects and makes them protagonists of their trajectories. According to Freire (1987), "[...] the awareness of the nature of their situation by the oppressed, as well as the identification of the oppressor, are key elements for involvement in a liberating struggle, based on their strengths, lived experiences and knowledge" (p. 22).

Another fundamental point of convergence between Freire's pedagogy and decolonial education is the resistance to educational colonialism, which manifests itself in the imposition of a Eurocentric curriculum and the exclusion of local knowledge. Freire argues that education should be a political act, committed to social transformation, and this idea is present in decolonial pedagogy, which proposes a break with the oppressive structures of knowledge. As Walsh (2018) points out, "[...] decolonial pedagogy does not only seek to include new content, but to profoundly transform the educational structures that perpetuate inequalities and exclusions" (p. 350).

Thus, overcoming the Eurocentric logic in education is not only a curricular issue, but a process of epistemological and political reconstruction. Both Freire and the theorists of decoloniality emphasize the need for teaching that values the diversity and experiences

of students, promoting meaningful and emancipatory learning. By breaking with banking education and recognizing popular knowledge as legitimate, education becomes a space for resistance and social transformation, reaffirming the importance of a curriculum that contemplates multiple epistemologies and respects historically marginalized cultures.

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