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Contributions of Marxist Thought in the Construction of Critical Political Education Courses

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Abstract

Critical political education courses, as theoretical-philosophical and methodological spatial processes, serve to awaken the working-class consciousness toward a revolutionary praxis. They are regarded as strategic education processes for the organization of the working class for the political struggle toward human emancipation. This study presents a literature review of articles on critical political education courses, obtained from Marxist academic journals. Twenty articles were included in the study, using the following method of selection. The article content was analyzed and discussed along two thematic axes: "Conception of Critical Political Education Courses" and "Contributions of Marxist Critical Theory in the Political Education Courses of Workers." The study found that the main ideas developed in the articles were "historical-dialectical materialism," "historical-critical pedagogy," "socialist pedagogy," "the pedagogy of social movements," and "applications to Latin American countries."



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Introduction

Experiences with political education courses directed towards the working class have been spaces that support the exchange of knowledge, encourage the social construction of general consciousness, and facilitate the implementation of strategies for popular organizations. Additionally, they equip activists for the class struggle, aid in the awakening of class consciousness, and involve workers as leading figures through the popular method. For this reason, they may also be referred to as popular education or foundational education (Peloso, 2012).

In Latin America countries, the theoretical foundations of these education courses are based on Marxist concepts, the propositions of educator Paulo Freire, especially those regarding the contributions related to "critical pedagogy" (McLaren, 2000; Darder, 2017; Freire, 2021), and the interpreters of the social education courses of Latin American countries.

Marxist theoretical influence has shaped Latin American thought in various socio-historical contexts because many educators, by basing their approach on dialectical historical materialism, develop their critical education courses based on their own material struggles. Therefore, they explore the possibilities of the world from the tangible reality of life rather than through idealistic dreams.

In addition to drawing on references such as Marxist thought, many Latin American educators also enriched themselves over the years through anti-imperialist analyses, especially at the beginning of the 20th century. Consequently, they began to include in their education courses readings that are more relevant to the rural and indigenous character of the continent as well as the structural legacies of its colonial past.

However, these dialogues and debates were curtailed following a series of coup d'états that occurred between the 1960s and 1980s. In the 21st century, with the rise of progressive governments and the abandonment of the old tenets of historical materialism, the development of Marxist thought has been shaped by the experiences of activists and intellectuals who were either ostracized or marginalized within the academic community (Estefane & Thielemann, 2018).

These influences continue to be strong in the critical thinking of the working class. Therefore, they have become fundamental references in political education courses for workers, situated within a radical revolutionary tradition (Holst, 2009). Exploring political content from a Marxist critical perspective enables these workers to expand their understanding of the topic and recognize politics in a more comprehensive manner (Lopes *et al.*, 2022).

It is with the aim of learning more about political education courses that foster the development of the working-class consciousness, that this article presents a review of the scientific literature on political education courses designed for workers using Marxist theoretical perspectives as a foundation. The intent of this inquiry is to answer the following question: What does the literature reveal concerning Marxist theory in the political education of workers? Understanding these reflections contributes to the dissemination of education for workers interested in revolutionary praxis.

Methodological Path

Approach and Delimitation of the Object

A political education course, even a critical one, can be implemented in traditional ways or even be “imposed.” It is not simply a matter of including critical content in a course, but of a critical “pedagogical practice.” In critical education courses, teaching and learning should be understood as a social practice that supports human development. In this context, it is essential to emphasize that critical pedagogical practice is neither neutral nor unidirectional. Critical pedagogical practice presupposes a dialogical relationship that occurs in the environment in which we are situated. In other words, it occurs in daily practice in a horizontal manner, not just in the realm of ideas and in a vertical manner. Critical pedagogical practice constitutes a tangible experience in our world, wherein the political dimension of everyday life (Pena, Nunes, & Kramer, 2018) serves as the connection to understand the various levels of abstraction in which we find ourselves.

The concept of “critical political education” is situated within this field of education. From a content perspective, it enables the understanding of the class nature of capitalist society and the nature of the State that legitimizes it. However, from a pedagogical practice perspective, it must begin with those of the same class. This knowledge is produced with the aim of not only freeing the workers from alienation but also equipping them for political struggle (Lima & Colares, 2023) in order to transform their reality and build an anti-capitalist future (Carnut *et al.*, 2020).

This struggle arises from the organizational processes of the working class, which function in various contexts to problematize issues, such as housing, food, leisure, health, education, identity, race, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. The discussion of these political subjects from a perspective that is critical of capitalist logic allows for an analysis of the contradictions in society, its need for change, and the paths to the future (Dalmagro & Bahniuk, 2019; Lopes *et al.*, 2022).

It is necessary to understand that politics, politicians, and the State are manifestations of capital that intervene to ensure its reproduction. In this sense, capitalists, as the dominant class, have control over political institutions and operate them according to their interests. Capital acts as an inherent and essential element that reproduces and consolidates itself. The working class, on the other hand, needs to understand the dynamics of global capitalism as well as the struggles, specific obstacles, and aspirations of the economic structures in their respective countries to revolutionize their structures and overcome this class sociability (Mascaro, 2018).

Understanding how the large-scale production and reproduction of capital function enables workers to reflect on the way commercial relations are established through a system of asymmetric and unfavorable exchanges between countries characterized by central and peripheral capitalism. The consequences of this unequal exchange, coupled with the processes of value formation and appropriation in Latin America, result in the overexploitation of labor. This overexploitation leads workers to endure more intense and precarious working hours. When this happens, the social issue is exacerbated by subhuman levels of inequality, along with a significant pool of available labor (Paiva *et al.*, 2022).

Thus, the scenario of impoverishment among workers living in Latin American countries is inextricably linked to the process of capitalist accumulation. It arises as a product of the existing contradictions between the wealth of the dominant class and the exploitation of the working class.

Therefore, it rekindles debates such as those about the marginalization of the growing working class within the urban social fabric, characterized by an “underclass” of workers and “social exclusion” (Alves & Escorel, 2012). Reviving these debates highlights the extent to which the role of the working class in committing to political education courses rooted in a Marxist framework is an unavoidable path to mobilizing political actions toward their human emancipation.

To clarify the importance of these critical political education courses in the present socio-historical context of workers, this article presents a literature review of articles published in academic Marxist journals as its object of study. The selected journals are concerned with the development of the revolutionary consciousness of the working class, with a particular focus on Latin America, albeit not exclusively.

Critical Political Education in Latin America and Internationally

Experiences involving revolutionary critical education extend beyond merely mobilizing people for marches or protests; they involve collective organization. These courses are driven by the leadership of workers, with the goal of seeking autonomy in thought, creativity, and action (Mariano *et al.*, 2016). These educational approaches are shaped by theories that are grounded in the Marxist tradition and dialogues with other critical leftist thinkers as well as discussions concerning Latin American social reality. The potency of this critical thinking is manifested in the anti-imperialist struggle and the pursuit of collaboration between countries of the Global South (Feldman, 2022).

Adult educators in North America refer to these educational practices as radical adult education, wherein theory and practice are united in a dialectical relationship. Examples of this type of democratic and participatory training in Brazil include the foundational education courses organized by the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra — MST) or the Landless Workers' Movement of Brazil (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra do Brasil — MTST) (Holst, 2009; Holst, 2021).

The Chilean Union School offers a critical education course through the Alejandro Lipschutz Institute of Sciences (Instituto de Ciencias Alejandro Lipschutz — ICAL). The course takes the form of meetings wherein participants enhance their skills in political work, assuming roles as leaders of unions and social movements. They also develop their analysis of the Chilean economy, its history, and the nature of education and movements (Holst, 2021). The focus is on the education of Chilean workers, achieved not through armed struggles but through critical education. This approach aligns with the philosophy of the early 20th-century Chilean communist leader, Luis Emilio Recabarren, a pioneer in Latin American education for the working class (Rueda, 2021).

The social movement struggles in Latin America and the Caribbean are recognized worldwide for their resilience and strategies. This is because these movements contributed to the deepening of democracy by expanding opportunities for social participation. They had influences that were distinct from those in Europe and the United States, as they incorporated unique aspects from indigenous and peasant movements as well as from ecclesiastical communities practicing liberation theology (Gerônimo-López *et al.*, 2021).

The ideological foundation regarding the role of education for the working class has significantly influenced popular education movements, particularly through the contributions of Paulo Freire. His teachings uncovered oppressive relationships, investigated the roles of education

and popular organization, and criticized the concept of banking education (Kuk & Tarlau, 2020). These principles, stemming from an educational experience guided by meaningful, critical, and dialogical learning, continue to be a legacy for workers.

Freirean popular education has achieved such prominence that it resonates in the critical pedagogy of the Mexican Zapatista movement. The Zapatismo philosophy distinguishes itself from other conventional doctrines in its fostering of a democratic practice that is taught, grasped, and questioned. This philosophy challenges pre-existing conceptions and contemplates revolutionary changes that can replace the established structures of domination. It recognizes that mobilization, teaching, and learning underpin its praxis (Anderson & Springer, 2018). It inspires workers to resist institutional power relations, with the aim of building an emancipated society. The proponents of this philosophy understand that radical change is possible, if there is a revolutionary takeover of the State.

If radical change is possible and desired, how can we achieve it? The norm has been to accept the current material conditions of life as natural, arguing that proposing a different path for social interaction is fanciful and utopian. However, history demonstrates that other societal regimes have changed. Social achievements have been realized in many different areas, although not without struggle and activism. That is why popular organization, implemented in an ongoing and enlightening manner, is essential. In this regard, meetings between workers to analyze the current situation and interpret the tangible conditions of the material aspects of life are crucial. The struggle of Latin American workers, which comprises resisting and taking action, is powerful and continues to be a source of inspiration for all who are outraged by the reality of the contemporary world.

Data Collection Technique (Data Co-production)

The methodological path for the critical review begins with an exploratory search of the leading Marxist journals (Table 1), from which 44 journals were selected: 22 national, 10 Latin American, and 12 international. Although one of these journals is not considered Marxist, it was included because it includes studies related to the Marxist approach.

In the subsequent phase, which we called “mapping of publications,” the key terms related to the research topic were identified and used to filter the publications obtained by using them. The terms used were as follows: “*formação política*,” “*educação crítica*,” “*educação política*,” “*formação crítica*,” and “*formação humana*,” translated, respectively, into Spanish (“*formación política*,” “*educación crítica*,” “*educación política*,” “*formación crítica*,” and “*formación humana*”) and English (“*political formation*,” “*critical education*,” “*political education*,” “*critical formation*,” and “*human formation*”), according to the origin of the journal.

Table 1.
Marxist Journals Included in the Critical Review

National Journal	
<i>Crítica Marxista</i>	<i>Revista Trabalho, Política e Sociedade</i>
<i>Marx e Marxismos</i>	<i>Revista Serviço Social e Sociedade</i>
<i>História e Luta De Classes</i>	<i>Revista Ser Social</i>
<i>Verinotio</i>	<i>Revista em Pauta</i>
<i>Terceiro Incluído</i>	<i>Revista Sociedade em Debate</i>
<i>Germinal</i>	<i>Revista de Políticas Públicas</i>
<i>Argumentum</i>	<i>Margem em Esquerda</i>
<i>Katálisis</i>	<i>Educação e Emancipação</i>
<i>Revista Lutas Sociais</i>	<i>Histedbr Online</i>
<i>Outubro</i>	<i>Princípios</i>
<i>Temporalis</i>	
Non-Marxist Brazilian Journals	
<i>Revista Tempo Social</i>	
Latin American Journals	
<i>Revista de Raíz Diversa</i>	<i>Razon y Revolucion</i>
<i>Rebela</i>	<i>Viento y Sur</i>
<i>Revista Pacarina Del Sur</i>	<i>Utopia y Praxis Latinoamericana</i>
<i>Izquierdas</i>	<i>Revista SEP</i>
<i>Nuestra America</i>	
International Journals	
<i>Capital and Class</i>	<i>Monthly Review</i>
<i>Historical Materialism</i>	<i>Socialism and Democracy</i>
<i>Socialist Register</i>	<i>Review of Radical Political Economy</i>
<i>International Critical Thought</i>	<i>Journal of International Health Services</i>
<i>International Socialism</i>	<i>Actuel Marx</i>
<i>New Left Review</i>	<i>Rethinking Marxism</i>

After identifying the publications using the primary key terms, the next step was implemented by combining these terms. For the non-Marxist journal, the term “Marx” was included to obtain the publications adhering to this perspective.

For journals in which the combinations of primary terms exceeded 50 publications, greater search refinement was necessary. For this reason, the key terms were recombined. However, the same process could not be implemented with the journals *Crítica Marxista* and *New Left Review* because their search systems did not ensure the specificity of the search. At that point, the decision was made to continue with the high number of publications, expecting refinement to be achieved in subsequent stages. Hence, the journals that underwent the second search process with the recombination were *Germinal* and *Revista Tempo Social*.

In *Germinal*, only two research fields required a recombination: “*formação política AND educação política*,” with 72 publications and “*educação crítica AND formação crítica*,” with 53 publications. We chose the combinations “*formação política AND educação política AND formação crítica*” and “*educação crítica AND formação crítica AND formação política*.” Both filters resulted in 18 publications, which are the numbers counted for the identified publications. For *Revista Tempo Social*, the decision was made to place the already selected terms in quotation marks. This technique was also used for the journal *Razón y Revolución* and all international journals. This criterion enabled the search systems to enhance the specificity of the obtained publications.

Given these new configurations, it was possible to identify a total of 2,978 publications, of which 1,705 were from national journals, 257 were from Latin American journals, and 1,016 were from international journals. Repeated titles from all searches were excluded, thus reducing the publication number by 2,154. Therefore, 824 publication titles were screened.

As an exclusion criterion, we chose to exclude all publications that were not articles. Therefore, the article screening stage resulted in the exclusion of 205 publications, specifically, Entire Volumes ($n = 2$); Reviews ($n = 77$); Editorials ($n = 11$); Interviews ($n = 8$); Abstracts, Dissertations, and Theses ($n = 10$); Debates ($n = 23$); Comments ($n = 9$); Documents ($n = 4$); Dossiers ($n = 53$); Notes ($n = 4$); and Posts ($n = 4$). Finally, 619 titles remained, all of which were scientific articles.

The titles and abstracts of the articles were read twice to determine whether these articles correlated with the subject of this review. In total, 572 titles were excluded after the first reading, and 25 articles were excluded after the second. This resulted in 22 articles remaining, to be read in full. Of these, two were excluded because, upon complete reading, it was determined that they did not specifically align with the theme of the review. Thus, 20 articles were included in the final review, and they were compared with the existing scientific literature, resulting in the discussion presented in this article. The synthesis of this methodological path is summarized in the flowchart depicted in Figure 1.

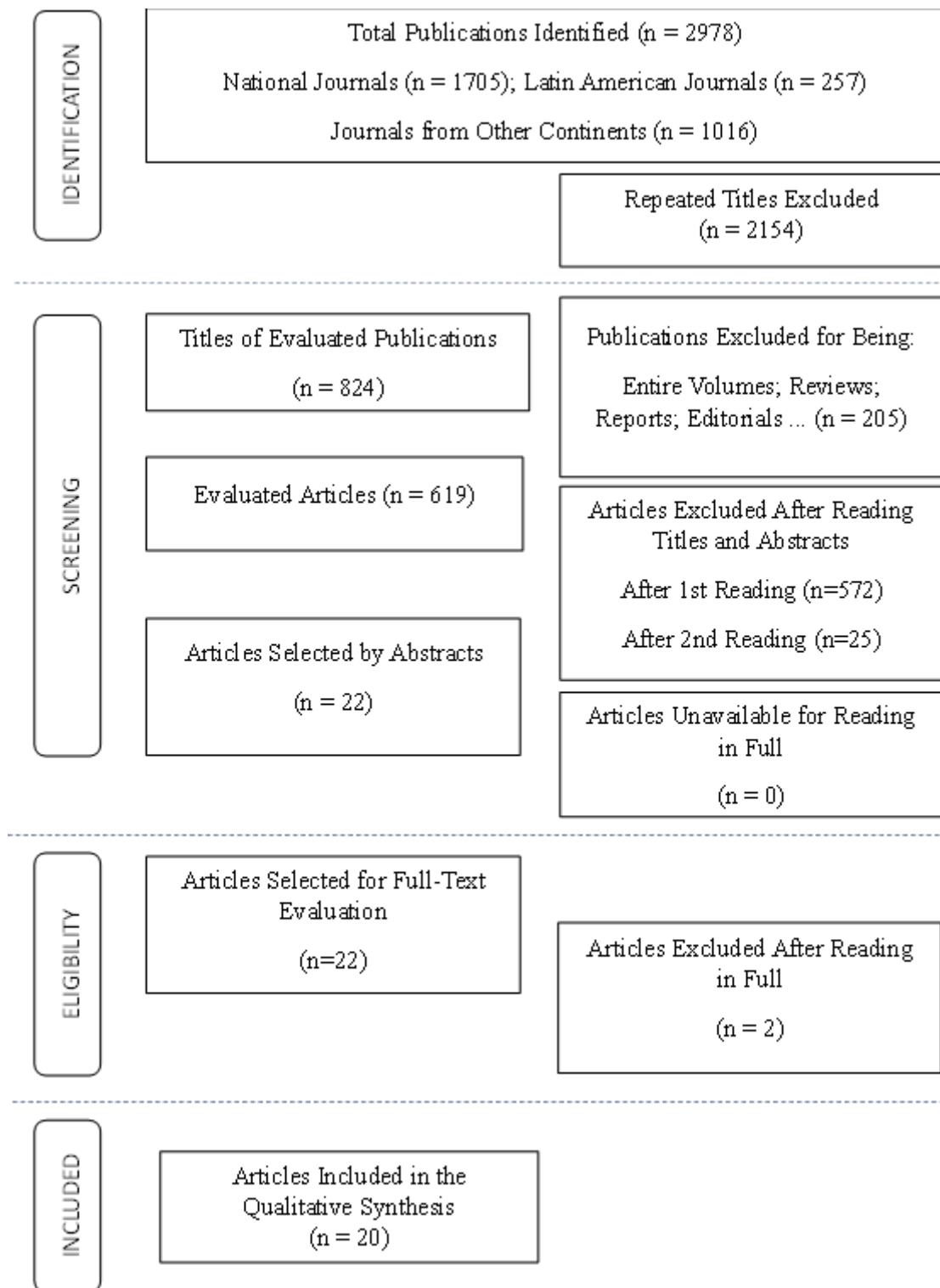


Figure 1. Flowchart of the selection process of articles included in the review on Marxist theory in political education

Limitations of the Study

It was observed that, although there was a significant number of international publications, these studies were not included in the article selection for this review. One reason for this exclusion may be related to the way in which the publications frame their terminology concerning critical political education courses.

Within the realm of critical education, political education courses aimed at workers may be represented in the literature by various terms, such as political education, counter-hegemonic education, popular education, foundational education courses, training, radical adult education, adult education, and social movement learning. These representations, although described variously, share the same premise: education for workers from revolutionary perspectives. These are education courses for movements and for the development of trade union cadres, and they are aimed at the critical political education of the working class interested in a praxis of transforming their tangible reality.

Although the concept is the same, these terms must be appropriately contextualized by authors in their publications. This is because the term “education” might not be understood in the same way by Latin American workers as it is in other countries. For example, while the term “training” can be considered synonymous with “education” in English, this is not the case in Latin languages. In Portuguese or Spanish, the translation of “training” refers to “treinamento” (in Portuguese), a term considered instrumental within critical-progressive pedagogies. This terminological divergence highlights a limitation in the way the literature review of this study was conducted in terms of the search engines of English-language journals.

Results and Discussion

This review encompassed 20 articles (Table 2) spanning a period from 2004 to 2019. The contents of these articles were examined along two main topics: (1) The concept of critical political education and (2) Contributions of Marxist critical theory to the political education of workers.

A critical education course is the result of necessary and urgent political-ideological education (Barboza & Lima, 2012) that seeks to promote political-pedagogical activism (Araújo, 2019). It is characterized by the dialectical unity between being and not being a person, and it involves an active and conscious intervention rather than merely a passive acquisition of knowledge (Abrantes, 2014; Barboza & Lima, 2012). This means that the teaching-learning process must include an engaging pedagogical proposal that provides meaningful learning to workers, based on a conceptual framework in which knowledge is constructed as an ongoing practice.

Table 2.

Summary of the Articles Included in the Review and their Characteristics: Author(s), Year, Title, and Objective.

Author(s), year	Title	Objective
Abrantes AA, 2014	Educação escolar e acesso ao conhecimento: o ensino como socialização da liberdade de pensar.	Reflects on the relationship between school education and individual thought development
Alves AJL, 2004	A determinação onto-societária do educar ou para uma crítica da vontade educativa.	Discusses the theoretical and social premises of pedagogical proposals as well as their consequences for educational practice.
Araújo OHA, 2019	Didática e a prática docente na escola básica em uma perspectiva crítica de educação.	Discusses the role of didactics and teaching practice in primary school from a critical-reflective perspective.
Barboza DR & Lima JAB, 2012	Processo de formação crítica e processo social: a questão da ideologia em Gramsci.	Analyzes how the process of critical formation is the result of political-ideological development.
Batista EL & Lima MR, 2013	Dermeval Saviani – uma trajetória de luta e compromisso com a educação transformadora.	Analyses the importance of Saviani in Brazilian social, political, and pedagogical thought.
Carnut L <i>et al.</i> , 2019	“Passei a entender a influência do capital na saúde pública...”: formação política crítica dos trabalhadores do sistema único de saúde.	Analyzes the perceptions of SUS (Unified Health System) workers regarding the public health challenges in Brazil.
Ciavatta M, 2018	Marx: 200 anos – A teoria, a política e a educação.	Reflects on the relevance of Marx's thoughts in contemporary times.
Costa CA & Loureiro CF, 2017	A interdisciplinaridade em Paulo Freire: aproximações político-pedagógicas para a educação ambiental crítica.	Addresses Paulo Freire's pedagogical contribution to interdisciplinary issues and its convergence with Critical Environmental Education (EE).
Gonçalves LD <i>et al.</i> , 2019	Pedagogia socialista e política educacional: debate acerca da politécnica.	Analyzes the experience of the Polytechnic School during the Russian Revolution and the debate on polytechnics in the Brazilian context.
Hamada IA, 2017	O trabalho pedagógico e suas possibilidades enquanto práxis no contexto da perspectiva crítica, histórica e cultural.	Investigates the theoretical elements needed for understanding pedagogical praxis in the school environment.
Lusa <i>et al.</i> , 2019	A Universidade pública em tempos de ajustes neoliberais e desmonte de direitos.	Analyzes Brazilian public education, with an emphasis on higher education.
Mariano AS & Lombardi JC, 2019	Método de formação política da Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes do MST.	Reflects on the method of political education implemented at the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes

Author(s), year	Title	Objective
Mata VA, 2015	Educação e liberdade: a pedagogia histórico crítica e a emancipação humana.	Introduces Historical-Critical Pedagogy as an enhancer of struggles for a genuinely libertarian education, with a revolutionary character and commitment to societal transformation.
Pinto FM & Oliveira RC, 2019	Educação, formação humana e Estado na contemporaneidade: breves reflexões.	Analyzes the relationship between education, human development, and the State.
Saes DAM, 2004	Educação e socialismo.	Analyzes the role of school education in socialist society.
Santos <i>et al.</i> , 2015	Emancipação e a expansão recente da educação superior no Brasil: nexos com a teoria crítica.	Reflects on higher education in Brazil from a critical theoretical perspective.
Santos PHA & Goulart DC, 2016	Formação no Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Teto: uma análise de seu projeto político.	Examines the political and educational education sector of the Homeless Workers Movement (MTST).
Schlesener AH, 2015	Marx e a educação: observações acerca de a ideologia alemã e teses contra Feuerbach.	Analyzes the capitalist mode of production, focusing on the concepts of ideology and alienation to clarify the notion of education.
Schlesener AH, 2019	Direção política e educação: a noção de vanguarda nos escritos de Gramsci.	Clarifies the connection between politics and education in Gramsci's writings.
Silva JC, 2011	A questão educacional em Marx: alguns apontamentos.	Understands the educational issue in light of historical transformations, based on certain Marxist writings.

This process aims to create a space for reflecting on issues related to humanity, human production, and culture among individuals (Alves, 2004), and its agenda encompasses a process of understanding and building social and cultural relationships, which passes from one generation to another and considers their history (Lusa *et al.*, 2019). This space for socializing knowledge and experiences integrates theory and practice and is indispensable in enhancing the struggle and organization of the working class (Mariano & Lombardi, 2019).

Knowledge socialization and the establishment of a theoretical connection with reality have been subjects of interest for the working class. Through access to philosophical, artistic, and scientific knowledge, workers begin to understand and question their reality. The realization of their collective participation in political struggle brings workers closer to their most immediate demands. It also aligns them with the construction of structural changes in society, aiming toward a new political project that transcends class-based society (Abrantes, 2014; Batista & Lima, 2013; Hamada, 2017; Lusa *et al.*, 2019; Mariano & Lombardi, 2019; Mata, 2015; Saes, 2004; Schlesener, 2015; Schlesener, 2019; Silva, 2011).

Reflecting on critical education courses whose theoretical matrix encourages the transformation of the existing corporate model guided by capitalist logic allows workers to see themselves as capable of being the driving forces behind this change. At times, this transcendence of class distinctions seems distant, especially when considering the noticeable effects of the deterioration of living conditions. However, this circumstance should be allowed to become a

source of energy to marshal the resistance against the structural inequalities inherent in capitalist social structures.

Marx (2007a) emphasizes the historical-transformative potential of the working class, highlighting the fact that every class struggle is a political one. He advocates the union of workers as a path to human emancipation, positing that political education is an instrument of this struggle and is a strategic means for the reorganization of the “class itself,” the understanding of the challenges to be faced, and the recognition that political struggle is the solution (Batista & Lima, 2013; Carnut *et al.*, 2019).

This political struggle is supported by the utopia of building a new society that is free, solidary, and humanistic, in which a critical dialogue with the oppressed must be cultivated to overcome practices that reproduce oppression (Costa & Loureiro, 2017). The idea of an emancipated society motivates workers to objectively fight for its realization by presenting utopia as an imaginary representation of the future society that they aspire to create (Vasquez, 2010).

Improved existential conditions is a legitimate aspiration of the working class. Building a future together, cooperating with one another, and experiencing affection and solidarity in times of adversity have been a daily reality for all workers. Therefore, labels such as “utopian” should not diminish the importance of the political struggle. If this is the path, it must be approached with seriousness, resistance, and hope. Let critical political education courses assist in this teaching-learning process for workers by helping them develop their skills for activism.

Contributions of Marxist Critical Theory to Workers' Political Education

Critically educating an individual aware of the social, political, and cultural conjuncture implies undertaking an action that is committed to the fight against any type of domination, exclusion, and marginalization of the human condition. The focus should be on the centrality of the human being in (re)constructing history and overcoming violence and on providing opportunities for an educational process against social segregation (Araújo, 2019; Costa & Loureiro, 2017; Saes, 2004). Marx (2007b) corroborates this idea when he mentions in the third *Thesis on Feuerbach* that “the coincidence between alter[ing] circumstances and human activity or self-modification can only be apprehended and rationally understood as revolutionary practice.” In *The Holy Family*, he emphasizes the role of the material construction of consciousness by the workers themselves

[The workers] feel, in a very painful manner, the difference between being and thinking, between consciousness and life. They know that capital, money, wages, and the like are not at all ideal chimeras of their brains, but rather very practical and objective creations of their own self-alienation that they can and must overcome in a way that is also practical and objective. (Marx & Engels 2007, p. 66)

Engaging in revolutionary practice means understanding that the practice and theory of workers' actions are intrinsically linked. The theory helps foster class consciousness, enabling workers to reflect on their position within the class struggle, discuss whether their rights are being acknowledged or denied, and even consider the limitations that capitalist society imposes on human emancipation. Workers who are aware of their social role articulate their positions through their actions, guided by their philosophy of praxis.

Educators who engage with this revolutionary praxis ground their work in the theoretical-philosophical and methodological principles of historical-dialectical materialism (Batista & Lima, 2013; Hamada, 2017) and historical-critical pedagogy (Batista & Lima, 2013; Mata, 2015). In addition to these references, they draw inspiration from socialist pedagogy (Gonçalves *et al.*, 2019), popular education pedagogy (Freire, 2021), movement pedagogy (Mariano & Lombardi, 2019), and/or the interpreters of the social formation of Latin American countries.

References based on the principles of historical and dialectical materialism enable an understanding of educational reality and its contradictions within their historical and material determinations, situated within the context of reality (Hamada, 2017). This theory, in conjunction with the collective efforts of other critical educators, gives rise to Historical-Critical Pedagogy, which involves an educational process that fosters learning grounded in tangible knowledge and offers a dialectical perspective on historical and cultural development (Saviani, 2013; Abrantes, 2014).

Historical-Critical Pedagogy presents itself as a significant theoretical tool to intensify the struggles for a genuinely libertarian education. It is revolutionary in nature and committed to transforming society. This is why Demerval Saviani and his work are considered significant for understanding Brazilian social, political, and pedagogical thought. His trajectory of struggle for a just and egalitarian society and commitment to it have served as a reference for the critical education of thousands of educators (Batista & Lima, 2013; Mata, 2015).

The assumptions of these pedagogies support critical thinking especially in the critical education courses for Latin American workers. By examining the results of their own social circumstances, the workers begin to discuss how to act in a dialectical movement between planning and implementing their tangible radical activities. Therefore, they organize themselves through organizations, social movements, unions, or political parties to equip themselves.

In terms of the pedagogies used in these critical education courses, socialist pedagogy counts the historical and practical foundations of polytechnics among its main contributions. It understands omnilateral education as the education of the human being as a whole (Ciavatta, 2018; Gonçalves *et al.*, 2019; Saes, 2004). The concept of omnilateral education is also present in Marx's (2017) vision of education, in which he regards education as a combination of schooling and work. It is understood that education can only shape the new, complete individual, that is, shape the individual omnilaterally, when this person becomes aware of their historical potential, which was originally manifested in the milestones of the Industrial Revolution, as described in the following excerpt:

From the factory system, [...], springs the germ of the future education, which will combine, for all children from a certain age onward, productive work with teaching and gymnastics, not only [as] a way to increase social production but also [as] the sole method for producing human beings who are developed in their multiple dimensions.

These theoretical contributions reflect on omnilateral human development and public and free education and enable workers to consider popular power in order to fulfill this social function, as advocated by Marx (2007a), "Public and free education for all children; abolition of child labor in factories, as it is practiced today. Integration of education with material production, etc."

The struggle for free and equal access to knowledge has compelled workers to break away from the dominant power relations and privileges (Abrantes, 2014; Schlesener, 2015; McLaren, 2016). Marx (2012) guides workers toward the emancipation of the working class, which involves fighting not for new privileges and monopolies, but rather for equal rights and responsibilities and the abolition of all class dominance. Additionally, he criticizes the popular education that is subsidized by the State.

The limitations of the capitalist state concerning the popular education of the working class become evident when its connection to capital emerges. This connection reveals capital as a necessary entity for maintaining class division (Barboza & Lima, 2012). Knowledge has been used to disseminate and sustain hegemonic ideologies. Furthermore, educational actors who operate within the state express their ideology through their actions (Silva, 2011; Pinto & Oliveira, 2019).

The ideological power that the dominant classes exert over the dominated influences schools, religion, and the means of communication in such a way that the dominated often incorporate the power exerted by the dominant classes consensually, which explains the existing social reality. However, conflicts are inevitable, and when they emerge, the State reveals its violent and oppressive nature (Osório, 2019).

The forms of government that the State adopts to ensure this order of domination are intensified in Latin American countries and are more common in shielded democracies, dictatorships, or neo-fascist governments. This is why more precise critical analyses of the political and social situation are of utmost importance, given that they can bring about changes in the balance of power between the dominant and the dominated.

Therefore, workers' political struggle involves anti-State actions. While this does not mean that actions within the State should be denied or dismissed, it is important to recognize that they have limitations and that it is necessary to consider other forms of social relations that are not capitalist. Anti-capitalist struggles occur under a communal logic, which values non-expropriated labor. These alternative societal experiences are reflected in the critical education courses of councils and social movements, namely, in spaces where knowledge is socialized among workers.

Critical political education courses can assist workers in meeting this challenge by broadening the political scope of their critical thinking (Santos *et al.*, 2015; Carnut *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, they are a strategic means of strengthening, maintaining, and expanding emancipatory proposals (Lusa *et al.*, 2019). By including topics such as the economy, politics, and culture within the context of the philosophy of revolutionary praxis, they clarify how these education courses can be conducted in accordance with the interests of the working class (Schlesener, 2019).

The ongoing educational praxis assists workers' movements in getting closer to their most immediate demands by reflecting on society's contradictions and the political confrontation to build a new hegemony. Gramsci's theory refers to *The German Ideology* to underscore the concept of ideology as a worldview that permeates the emerging historical reality (Santos & Goulart, 2016).

At the same time, the theories and pedagogical practices of the working class in their struggle for Socialist Pedagogy, Popular Education, and Pedagogy of the Movements contribute to the socialization of knowledge through a revolutionary theoretical framework wherein knowledge is linked to human emancipation (Mariano & Lombardi, 2019). Several political

education courses promoted by social movements have based their program contents on this pedagogical triad, including the works of these critical educators as required reading material.

The political-pedagogical foundations of Freire's Popular Education were influenced by both the critical thinking of the Marxist tradition and the Christian social thought of egalitarian and humanist inspiration, which forms the basis of liberation theology (Silva & Reis, 2020; Mendes & Carnut, 2022). Therefore, these foundations were shaped by a dual influence that spread to Latin American popular and socialist movements. These influences enabled the adoption of emancipation/liberation strategies within the context of the radicalization process of the social issue (Costa & Loureiro, 2017; Gauthier & Tardif, 2014).

Freirean pedagogy has been influencing workers' critical thinking for over a hundred years. It dialogues with the oppressed, with those who advocate the practice of freedom, those who understand that the path is forged by walking, and workers who strive to improve the course of human history. It instills hope, but not the hope associated with the verb "to wait." Rather, it refers to the act of hoping, discussing ideas in a generous and welcoming way. It is no coincidence that this approach resonates with those who fight for critical education, as it educates through collective construction, in which the active participation of people leads to the understanding of the tangible reality of society.

Freire argued that leading figures or revolutionary agents do not arise from nowhere. They are formed dialectically by their circumstances. To revolutionize society, it is necessary to change thought, but to change thought, it is necessary to revolutionize society. It is not, therefore, an individual activity, but a collective struggle that includes thinking and speaking as social activities (McLaren, 2021).

In Brazil, the Movement Pedagogy has been a focus of pedagogical interest, specifically directed toward social movements such as the Landless Movement and the Movement of People Affected by Dams. Its theoretical references draw from the ideas of the Pecebist political party (Partido Comunista Brasileiro — PCB), which relate to the former communist hegemony and Freire's methodological concepts and incorporate works by Brazilian authors on Brazilian society (Caldart & Villas, 2017; Perruso, 2017).

Incorporating the works of these interpreters in critical political courses has facilitated discussions on the social formation of Brazilian capitalism and the origin of social issues within this context. It has also enhanced the understanding of the dependency process of this capitalism as well as its methods of exploiting salaried labor. Gaining clearer insight into these aspects enables workers to strive politically for a new social order, balancing the optimism of action with the pessimism of criticism.

Reflecting on all these critical influences on workers' political education courses reveals that they remain both relevant and indispensable for the political struggle. Understanding their particularities requires ongoing dedication in a society where workers are being overexploited. Strength and resistance to adversity are needed. In this context, mobilizing political actions for revolutionary praxis continues to be the focus.

Final Remarks

Marxist theoretical insights into critical political education courses create educational opportunities that enable workers to reflect on the issues that trouble them in their tangible reality.

By discussing their perceptions of the existing society, they place themselves within the class struggle and dispel the illusion that the State is a neutral entity working for the common good of society. On the contrary, the State operates to ensure the prevailing social order, prioritizing the interests of the dominant class over those of the dominated.

The overcoming of class barriers and establishment of a different, more just, and egalitarian society with access to free public education for everyone has been the ambition of the working class. It is with the objective of deepening their understanding of this political struggle that workers have shown an increasing interest in critical political education courses.

The Marxist theoretical perspective aids in the development of revolutionary critical consciousness. It relies on the transformative historical potential of the working class. Furthermore, its theoretical, philosophical, and methodological assumptions assist in understanding the complexities of workers' lives.

By drawing from the foundations of dialectical-historical materialism or historical-critical pedagogy, workers are able to broaden their knowledge within a structured understanding of reality. They do this by embracing the inherent contradictions present in the dynamics of their social reality, guided by the internal logic of capital, which is characterized by the pursuit of value.

The concepts of socialist pedagogy contribute to the construction of this revolutionary practice, while revisiting the historical and practical foundations of polytechnics, whose vision is to reclaim the omnilateral approach of creating an educational process that would foster the development of the multiple abilities of the human being. Education then becomes an instrument that integrates knowledge and action to liberate exploited workers, as it encourages the development of political actions focused on transforming reality.

Freirean pedagogy follows the same premise of popular education as a practice of freedom. It views education as a means to liberate human beings from their oppressed condition. This liberation is executed through an ongoing political struggle for de-alienation and free labor, facilitated by horizontal and dialogical relationships that guides individuals toward emancipation.

Movement pedagogy, which is informed by these theoretical frameworks, facilitates knowledge exchange among participants in these social movements. This enables them to contextualize their social realities within their current socio-historical period, making it possible to implement these pedagogies in everyday practice. Consequently, understanding the works of interpreters of the social formation of Latin American countries contributes to the analysis of the unique circumstances faced by super-exploited workers and their legacy of colonial slavery.

Learning from these revolutionary pedagogies not only supports the dissemination of this knowledge but also contributes to stimulating the political action of workers, who, motivated by the urge to subvert the logic of capital, can forge paths to tangible radical transformations. Therefore, this political struggle is an active, conscious, and ongoing process that requires pedagogical alignment, and more importantly, political organization.

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