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The High school sense for students in state public schools

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Abstract

In this study, we aimed to raise the discussion about the meaning of secondary education for the students of the state educational network, having as theoretical reference the Historical-Cultural Psychology. Empirical data collected through individual interviews with eight high school students from two state colleges. The analyzes were based on theorizations of authors who deal with the subject in question, especially in the studies of Lev Semenovich Vigotski and Alexei Nikolaievich Leontiev. The results point to the absence of meanings related to the study activity, since the students do not attribute value to the learning itself. They point to personal relationships (friendships) and expectations of career success in the future as motivational factors for attending high school. Although participants say that attending high school is relevant to their lives, they are not clear about the importance of what they learn in it for their development, which results in the non-establishment of study activity, in the sense advocated by Leontiev.

Keywords: High school; state public schools; historical-cultural Psychology.

Sentido do ensino médio para estudantes de escolas públicas estaduais

Resumo

Neste estudo objetivamos suscitar a discussão acerca do sentido do ensino médio para os estudantes da rede estadual de ensino, tendo como referencial teórico a Psicologia Histórico-Cultural. Os dados empíricos foram coletados por meio de entrevistas individuais, realizadas com oito estudantes do ensino médio, pertencentes a dois colégios estaduais. As análises pautaram-se em teorizações de autores que tratam da temática em questão, em especial nos estudos de Lev Semenovich Vigotski e Alexei Nikolaievich Leontiev. Os resultados apontam para a ausência de sentidos vinculados à atividade de estudo, pois os estudantes não atribuem valor à aprendizagem em si. Eles apontam as relações pessoais (amizades) e as expectativas de alcançarem sucesso profissional no futuro, como fatores motivacionais para frequentarem o ensino médio. Embora os participantes afirmem que cursar o ensino médio é relevante para suas vidas, eles não têm clareza acerca da importância do que aprendem nele para o seu desenvolvimento, o que resulta no não estabelecimento da atividade de estudo, no sentido defendido por Leontiev.

Palavras-chave: Ensino médio; escolas estaduais; Psicologia histórico-cultural.

Sentido de la enseñanza secundaria para estudiantes de escuelas públicas estatales

Resumen

En este estudio se tuvo por objetivo suscitar la discusión acerca del sentido de la enseñanza secundaria para los estudiantes de la red estadual de enseñanza, teniendo como referencial teórico la Psicología Histórico-Cultural. Los datos empíricos fueron recolectados por intermedio de entrevistas individuales, realizadas con ocho estudiantes de la enseñanza secundaria, pertenecientes a dos colegios estatales. Los análisis se efectuaron en teorizaciones de autores que tratan de la temática en cuestión, en especial en los estudios de Lev Semenovich Vygotsky y Alexei Nikolaievich Leontiev. Los resultados apuntan para la ausencia de sentidos vinculados a la actividad de estudio, pues los estudiantes no atribuyen valor al aprendizaje en sí mismo. Ellos apuntan las relaciones personales (amistades) y, las expectativas de alcanzar éxito profesional en el futuro, como factores motivacionales para acudir a la enseñanza secundaria. Aunque los participantes afirmen que cursar la enseñanza secundaria es relevante para sus vidas, ellos no tienen clareza acerca de la importancia de lo que aprenden en él para su desarrollo, lo que resulta en el no establecimiento de la actividad de estudio, en el sentido defendido por Leontiev.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza secundaria; escuelas estatales; Psicología histórico-cultural.

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Introduction

Although high school, which integrates the last three or four years of Basic Education in Brazil, has historically been an educational stage that has undergone several reforms. Many of the problems it encountered have not been overcome, such as the definition of its curriculum, resources for its maintenance and expansion, teacher-training, quality of teaching, levels of approval, serial / age distortion and avoidance. In terms of their function, there is also a great impasse, coexisting with the idea of preparation for work and preparation for continuing the studies.

Bounded to these great questions is the way in which students' experience it and the personal sense they attribute to this educational stage, which in turn has an impact on the posture they take in front of their studies, resulting in more or less appropriation of the knowledge in it worked. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the meanings of high school for students at this level of education.

In order to be able to discuss such questions, we will first present a brief summary of the history of high school and, in the following; we will approach the concept of personal sense and its interface with study activity, based on the assumptions of Historical-Cultural Psychology.

Brief rescue of the history of high school in Brazil

A look at the history of Brazil shows us that the political and economic movements experienced by the country had a decisive role in the ways of thinking and organizing Brazilian education. With regard to the history of high school education, this can clearly perceive, since in each historical moment organized to attend to different publics and demands, sometimes assuming a more theoretical character, sometimes having a technical focus, but always in response to the Brazil's socioeconomic context. The conflicts between the interests of conservatives and progressives, their struggles and disputes, sometimes attended by governments due to the country's economic movement, have brought about the nuances that characterize the history of high school in Brazil. However, to a lesser or greater degree, the structural duality at this level of education, characterized by the existence of distinct branches of education for the elites and for the working class, has been maintained from the beginning of its organization to the present day.

As pointed out by Xavier (1990), in Brazil, high school was initially the space for the formation of the elite, having a curriculum focused on the humanities, organized in principle within the model of Jesuit seminary school, whose purpose was to prepare a small portion of the population for admission exams in higher education. Nevertheless, according to Xavier (1990), Kuenzer (2000), Romanelli (2012) and Moehlecke (2012), it was in the 1930s, from the educational reforms initiated by Francisco Campos, that high school began considered of as the masses, who needed professionalism to work in the industries that were emerging in Brazil.

From that moment, a succession of reforms has carried out. According to Romanelli (2012), one of them is the Capanema Reform, promulgated through the Organic Law of Secondary Education (Decree-Law 4,244 / 42). The specific decrees for professional education, in three distinct lines: Organic Law of Education Industrial (Decree-Law 4. 073, of January 30, 1942); Organic Laws of Commercial Education (Decree-Law 6,141 of December 1943) and Agricultural Education (Decree-Law 9,613, August 1946).

As stated by Saviani (2008), these reforms evidenced the dualistic character of high education, since such an organization envisaged at most the poor population, the completion of technical education (industrial, commercial or agricultural) and for the elite, completion of high education, followed by higher education.

According to Moehlecke (2012), it was only with the first LDB (Law No. 4024/61) that the equivalence between the so-called secondary education in the propaedeutic and vocational (industrial, commercial, agricultural and normal) to enable them to enter higher education. This is one of the main points of change in relation to previous proposals.

However, as stated by Xavier (1990), if the project for high school fed hopes of ascending poor people through education, what was proposed for higher education already denounced that this would not be for everyone and that "selection" it would be based on innate aptitudes, the "natural" difference between better and worse, more hardworking and less hardworking. Therefore, the possibility of equivalence between high school courses has opened, but the doors of higher education have closed with rigid selective processes. In addition, it maintains the privileges to the higher classes, but in a disguised way.

Another important movement in the history of high school was during the period of the military dictatorship when, according to Moehlecke (2012), the compulsory professionalization for high school was established, through Law no. 5,692 / 71. However, this measure proved its ineffectiveness, since, as Nascimento (2007) points out, the country did not have the human and material resources to implement it, which in fact never occurred.

Later, after the new democratization of Brazilian society in 1985, with the approval of the Federal Constitution of 1988, major changes in secondary education were defined and implemented, as Moraes (2006) points out, collective rights were recognized in this constitution. Thus, in a special way, the Citizen Constitution defined the duties of the State in relation to the expansion of access to secondary education, in an obligatory and free of charge.

It is worth remembering that, in this new historical moment, marked by the globalization and predominance of neoliberal ideology, new educational demands arose. Thus, with regard to secondary education, the establishment of the new LDB (9394/96, 1996) moved in the opposite direction to Law 5692/71, since the orientation directed towards the integration of this teaching, aiming at the formation general. Thus, from the new LDB, high education integrated with basic education, corresponding to the last level, with a minimum

duration of three years. However, a more detailed analysis reveals their contradictions and weaknesses, as stated by Bremer and Kuenzer (2012, p.6):

... although the overcoming of the duality between intellectual and manual work is indicated in the legislation, in practice, where duality actually occurs from the private appropriation of the means of production, it is accentuated by the rupture of the relation between qualification and occupation, new ways of organizing and managing work under the flexible accumulation regime.

Thus, to correct this mismatch with reality, in the year following the promulgation of LDB 9394/96, through Decree no 2.208/97, according to Moehlecke (2012), again separating general high education from vocational education. In the same way, introducing according to Brandão (2011, p.197), "a new structure for vocational training at the technical level was established idea of development of competences as the central objective of the new curricular guidelines of this level of education", with an extreme appreciation of "active methods".

In accordance with Bremer and Kuenzer (2012), this decree established a parallel network of professional education, which caused the break with the apparent unity that the LDB tried to bring and the definitive disruption with the concept of professional education integrated to high school. According to Brandão (2011, p. 197), "One of the objectives of this separation was to make vocational education at the intermediate level shorter and, therefore, faster."

Only after the issuance of Decree n. 5.154, in 2004, the possibility of reintegration between high school and technical and vocational education was restored, "by means of the 'integrated high school education' modality that began to compose the text of the LDB by virtue of Law No. 11.741 / 2008" (Kuenzer, 2010, p. 864), still in force.

However, in spite of the many discussions and regulations made since then, and the establishment of new Curricular Guidelines for high school education, as well as the significant increase in access to this level of average, occurring from the middle of the decade of 1990 in Brazil, the problems that affect this stage of education are still numerous. Among them, a very frequent one refers to the complaint of the teachers about the lack of interest in the studies, demonstrated by the students. At the same time, it is common to hear from students that they do not know why they should study all those content.

Understanding that this complaint is not something that explained by individual factors of the students, since it is present at different moments in the history of education and in various school contexts. We will resort to the understanding of Historical-Cultural Psychology about the formation of personal senses and their connection to the study activity, in an attempt to establish relations between the students' senses and the attitude they assume toward the studies.

Historical-Cultural Psychology and the concept of personal sense

According to Historical-Cultural Psychology, it is through the acquisition of the knowledge produced by humankind that human being becomes human, that is, the human psyche constructed from the subjects' learning, first spontaneously and later in an organized way through school education. Thus, the child begins to construct his knowledge about the world from his concrete experiences, in which the relations of mediation between the subjects are indispensable. In these relations, the child constructs the spontaneous concepts with which she operates in a practical way, but on which he/she cannot aware, for her knowledge based on empiricism. However, when the child goes to school and meets the scientific concepts - which have already organized within a system and have relations mediated with objects - through other concepts, can generalize and therefore become aware of them. The acquisition of scientific concepts, in turn, modifies the structure of thinking, allowing greater capacity for generalization and establishment of relationships. This alters the functioning of thought qualitatively and ultimately enables one to achieve thought in concepts.

Considering these presuppositions, school education is fundamental to the development of higher psychological functions, thinking in concepts and, therefore, the consciousness of subjects. However, it should emphasize it is not any kind of teaching that promotes development. Asbahr (2011, p. 100) states, "Learning takes place depending on the direction it has the subject, which requires the teacher to structure the learning activity so that the objects to be learned take place in the student activity".

As we have already said, the process of acquiring what produced by humankind comes from the mediations that established in the interrelationships in the social environment. However, human being is not a passive being in this process; he/she has internalized what given in culture, but only in a particular way. Thus, although in certain historical moments certain social configurations are present, the people will incorporate them in a singular way, according to their concrete experiences, of the place they occupy in the social relations of a given social structure, which results in the individual differences, in the different human personalities.

Therefore, in the process of acquiring the social meanings of words, by internalizing them, human being fixes on them his/her personal impressions - marked by the affections and motives that drive his action -, which is called **sense**. Drawing on the studies on language developed by the French psychologist F. Paulham, Vigotski introduced the concept of the **sense** of the word in Historical-Cultural Psychology, differentiating it from the **meaning** of the word, and it defined as follows:

... the sense of a word is the sum of all the psychological facts it awakens in our consciousness. Thus, sense is always a dynamic, fluid, complex formation that has several zones of varying stability. The meaning is only one of those zones

of sense that the word acquires in the context of some discourse, and, in addition, a more stable, uniform and exact zone. (Vigotski, 2009, p.465).

In this perspective, the sense of a word is always in-constant and therefore inexhaustible, variable according to context. By its dynamic nature, as Asbahr (2010, p. 86) states, "Sense enriches the word from its context and this is the fundamental law of the dynamics of the meaning of words."

In the text *Thought and Word*, Vigotski (2009) presents the idea that in order to understand one's discourse, in addition to understanding words, one must understand the motives behind that verbal thought because, as he says: "Understanding effective and full of the thought of others only becomes possible when we discover its effective profound affective-volitional cause" (p.479).

In introducing the question of motivation, Vigotski (2009) confers on human consciousness a higher character than thought itself, for it is she who "feels and thinks" (p. 485). For him, thought and language are the key to understanding the nature of human consciousness. Only from the words, in which are embodied the generalized representations of the practical consciousness of men, is it possible to arrive at the historical nature of human consciousness. Poetically, he explains this relationship:

Consciousness reflected in the word like the sun in a drop of water. The word is to consciousness as the small world is to the great world, as the living cell is to the organism, as the atom to the cosmos. It is the little world of consciousness. The conscious word is the microcosm of human consciousness. (Vigotski, 2009, p. 486).

In accord to Leontiev (2004), the conscience has constituted by the sensible content, the social signification and the personal sense. The first of them encompasses sensations, images of perception and representations, is the immediate content of consciousness and therefore is the basis for its existence, since it transforms the outer stimulus into fact of consciousness. Already the social meaning corresponds to the crystallized generalizations of social practice, which elaborated by men and reflect the existing objective reality, through language. They are, so to speak, the products of social relations, and because they are historical and in constant transformation, meanings change, thus reflecting the dynamics of social relations. The author also points out that, at birth, subject has faced with a system of significations ready, which must appropriated in their process of humanization. From this process of appropriation, these meanings become the consciousness of individuals.

However, as we have said previously, each individual will appropriate this set of meanings, in a greater or lesser degree, and will do it in an active, not mechanical way, will imprint on them their impressions, affections, feelings, motives, according to their experiences, their position in social relations, finally, according to the **personal sense** that gives meaning to it. According to Leontiev (1983, p. 125, our translation),

The difference of significations, of the personal senses, is equal to the sensitive plot of consciousness, does not have an existence "supra individual", "non-psychological." If the external sensibility relates to the consciousness of the subject the significations with the reality of the objective world, the personal sense relates them to the reality of their own life within that world, with their motivations. Personal sense is also, what gives rise to the subjectivity of human consciousness.

As Leontiev (1983) explains, the process of the formation of the senses, of the internal movement of the individual consciousness, occurs in the activity of human being, that is, the movement of human object activity generates it. However, what is activity for Historical-Cultural Psychology? According to the author:

The activity is a molar unit, not additive of the corporal and material subject. In a narrower sense, that is, at the psychological level, the psychic reflex, whose real function is that it orientates the subject in the world of objects, mediates this unity of life. In other words, activity is not a reaction, nor is a set of reactions, if not a system that has a structure, internal steps and transformations, development. (Leontiev, 1983, p. 66, our translation).

In accordance with Leontiev (1983), activity only exists in relationships that have established in society and is always oriented towards an object, due to the existence of a need, also created in social relations. The needs, in turn, have always linked to a motive, which guides the activity. The motives incite the activity and, through them, one can understand the personal sense that is behind a certain activity. "Conscious sense translates the relation of motive to the end" (Leontiev 2004, p. 103), since every activity presupposes the existence of a motive. The activity has carried out through **actions**, which are its fundamental components. Leontiev (1983, p. 83, our translation) thus defines them: "We call action to the process that subordinates the representation of that result that must be achieved, that is, a process subordinated to a conscious goal."

It is important to emphasize that Leontiev (1983) differentiates **activity** and **action** from their relation to motives, so that, for him, only the processes in which the object to which the object and the objective coincide have called activity. However, he draws a parallel between the two concepts by saying that, just as the concept of motive relates to the concept of activity, the concept of objective relates to the concept of action.

If, in activity, object and objective (motive and purpose) coincide, in action, the object is always a "recognized direct target", which will arouse it. However, although distinct in their relation to motives, activity and action have a particular, dynamic connection, so that an activity can become an action and vice versa. In addition, it is due to this movement, that is, "This is the way, in which all activities and new relations with reality arise" (Leontiev, 2014, p. 69).

How does this occur? In order to explain this process, Leontiev (1983, 2014) differentiates motives-ends according to their relation to the activity, dividing them into “motive-generating senses or really effective motifs” and “stimulus motive or just understandable motifs.” The former have characterized by giving meaning to the activity, so that the subjects are aware of the reasons that lead them to the activity and their actions. Nevertheless, the stimulus motives do not generate sense; they only impel the subject to action.

The activity has linked to the motive, and the action has linked to the objective (purpose), to what must be done. Thus, as Leontiev (2014) points out, only through the analysis of the motives can one arrive at the understanding of the main forms of activity of the individuals and, therefore, to the sense attributed by them to the objects and phenomena of the social world. Put another way, to understand the personal senses, you have to understand the motives that drive the activity.

With regard to the study activity, and bearing in mind that the learning process requires the awareness of the contents, the sense of the reason for studying should be clear to the student, because it is the personal sense that will drive or not to the study activity.

Therefore, the present article aims to discuss the senses of high school for students in the state public network, as we consider that the students’ understanding of the senses in relation to high school can provide interesting information to foster discussions and guide confrontations with regard to current challenges in the interior of the high school.

Method

The present study had carried out from an exercise in the method of historical-dialectical materialism, which constitutes the philosophical basis of Historical-Cultural Psychology. This choice had made in view of our appropriation of Vigotski’s (1996) conception that the objects of Psychology can only be truly apprehended from a method that integrates subjective and objective, ideal and material, subject and society. It is only through a historical and dialectical analysis of phenomena that it is possible to study them in their complexity, not by reducing them, not by simplifying them, but by understanding them as a totality.

The empirical study involved eight adolescents (five girls and three boys), high school students, aged 15 to 17 years, belonging to two institutions of education of the state public network, located in a medium-sized city in the countryside of Paraná. In this study, we sought to collect data through interviews based on a semi-structured script, in order to investigate the meanings attributed by students to high school.

Data collection procedures

We have contacted with two educational institutions of the state network, one located in the central region of the city and the other in the periphery, presented the research

objectives and requested permission to conduct interviews with some of its students. In view of the acceptance of both institutions, all procedures determined by the Ethics Committee of the State University of Maringá followed up.

After approval of the research project by the Ethics Committee, contact with the educational institutions participating in the research resumed and pedagogical coordinators had asked to indicate some students who might be interested in participating in the research. It is important to mention that we decided to request students had nominated because of the small number of participants from each school. No qualifications had made regarding the educational performance of the possible participants, so that, in our request, we only asked for the indication of students, boys and girls, who attended high school.

To those indicated, we made the invitation to participate in the research, on a voluntary basis. Before accepting the students, the terms of free and informed consent for minors had delivered, which had signed by the adolescents and their parents. With the consent, we scheduled the interviews, which carried out in the schools themselves, at the time of class. Finally, after all the interviews, which recorded, we transcribed the material in full, so that we could then begin the analysis of data.

Results and discussions

Through the interviews, we try to investigate the sense of high school education for the participants of the research, to arrive at the singular expression of the subjectivity of the adolescents, which dialectically, linked to the totality of which they are part. To do so, these are the questions, which they have asked by the researches: a) what does it mean for you to be in high school? b) What is the importance of what you learn in high school for your life?

Next, we will present the results, discussing them in the light of Historical-Cultural Psychology. To illustrate we will use excerpts from the speeches of the participants, whose names have replaced by other fictitious ones.

When questioned about what it meant for them to be in high school, the respondents’ responses varied and brought individual aspects of that experience, meaning for each student. Two teenagers consider high school as a win because there are people in their families or colleagues who did not have the opportunity or did not take advantage of it. To exemplify, we present the speech of one of them:

That I have won great victories. That I skipped elementary school and I arrived in high school, which for me that is a victory. It is ... I of my family, of all my cousins, I am the only one, the oldest I am the only one in high school. So that to me is like this ... a pleasure, right? For me, for my family I am the pride, because I did not drop the studies ... So for me it is a victory. (Juliana, 17 years, 2nd year HS)

In the above speech, we note that the sense of victory related to the fact that the student lives in his family with people who did not have access to this level of education. By perceiving this exclusion, being able to attend high school has the sense of obtaining a different opportunity, which must be harnessed, so that this perception becomes one of the reasons for the activity of study.

We must remember that the senses also marked by the social position that each occupies in society. This is evident in this case because, because it comes from a family with low levels of education, education assumes a *status* of overcoming, mainly by the idea still present in society that it can be redemptive and reduce social inequalities. It is worth emphasizing that, as the pedagogical ideas of the new school and constructivism continue predominant in the educational context - although with new style, neo-school vision and neo-constructivism. As defined by Saviani (2008) -, this conception is in full force, being more attributed to individuals the responsibility for their success, because it is up to them to seize the opportunities and achieve this victory.

Consistent with this idea, Cecilia established a relationship between the sense of high school and her active stance in the search for knowledge to expand her education. In her speech, it is clear the incorporation of the ideas of the pedagogies of "learning to learn", as a constant need for improvement, expressed in the consecutive accomplishment of courses, being the student, protagonist in the construction of his knowledge.

Very. Because I have ... I crave a lot. Therefore, I am always looking for is ... more information, with teachers, whenever I can. I ask in addition to the content he is studying, so that I can have another training to enter college, to enter a college, and then do a post, and so on. (Cecilia, 17, 3rd HS)

A teenager understands that attending high school is completing a stage of her training, which credits her to start another stage, higher education. *"I'm coming to college (laughs). Soon I am leaving"* (Elisa, 16, 2nd HSG, I2). For another student, high school has the meaning of building a good future for you.

Three other students also punctuate the acquisition of knowledge as the personal meaning of high school for them, as illustrated by the following: *"Ah, more for you to learn more, to have more knowledge. I think that is for me, is not it? It is important that you have high school. It is more for you to know new things and such do you understand."* (Clara, 15, 1st HSI, I2).

As you can see, the meanings are varied and relate to the personal experiences, the expectations that each one attributes to this stage of teaching. However, it is worth mentioning that only three of the eight adolescents interviewed relate the meaning of secondary education with the acquisition of knowledge, which, according to Historical-Cultural Psychology, linked to the true function of the school, which is the transmission, to new generation of knowledge produced by humankind throughout its history.

However, although these students affirm that high school has the meaning of acquiring new knowledge, when asked about the importance of contents learned in high school for their lives, most of them had difficulties in answering, making even pauses in there and sometimes asking to repeat the question. Of the eight participants, five established a direct relationship between learned content and usefulness in everyday life, in practical and simple everyday matters such as financial mathematics, knowledge about the functioning of their body and use of the Portuguese language to communicate. We present an excerpt to illustrate:

(Break). Depends on what. In chemistry itself. We are learning about nuclear bombs. We see that it is bad and that we cannot practice, right? And ... Mathematics, these things, we see ... Math last quarter was financial mathematics. Therefore, we learn that ... interest business, these things that we can take to life, because if you leave the interest very high, very low, the profit, the losses you can have, etc. And things that can happen ... Most of the things you learn in high school are for that. And ... biology you learn the thing of the body and then you learn the plants ... Just as we were studying this quarter, learn the things from the root, so for those who want to be an agronomist, have to study enough biology, especially in the second year. (Gustavo, 16 years old, 2nd HSG, I1)

From the reading of this answer, we noticed that the relationships made between what has been learned in high school and its usefulness to life were given in a simplistic way, that is, the student confronted the contents and their direct utility in practical life, as well as the others, whose lines were not presented here. Therefore, they cannot realize the utility of more complex content. This lack of clarity in knowing why some content is studied causes teaching to become mechanical, meaningless to the student and, consequently, he loses his interest in learning, and this is one of the great complaints of teachers at this level of education.

As Leontiev (1983) explains, lack of awareness of motives and purposes prevents study from being truly an activity. It at most is an action, carried out to achieve the goal of getting notes in the tests and selective processes. This distance between motives and purposes has an impact on the posture that adolescents assume in relation to the study and can explain the famous "lack of interest" shown by the students in front of the activities proposed by the school. This is because the need to learn content has not linked to its importance as knowledge, but only in its restricted use in passing examinations.

Therefore, what motivates them is, in most cases, the approval and not the learning. In this case, the study is not an activity, but only as an action toward a goal. Therefore, the sense of attending high school is not to appropriate knowledge and from them to promote a kind of complex thinking, but to fulfill the tasks required and to achieve the diploma of this level of education, which can serve both to fulfill a requirement for a job vacancy, and to enter higher education.

Of the eight interviewees, one of them emphasized that they cannot see practical utility for some content and, therefore, they do not need to work in high school. Two other students were not even able to establish these relationships and gave vague answers, saying again that high school will be important in the future, but without explaining why, as we can see in the answer below:

What is the matter? (Long pause). Look ... importance ... (silence) ... Of course! Many things from here I am going to take for my whole life. Many things I have learned here I am going to take for my entire life. Just like when I go to college, I will remember many things that I learned here. Out of college, did you get it? (Juliana, 17 years old, 2nd HSG, 11)

Some interviewees explained in more detail what motivates them to come to class. Three of them linked their motivation to the desire to achieve their goals in the future, as exemplified in the following excerpt: "... the reason I am here is because I want to be here. It is because I like to be here and I want to have a future ... that says, ah, you will have a good future" (Carmen, 16, HSG, 12).

Two students emphasized a desire for learning, a willingness to learn as the main motivational factor, although one of them also emphasized social relationships with school friends and the encouragement of the family as motivating factors.

What really motivates me is learning. It is mainly learning the things that I like, that I have enough interest. And... not to mention the social question as well. The social issue sure helps a lot, because come here and know that you will be present with your ... you end up making friends, right? And then know that you will be close to people you made a lot of friendship, is already intimate, is interesting, very interesting. It's one of the things I think attracts many people, actually. It is one thing that encourages many students is the social issue itself. (Murilo, 16 years old, 2nd HSG, 12)

According to Murilo, although what motivates him most to go to school is to learn, the social relations in the school space, that is, the coexistence with his colleagues, is also a factor of extreme importance. In such a way that, as he himself says, can either stimulate the student to go to college or lead to dropping out, if he has difficulties in relating and establishing friendships.

In accordance with Leal (2010), this great importance attributed to coexistence with peers, which becomes for many as the main motivation factor, demonstrates how the school has failed to develop its role and make sense for the students, that is, can be understood in its function and central meaning. In the research conducted by the author with adolescents, the coexistence with colleagues in the school environment was pointed out by the participants as the most striking and positive characteristic of the school.

The attribution of greater importance for the coexistence than for the learning process in the school environment reveals the inefficiency of the educational work carried out. As

discussed by Anjos and Duarte (2016), it is up to the school to produce knowledge needs systematized in students, thus recovering their role in the development of these students as subjects in the middle of the formation phase of thinking in concepts, in the development of their consciousness.

However, we must always remember that the school has not disconnected from society, or rather; it is not configured as an area independent of material conditions. Thus, the devaluation of knowledge in favor of the formation of "competences" for easy adaptation makes it difficult for the educational process to achieve a true knowledge appropriation. Thus, this split between the meaning of the school and the sense it takes for students, especially during high school, since the links between the content and the concrete reality has not explained marks, the educational practice. In this way, students cannot understand why they should learn those contents and realize their importance beyond their practical and immediate use.

Final considerations

In this study, we sought to understand what the students' senses about high school. As it was possible to verify by means of the statements of the interviewees, the sense to attend secondary school has linked to their approval, due to the need to obtain a diploma at this level of education, so that they can try a job vacancy or continue their studies. Their motivations have related to the promise of a better life in the future, conquered through the studies, as well as the coexistence with their colleagues, in the present. In this sense, although some students have spoken that they attend high school to acquire more knowledge, learning itself is not the focus, because the appropriation of knowledge has not perceived as necessary for its development. The importance of education has understood to be from the demands of the labor market, that is, the need to acquire more knowledge to gain better chances in the market.

From these results, we consider it is necessary to rescue the true role of the school, placing the focus of the work on the transmission of knowledge produced and systematized throughout history by humanity. The knowledge learned in the school space must articulate with the social practice, with the real world. In this sense, the study activity becomes a reality, because as the students can understand why they should learn those contents and how important they are for the development of their thinking and their understanding of the world, the act of studying will make sense. Only then, going to high school will not mean merely completing a cycle, but it will mean having the opportunity to acquire knowledge that has built by men and made possible the incredible advances in the way of production of the means of life. Knowledge that needs to be socialized in order for all to have access to cultural wealth and to reach the maximum development of their human potential, with a new awareness and a new vision about the world, to be able to promote changes in social structure.

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