



Ensaio: Avaliação e Políticas Públicas em Educação

ISSN: 0104-4036

ISSN: 1809-4465

Fundação CESGRANRIO

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Ensaio: Avaliação e Políticas Públicas em Educação,
vol. 26, no. 100, 2018, July-September, pp. 706-722

Fundação CESGRANRIO

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-40362018002601609>

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The training of the teacher in the 21th century: an approach with the history of medieval education*

Terezinha Oliveira ^a

Abstract

Our purpose is to deal with teacher education in Brazil, with the history and history of education as our guiding principle, based on texts by Thomas Aquinas. For us, in the process of teacher training, the professionals involved must be clear that teaching and learning occur when these characters are aware of the need to understand the intellectual “essence” of man. Therefore, we recover the Dominican master to make explicit that knowledge becomes effective when there is an understanding that men are, par excellence, social beings. Based on these principles, we will examine data about teaching in Brazil, relying on the reflections of the medieval master to show the relevance to a country whose people have knowledge acquired by and in history. In theoretical terms, our arguments follow the principles of social history, with special attention to the idea of long duration.

Keywords: Knowledge. Thomas Aquinas. Teacher training.

1 Introduction

The purpose of this text is to reflect on the relevance of the history of medieval education, based on writings by Thomas Aquinas (1224/25–1274), with special emphasis on Question 47, On Teaching, contained in *Questões disputadas sobre a verdade*, for the question of teacher education in Brazil in the 21st century. In this respect, it is important to emphasize that we will not treat, within the limits of this text, the curricula or teaching methodologies for the training of this professional. Rather, our focus will be on the understanding of education as a historical-philosophical principle (SAVIANI; DUARTE, 2010; SEVERINO, 2000), in which people acquire knowledge and are able to present social projects to the collective. Among these, we select the one that we judge the most important, the formation of the person.

* Pesquisa Financiada pelo CNPq.

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Recebido em: 06 fev 2018

Aceito em: 12 jun 2018

Considering that the formation of the person is a broad process, we emphasize the fact that the history of medieval education is a discipline that must be part of the formal content of learning of the teacher as it integrates a roll of knowledge of a social nature, which implies in the social behaviors of man. Thus, teaching and learning of these contents accompany the formal and non-formal education of the individual. In this regard, we take, as an example, the formulations of Libâneo (2006) to evidence our understanding of teaching.

Thus, the object of pedagogical science is the study and systematic reflection on the educational phenomenon, on educational practices in all its dimensions. A scientific field may be a course, but rather one needs to know what its epistemological premises, its conceptual body, and its investigative methodologies are. If a more comprehensive field of knowledge is admitted, it is necessary to admit subfields of knowledge, such as, for example, education theory, history of education, organization of school work, didactics (which deals with teaching) etc. (LIBÂNEO, 2006, p. 849).

For us, teaching involves a complex web of knowledge that cannot be limited to the practical activity of the classroom, because even though it is essential, it is necessary to be aware that the act of being a teacher implies being a formative person in its full meaning. Thus, we teach students not only content, but also ways of living. For this reason, teacher training must be as broad as possible so that it does not become a “[...] pedagogue-teacher [...], participant in management, nothing else [...]” as Libâneo points out (2006, p. 846). Therefore, the knowledge of the sciences, politics and general conditions of the historical time when one lives is essential to the formation of the teacher.

2 Brazilian scenery

The future teacher, especially the one in the initial grades, cannot ignore the reality experienced by the children to be formed by them. Brazil goes through an intense social crisis that directly affects human development and this cannot be ignored by all who, directly or indirectly, are responsible for life in common, as the teacher.

From this scenario, we highlight four aspects that we deem important.

The first aspect refers to the poverty rates that devastate the country. According to the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Program

(UNDP), which presented data for 2015, among the 188 countries analyzed, Brazil ranked 79th, with a poor index of 0.754, behind countries such as Albania (0.764), Mexico (0.762) and Azerbaijan (0.759). These data need to be considered, since these countries live in more serious risk situations than Brazil. In relation to the Latin American nations, Brazil was below Latin American countries according to the following indices: “Chile, for example, was in 38th place, with HDI 0.847; Argentina, ranked 45th (HDI 0.827); Uruguay, in 54th place (IDH 0.795); and Venezuela, in 71st place (IDH 0.767)” (MATOSO, 2017). In relation to the Mercosur countries, the picture of Brazil does not improve, as it is only ahead of Paraguay.

This picture needs to be considered when we reflect on teacher education and the level of Brazilian education, since education is one of the items analyzed by the UN to define the HDI of a country and ours is quite delicate. However, it is not only because it is one of the indices considered by the UN, but also especially because human formation is a condition for the preservation of society (ARENDT, 2009). Therefore, it is not an item, but the essence of human existence.

The second aspect to be considered and associated with the first refers to the number of illiteracy and functional illiteracy. Our country continues to present significant indexes in the two indicators, according to the National Survey by Household Sample (IBGE, 2016).

Among young people aged 15 to 19, the rate was 0.8%; among those aged 60 and over, the illiteracy rate rises to 22.3%, according to estimates for 2015. This means that at least one in five Brazilian elderly people cannot read or write.

Further, the Survey indicates that:

The rate of Brazilians considered to be functional illiterates - that is, those who are 15 years of age or older but have less than four years of formal study dropped from 17.6% in 2014 to 17.1% in 2015. In this case, the index fell in all regions, and the Northeastern Region is once again the one with the highest rate (26.6%, against 27.1% in the previous year) (IBGE, 2016).

If we move to the indices of people with elementary education, complete high school and higher education, they are still very timid. In the country, “By 2015, more than half of the population aged 25 and over was concentrated in education levels up to full or equivalent primary education (52.0%), 26.4% had completed

secondary education, and 13.5% had the complete superior education” (IBGE, 2016). These data explain that, in Brazil, the index of enlightened people, considering the educational level, is meager.

This scenario in relation to education leads us to the ‘third aspect’ that we deem important to reflect on teacher training in the 21st century: the Brazilian population is not in the habit of reading and reading is, without doubt, a condition of citizenship.

According to Rodrigues (2016), based on research from Ibope, commissioned by the Pro-Book Institute, 44% of the Brazilian population does not read and 30% of those never bought a book in their lives.

There are a few more readers in Brazil. If in 2011 they represented 50% of the population, in 2015 they are 56%. But it’s still little. The reading index, despite a slight improvement, indicates that the Brazilian reads only 4.96 books per year – of these, 0.94 are indicated by the school and 2.88 read of their own volition. Of the total books read, 2.43 were finished and 2.53 read in parts (RODRIGUES, 2016).

The data indicate that the Brazilian is not in the habit of reading and, practically, eighteen percent of the books read were because they are required in the school. As we have seen, the school does not have good literacy rates, so there is no way to separate illiteracy or functional illiteracy from the reality of reading: Brazilians are a people that are not aware and, once again, this reality passes through the teacher’s training and the habits that this individual will take to his classroom practice.

The Pro-Book Institute’s survey, too, interviewed teachers and the numbers are not encouraging:

The survey asked teachers what the last book they read was, and 50% answered none and 22%, the Bible. Other titles cited: Hope, The Monk and the Executive, Love in the Time of Cholera, Good Morning Holy Spirit, Dream Book, Brilliant Boy, The Lost Symbol, Our Home, Never Give Up on Your Dreams and Exercise Physiology. Among the seven most remembered authors, Augusto Cury, Chico Xavier, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Paulo Freire, Benny Hinn, Ernest W. Maglischo and IçamiTiba (RODRIGUES, 2016).

The research shows that half of the interviewed teachers do not read and when they do, the chosen works are mostly religious or self-help, which reveals that teachers themselves are not able to stimulate reading and the formation of their students.

The three previous aspects lead us to the ‘fourth aspect’ we need to consider about Basic Education in Brazil and it is linked to the formation/knowledge of teachers. We clarify that we are not referring to the formal qualification, because, according to data from the 2016 school census of basic education: statistical notes, MEC/Inep, most primary school teachers have higher education: “Regarding schooling, 77.5% of teachers who work in basic education have a complete upper level. Of these professors with graduation, 90.0% have a degree course” (BRASIL, 2017, p. 23)¹.

From the data we assume that teachers are trained at the higher level, therefore, they should have enough knowledge to promote children and adolescents’ literacy, but the referred data on illiteracy and functional illiteracy show that the opposite occurs. Therefore, even though research indicates a reduction in the illiteracy rate and an increase in the level of education in Brazil among young people, the numbers continue to be bleak, especially considering that education is a condition for the development of a nation and “key” for individuals to become aware of and fight for better living conditions. All these aspects depend on education and are therefore linked to teacher training. A teacher who, in his or her training, has not acquired the habit of reading, is not only unable to stimulate his or her students to read, but also does not update his or her education, does not accompany the cultural, scientific and social advances.

Thus, it is necessary to think and modify teacher education because the institutionalized space of education interferes decisively in the actions of people in the non-formal spaces of society. Knowledge is therefore an essential element of the development of a society. For Saviani and Duarte (2010, p. 423) “Human formation coincides, in this sense, with the human promotion process carried out by education”. The authors corroborate our argument that education is a condition of humanity in all respects; therefore, in the teaching person it would be the essence.

In view of these data, as teacher trainers, we should inquire about the essence of the formation we are providing them, because, after all, as an intellectual of

¹ “Recent research has identified a reduction in the deficit of teachers duly qualified to work in basic education but the situation is still disquieting. According to Alves and Silva (2013) analyses of the 2009 School Census data show that 35.4% of teachers did not have a suitable qualification. The Census for 2016 shows a deficit of 22.5% for a total of 2.19 million teaching posts (BRASIL, 2017)” (NUNES, 2018, p. 34).

the history and history of education and ordinary citizens, we observe that the educational reality of the country, at the level of basic education, is increasingly deficient, which leads us to affirm that this deficiency contributes to the moral, ethical and social crisis (OLIVEIRA, 2017) through which the nation has navigated during the first two decades of the 21st century.

Because we think that education is essential for the preservation of society, even of humanity, because we consider that history is one of the most fruitful ways of understanding man's actions, we resume some writings of one of the greatest teachers of the medieval university of the thirteenth century. Undoubtedly, the Dominican master was an intellectual (OLIVEIRA; MENDES; SANTIN, 2016)² who was concerned with presenting a proposal of education in which he considered his social context and did not separate the formation of the person from its action in society. It is also important to remember that in order to reflect on the questions of the men of his time, Thomas Aquinas turned to one of the greatest authors of antiquity, Aristotle, to analyze the men of his present and to point out ways to solve their problems.

In this way, these characteristics of Thomas Aquinas's writings, his understanding of man and teaching and the relevance he grants to an author of the past, Aristotle, what we now consider to be history, led us to elect him as a relevant intellectual to think the issues of education in our present. Still as a historian of education, we take this intellectual as reference as he regards memory as the central point³ of man's understanding through it because man makes use of his intellect and, therefore, he becomes a man. "Only man has, by memory, control of time, only he, by the intellect is located between past, present and future. The intellect knows man as such; but to man as such it is accidental to be in the present, in the past or in the future" (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, 2002, p. 449)⁴.

3 The relevance of studying Thomas Aquinas in teacher education

The first question that we consider important in Thomas Aquinas to help us think about the crisis of education in the 21st century is that he seeks to understand the existence of man as a Being that is part of a collective. In an emphatic way,

² In this text, we take the concept of intellectual presented by Le Goff (2003) in *Os intelectuais na Idade Média*.

³ *Summa Theologiae*, II^{ae}, q. 79. We inform the reader that for all the quotations of Thomas Aquinas, we will indicate, in a note, how they would be referenced in accordance with the international norms of quotations for the works of Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

⁴ *Summa Theologiae*, II^{ae}, q. 79, art. 6, answer, adm. 2.

he considers that the person does not exist alone. In order to demonstrate this formulation, he retakes the *Política* of Aristóteles (1985a) and, through the philosopher's arguments, tries to explain that man is an "animal" that only exists from the life in common.

It is, however, man, by nature, sociable and political animal, living in multitude, even more than all other animals, which is evidenced by the natural necessity. [...] the other animals prepared the nature of the food, the clothing of the hair, the defense, such as teeth, horns, and nails or, at least, the speed to escape. But he was created without the preparation of any of this by nature, and, instead of everything, he had reason, by which he could earn all these things by his own hands, for which only a man is insufficient. [...] Now it is not possible for a man to embrace all these things by reason. Where it is necessary for man to live in a multitude, so that another may help one and research in the various subjects, namely, some in medicine, another in this, another in another thing (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, 1997, 127)⁵.

This principle that man is a social animal, therefore, which can only exist if he lives in community, reveals the fragility of man, since he exists only as such in relation to the condition of dependence of the other people who live with him.

In our view, this issue should be part of teacher education. It is evident that we all know this maxim of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, that man is a political animal and depends on others. However, we believe in this as if it were "natural". Put another way, it is as if everyone knew that one needs to live with the other from an early age. When, in fact, learning to live with the other is not a natural process. If this were the case, men would not have to be educated according to the social rules of each historical time. It is by virtue of this that authors such as Kant (1999) and Arendt (2009) have already demonstrated the relevance of the adult in the formation of younger generations in society.

Nor can we understand as natural that men are individualists by virtue of capitalist society, since this is the "model" of society that most Western and Eastern worlds have known and lived in since the sixteenth century and institutions and people continue to live from this intrinsic relationship of dependence to exist and preserve society. The point, in effect, is that future teachers need to be aware of the 'need' to teach, each of their pupils, who are subjects, completely dependent on the other.

⁵ *De regno ad regem Cypri*, Book I, c. II, §2.

This complex dependency on a community was a new reality in the time of Master Thomas. Therefore, his human training project needed to consider which man would need to be trained to live in the city, since, in that environment; diversity was part of people's daily lives. In this place, the artisans, the men of the church, the nobles and merchants began to live. These people, although they had in themselves rooted in the feudal traditions, because they came from a feudal and ruralized society to the city space, were new characters, like the place that they occupied, since the activities they performed and the urban relations they were creating were taking them into a new horizon. The city was, however, according to Thomas Aquinas, the "perfect community", for in it all was common yet diverse.

His project of human formation was in line with this condition, since he had to teach men to live with one another with civility, with tolerance, in short, they needed to learn the practice of social virtues in order to establish bonds that would lead the community towards common good. Thus, for the students of the university, the teacher taught scientific knowledge based on the authorities of Antiquity, particularly the texts of Aristotle, and, for the faithful, listeners of the Dominican mendicant, sacred knowledge from the Bible. At the university, he also debated, through controversial writings, intellectuals who differed from the scholastic principles he advocated. In these two spaces of teaching, the university and the preaching, the Dominican master wrote a vast number of works, among them we mention the *Summa Theologiae*, the *Summa contra Gentiles*, the *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate*, the *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas* etc.

The debate about the unity of the intellect, undoubtedly, is one of the texts that may be relevant to the formation of the teacher, because in him the teacher discusses the sense of the intellect for the constitution of the person and his action. We, teachers of the 21st century, start from the assumption that children learn naturally, that is, that the use of the intellect is part of the nature of man. This naturalization of learning was not possible for the masters of the thirteenth century.

However, in this period, there was an intense debate about the use of intellect by men; more than that, how they used it. In this clash, the world and religion understandings that each one of these theorists possessed were placed. Some maintained the understanding that the human intellect could only know and act through the divine light, that is, all that men did would come from the divine will. For others, the intellect was unique to all men, which would imply in an "almost" state of submission of all to a single and common principle. In this scenario, Thomas Aquinas defends the idea that the intellect is part of man's unity, that is, the intellect, although abstract, forms part of human nature, just as

the body. However, the intellect would exist in man as a power, for, as an almost perfect animal, he would have to learn to use the intellect to know how to live in society; but by the knowledge of the social virtues, the ancient writers, the sacred writings, would act in the best possible way, for the common good and only in this condition, by means of the good use of the intellect could man become the image of God. Man would not be born, of course, as the image and likeness of God. On the contrary, only by knowledge and therefore by his actions in society could he become the divine image.

This perception of the human intellect as a potency was only possible from the city environment and the questions that it brought, since until then, particularly for the man who lived in the fief, all human action came from the infusion of the light of God. For men and even Christian intellectuals, men naturally thought and acted because God was commanding all their actions. However, in the city, with such diversity, it was not possible to defend the idea that people acted naturally, since, in the common environment, there was one who conducted his acts for the common good, but there were also others who, by their actions, harmed the community. Thus, the debate about the human intellect in Thomas Aquinas would be associated with his idea of man and community, because it would be necessary to point out that men should be responsible for their acts because they have intellective reason.

It is clear that this particular man thinks, for we would never get to know what the intellect is if we did not think; nor when we seek to know but the one by which we think. Hence Aristotle says: **I call the intellect that by which the soul thinks.** Therefore, Aristotle concludes that if there is a first principle by which we think it must be the form of the body, for it has already demonstrated before that form is that by which something first acts. And it is also proved by an argument: things act while they are in action; now it is by a form that things are in action; therefore, what the first thing acts on is its form (TOMAS DE AQUINO, 1999, p. 103, emphasis added)⁶.

The fundamental idea, therefore, for Master Thomas is that it belongs to human nature to think, and once again this author takes up Aristotle to demonstrate that the thinking of man is that he conducts his acts, i.e., the person's act mirrors his or her thinking. Therefore, man has an agent intellect because he acts, moves, and these movements indicate that he possesses an intellect that commands his movements, to which Aristotle would define as the first mover. It is this engine,

⁶ *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, c. III, § 61.

the intellect, that is part of human existence, for it would be part of your soul that commands the attitudes of people in society, therefore, it is necessary to understand man as a whole, a Being that has a material, and an intellectual part which, for Thomas Aquinas, would compose his soul.

By participating in the debate among the intellectuals of the thirteenth century, several of them professors at the University of Paris, like Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, Thomas Aquinas makes men capable of taking the direction of their destiny. Precisely for this reason, in the clash with the averroists⁷, he affirms “[...] when the possible intellect thinks, it is an individual man who thinks” (TOMAS DE AQUINO, 1999, 103)⁸.

In defending the principle that men think for themselves, and more individually, Thomas Aquinas Aristotle’s maxim present in the *Ethika Nikomacheia* (ARISTÓTELES, 1985b) reiterates that men are what they practice, therefore, if their acts are good, the community will be led for good, if their deeds are evil, the city will be led to evil.

Now, in the face of contradictory individual human actions, Thomas Aquinas is prepared to discuss whether men can teach, since if this is possible, they could interfere in the actions of the other, insofar as they could learn to do righteous deeds. Thus, precisely because he sought to understand the actions of men and to follow up their life in the city, for the sake of good, the master investigated and evidenced by means of arguments that men could teach and learn through their agent intellect.

This is also an important maxim to be taught to future teachers, that students do not learn naturally, nor are they good or bad, because of their social environment. According to the principle demonstrated by Thomas Aquinas, they are able to learn because they have potential intellect, since they are humans, but who they will become in society will depend on what they have learned to be.

4 On teaching

Within the scope of this text, we have selected some of the arguments of the master in Question 47 of *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate*, which in Brazil was translated by Jean Lauand (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, 2001) under the title of *Sobre o ensino*, to show how Master Thomas, in the middle of the thirteenth century, presented some essential aspects about how teaching and learning should take place.

⁷ Object of the debate presented in the work we are basing ourselves: *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*.

⁸ *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, c. III, § 62.

The first aspect that we think is important is that the master considers that the teacher, in order to be with legitimacy, should have knowledge in the act. In other words, the teacher should act according to his knowledge; therefore, this knowledge should be like a “second skin”⁹.

Now, **teaching presupposes a perfect act of knowledge in the teacher**; hence, it is necessary that the teacher or those who teach have explicitly and perfectly the knowledge they want to cause the student to acquire by teaching. When, however, one acquires knowledge by an intrinsic principle, that which is the agent of knowledge is only in part, namely, as to the seminal reasons of knowledge, which are the common principles. And it is not possible, due to such causality, to properly apply the name of teacher or master (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, 2001, p. 41-42, emphasis added)¹⁰.

From Thomas Aquinas’ point of view, being a teacher presupposes BEING knowledge in essence, the content. The science to be taught cannot be external to the one who exercises the function of “enlightening” the other, but rather must be expressed in the attitudes of the person. Therefore, he who knows something without depth or as the master defines as accidental, cannot be called a teacher.

Another aspect that deserves to be emphasized on the way in which teaching is carried out, according to master, is that the knowledge that the teacher infuses in the student is not something occasional or mechanical, could not be a mere transmission of knowledge.

The teacher instills knowledge in the student not in the numerical sense that the same knowledge that is in the master passes to the student, but because in this, through teaching, it is produced passing from potency to act a knowledge similar to that in the master (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, 2001, p. 35)¹¹.

Therefore, content should not be a repetition, but be taught in such a way that the learner can appropriate this knowledge and it becomes, also, in the student, an act. It is not, therefore, a mere assimilation of a given information, but a transformation

⁹ We use this expression in consonance with the formulations of Aristóteles (1985b), in book II of *Ethika Nikomakheia*, in which he considers that the habits that a person acquires are so ingrained in their actions that they constitute a second skin.

¹⁰ *Sobre o ensino*, Article 2. Solution

¹¹ *Sobre o ensino*. Article 1. Replytoobjections 6.

of the student. Within this principle, the student reaches the knowledge and not the teacher who infuses him as a divine light. “[...] the teacher must lead the pupil to the knowledge of what he did not know, following the path traveled by someone who comes by himself to the discovery of what he did not know” (TOMAS DE AQUINO, 2001, p. 32)¹². Thus, the student discovers knowledge through the teacher’s guidance. So this one needs to have the knowledge in the act.

Now, knowledge pre-exists in the student as a potency not purely passive, but active, otherwise man could not acquire by himself. And just as there are two forms of healing: that which occurs only through the action of nature and that which occurs through the action of nature helped by the remedies, there are also two ways of acquiring knowledge: in a way, when reason itself reaches knowledge which it did not possess, which is called discovery; and on the other hand, when it receives help from outside, and this mode is called teaching (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, 2001, p. 31-32)¹³.

According to the Dominican master, the student is not a being that receives knowledge, what today we could define as a receiver of information passed by the teacher, nor is it a decoder of information. On the contrary, precisely because it possesses intellect is that the student can potentially learn what the teacher teaches. By virtue of this, Thomas Aquinas emphasizes the fact that knowledge “pre-exists” in the learner, that is, there is a learning condition that enables a given knowledge to be taught and learned. Therefore, for the sake of knowledge, what the teacher teaches must have meaning for the students, they need to know, minimally, what is being taught so that they can appropriate and modify it. It is, therefore, under this aspect that Master Thomas emphasizes the fact that teaching is the “help” that the teacher gives the student so that he comes to knowledge. That is why Thomas Aquinas also explains that what one learns alone is not the result of teaching and cannot be considered as such, since it is a discovery.

The last aspect of Thomas Aquinas’s writing that we consider important to emphasize about the teacher’s action is the fact that ‘teaching’ presupposes commitment to “real evidence”.

[...] if a person proposes things which do not flow from the evident principles, or which follows from them, but this is not clearly visible, then it is not producing in him knowledge, but perhaps opinion or faith,

¹² *Sobre o ensino*. Article 1. Solution.

¹³ *Sobre o ensino*. Article 1. Solution.

although these are caused in some way by innate principles: for it is from these very evident principles that one draws those conclusions which necessarily follow them and must be asserted with certainty, while denying their contraries; but there are other propositions to which one can assent or not (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, 2001, p. 33)¹⁴.

We chose this passage to close our reflections on Master Thomas's understanding of teaching because we consider this aspect essential to the teacher's training and performance. What we teach to our students, particularly in the history of education, cannot be derived from what we think or think of as singular subjects, but must rather flow from the knowledge produced and evidenced in history because we need to lead our students to have their own ideas and come to knowledge for themselves.

If, on the contrary, our teaching becomes a political positioning on a certain content and not the event that has been recorded – evidently even with partiality, since the historical records are made by men – the only one that remained in the written memory or in the a monument built, therefore, the preserved one, we are teaching dogmas, opinions or even, as stated by Thomas Aquinas, profession of faith, religion or even convincing our students so that they think as we think. What the teacher teaches us is that we must be faithful to knowledge so that students can come to it independently and, therefore, have the freedom and insight to make the choices of their own lives. Precisely for this reason, our students must read everything and by everyone, as they are still in formation and need to know, with autonomy, to become free people and to be able to use, by themselves, their intellect. Only in this condition would he or she be a citizen.

5 Final considerations

By asserting that man can be a teacher, therefore, he can teach, Thomas Aquinas subverted the order of theoretical explanations that had hitherto dominated the horizon of medieval men. God is no longer the only being capable of infusing the light of knowledge. This light also becomes a human quality. The thirteenth-century man can teach and, by being able to teach, would create new explanations and new forms of relationships. This is the revolution that was implied in the Dominican master. If, until the twelfth century, Abelard thought that his knowledge and the fact that he detained his philosophical knowledge and was able to pass it on to students was a divine gift, with Thomas Aquinas, knowledge and teaching are no longer the privileges of God's contemplated ones. Knowledge and teaching gain the mark

¹⁴ *Sobre o ensino*. Article 1. Solution.

of the human. The Dominican master makes teaching such a human quality that stresses that the one who teaches does it not because he has a sacred quality, but because he has a contemplative quality “[...] the contemplative life is the teaching principle, as the heat is not the heating up, but the principle behind heating up. Now, the contemplative life is the principle of the active, while directing it [...]” (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, 2001, p. 62)¹⁵, that is, is capable of studying and contemplating nature, to observe, understand and explain their surroundings. Even more: it is the intellectual understanding that either drives or should drive the actions of man. In this sense, when we recover Thomas Aquinas’ arguments about the fact that man can teach and, therefore, can be a teacher, we want to point out that our students, future teachers, must be aware they must use their intellect. In this manner, they can learn that the knowledge, which they appropriated, must transform them into subjects of their acts, that the assimilated content is not knowledge if it does not enable their actions as individuals to be modified. Teachers, in turn, need to be aware that if they do not produce changes in their students they are not being teachers, but only replicators of given information.

Thus, only when students and teachers consider knowledge as a condition of transformation, freedom, autonomy, citizenship, the Brazilian reality can be modified. In fact, if we do not change our understanding of teacher and subject formation we will certainly maintain the HDI indices we present at the beginning of this text, the rates of illiterate and functional illiterates will remain alarming, as long as teachers are not in the habit of reading and contemplation, we will hardly change the scenario of inequality, lack of ethics, habits of corruption rooted in us, in general. Therefore, as we return to an example of the history of medieval education through Thomas Aquinas, we try to show that history is a great counsel and humanity, as Bloch (2001) has affirmed, is preserved through its “permanent background”.

We conclude our reflections with this passage from Libaneo because we consider that if future teachers learn that each student has an own intellect, that all his action depends on what he learned in his formation during childhood and adolescence, knowledge is a *sine qua non* condition of being human. Likewise, if teachers take advantage of history and have clarity that each society has specific laws and that these laws and institutions, even if they can lay their roots in the past, are proper to the present and that, undoubtedly, the next generations and the next laws will depend on contemporaneous actions, we will be more likely to surpass the indices of learning and, perhaps, to overcome the moral and ethical crisis that undermines our country in these first decades of the 21st century.

¹⁵ *Sobre o ensino*. Article 4, reply to objections 4.

A formação do professor no século XXI segundo uma abordagem da história da educação medieval

Resumo

Nosso propósito é tratar da formação docente no Brasil tendo por fio condutor a história e a história da educação, apoiando-nos em textos de Tomás de Aquino. Para nós, no processo de formação de professores, é preciso que os profissionais nele envolvidos tenham uma noção clara de que o ensino e a aprendizagem ocorrem quando estes personagens têm consciência da necessidade de compreender a “essência” intelectual do homem. Por isso, recuperamos o mestre dominicano para explicitar que o conhecimento se efetiva quando há entendimento de que os homens são, por excelência, seres sociais. Baseados nesses princípios, examinaremos os dados sobre o ensino no Brasil, valendo-nos das reflexões do mestre medieval para mostrar quão relevante é para um país que as pessoas tenham o conhecimento adquirido pela e na história. Em termos teóricos, nossos argumentos seguem os princípios da história social, com especial atenção para a ideia de longa duração.

Palavras-chave: Conhecimento. Tomás de Aquino. Formação docente.

La formación del profesorado en el siglo XXI: un enfoque con la educación medieval

Resumen

Nuestro propósito es tratar de la formación docente en Brasil, con la historia y la historia de la educación como nuestro principio rector, basado en textos de Tomás de Aquino. Para nosotros, en el proceso de formación docente, los profesionales involucrados deben tener claro que la enseñanza y el aprendizaje ocurren cuando estos personajes son conscientes de la necesidad de comprender la “esencia” intelectual del hombre. Por lo tanto, recuperamos al maestro dominicano para hacer explícito que el conocimiento se vuelve efectivo cuando hay una comprensión de que los hombres son, por excelencia, seres sociales. Con base en estos principios, examinaremos los datos sobre la enseñanza en Brasil, confiando en las reflexiones del maestro medieval para mostrar la relevancia a un país de que sus habitantes tienen el conocimiento adquirido por la historia y en la historia. En términos teóricos, nuestros argumentos siguen los principios de la historia social, con especial atención a la idea de larga duración.

Palabras clave: Conocimiento. Tomás de Aquino. Formación del profesorado.

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