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Ideas, concepts, contexts: The contribution of Reinhart Koselleck to the writing of the History of Education

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Abstract: This article presents the History of Concepts from the critique of the traditional History of Ideas (Ideengeschichte), from the sketch of central elements of Reinhart Koselleck's thought: the distinction between word and concept, the categories modernity (Sattelzeit), acceleration and experience, as well And of the theoretical and methodological implications of the concept of History. We argue that this contributes to the history of education and writing about the various concepts with which it works, such as teaching, school, learning and training, etc., many being derived from other areas or created/invented in their context, considering, in particular, the fact that the nature and dynamicity of a concept are transversal to several areas of research.

Keywords: History of concepts, theory, writing, History of Education

Ideias, conceitos, contextos: a contribuição de Reinhart Koselleck à escrita da História da Educação

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Resumo: Neste artigo, apresenta-se a história dos conceitos, analisando-se a crítica à tradicional História das Ideias (*Ideengeschichte*) e esboçando-se elementos centrais do pensamento de Reinhart Koselleck: a distinção entre palavra e conceito, as categorias modernidade (*Sattelzeit*), aceleração e experiência, bem como suas implicações teóricas e metodológicas sobre o conceito de História. Argumentamos com a possibilidade de sua contribuição para a História da Educação e para a escrita sobre os vários conceitos com os quais trabalha, como, por exemplo, ensino, escola, aprendizagem e formação etc., muitos dos quais são derivados de outras áreas ou criados/inventados em seu contexto, o que mostra que a natureza e a dinamicidade de um conceito são transversais a várias áreas de investigação.

Palavras-chave: história dos conceitos, teoria, escrita, história da educação

Ideas, conceptos, contextos: La contribución de Reinhart Koselleck a la escritura de la Historia de la Educación

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Resumen: En este artículo se presenta la Historia de los Conceptos a partir de la crítica a la tradicional Historia de las Ideas (*Ideengeschichte*), del esquema de los elementos claves del pensamiento Reinhart Koselleck: la distinción entre la palabra y el concepto, las categorías modernidad (*Sattelzeit*), aceleración y experiencia, así como las implicaciones teóricas y metodológicas sobre el concepto de Historia. Se argumenta que esto contribuye a la Historia de la Educación y la escritura sobre los diferentes conceptos con los que trabaja, por ejemplo, enseñanza, escuela, aprendizaje y formación, etc., muchos de ellos se derivan de otras áreas o son creados/inventados en su contexto, considerando, así, en particular, el hecho de que la naturaleza y la dinámica de un concepto son transversales a diversas áreas de investigación.

Palabras clave: Historia de los conceptos, teoría, escritura, Historia de la Educación

Introduction

A gradual attraction seems to approximate the history of concepts and the History of Education, but how to write about this approximation without depriving the reader of important elements or questions of that writing? Such an approach, within the framework of historiography, would be a historiographical current, a spectrum with the potential to implode the supposed dichotomy Cultural History - Social History, or it would be only a modality of Intellectual History or, even more radical, the institution of a new Paradigm of theoretical and methodological reflection? Or would it finally be something bigger than that, a hybrid place in which Philosophy, History, Sociology and Education coexist? Apparently, it is a perspective that has been prowling especially the History of Education, from internal queries to Intellectual History and from the interest of some of its researchers by conceptual and contextualist approaches of the educational phenomenon.¹²

In this text, the goal is to discuss the nature of the history of concepts: first, approaching its critique of the traditional History of Ideas (*ideengeschichte*); second, outlining some elements of Reinhart Koselleck's research project (1923-2006). In particular, we analyzed the distinction between word and concept, we will deal with the categories modernity (*Sattelzeit*), acceleration and experience, and we will address some of the theoretical and methodological implications of the relationship between history and education.

Finally, we argue that the history of concepts, although linked to the study of thought and political and social concepts, may contribute to the History of Education and to the way of its writing, thinking the latter as knowledge and paradigm/observatory of life and decision-making in society par excellence. This will be done through a more careful look at the various concepts with which it deals and which are often derived from other areas or created/invented in their context, without forgetting the fact that the nature of a concept is transversal to several areas of investigation

¹ This article was written with the support of CAPES.

² I would like to thank the professors Justino Magalhães and Cláudia Cury for the careful reading of the manuscript and their precious suggestions about it.

and reflection. This is an important element to emphasize due to dynamicity and own internal decadence in the history of a concept³.

Introducing the history of concepts

Over the last few decades, a vast literature of historical and methodological character has been published that sketches certain concerns and is for some a translator of the *crisis* regarding the role and value of historiographic knowledge or the herald of new theoretical perspectives that better instrumentalize the investigations under development. Obviously, this is not a privilege of historiography, but a consequence, among other aspects, of a series of debates that challenge the project of Modernity and demand its replacement by regionalist pluralism guided by a critique of the idea of enlightenment rationality.

In fact, highlighting the transversal and transdisciplinary character of contemporary intellectual production involving the history of concepts and Intellectual History (Sebastián & Fuentes, 2004; Coves, 2013), it is observed that this does not only express internal transformations of a specific area with its also specific problems, but also and especially, changes derived from the gradual sharing of the internationalization of a relatively common vocabulary in the modern West and, consequently, of a representation of reality that has contributed importantly to social theory and historiography (Sebastián, 2002). These concerns and their consequent changes present an opportunity to think about the History of Education and its multifactorial and complex writing.

Such changes, in this sense, reflect the impact that the history of the concepts or *Begriffs geschichte* has exerted in the last years on the

³ An example that can help us think about concepts and History of Education is the fact that numerous political concepts, most commonly dealt with in Conceptual History, have origins in the most diverse areas of knowledge. For example, the concepts of crisis, organization, regeneration, or corruption come from medicine and biology; revolution, astronomy; reaction, mass and progress, of the physical sciences; equality, of mathematics; liberal, moderate and public opinion, of moral; ideology, of philosophy; decadence, of history; fanaticism, advertising, tolerance, and secularization come from the religious sphere; culture, of the agrarian world; finally, representation, legitimacy, emancipation and civilization, from the area of law (Sebastián & Fuentes, 2004). Many of these concepts have transited, transformed and transited or not in the context of the History of Education, which has also generated concepts that move in other areas, such as school, education and schooling. To understand the uses and misuses of these concepts is to understand the temporal transformations and the relations between the accumulated experience and our expectations of future in relation to the deep fugacity that is the present.

historiography, being a kind of critical reaction to the traditional way of approaching ideas, subjects and contexts. However, although the history of concepts cannot be treated in the same way as Intellectual History, the first presents numerous elements to assist the second, because the former is not exhausted in the treatment of concepts, but also addresses the discourses, which involve and are sensitive to intellectual and cultural issues without falling, as will be seen below, into the “[...] excesses of the classical history of ideas” (Vilanou, 2006b, p. 187).

In general, the main contribution of this conceptual perspective was to bring to the fore the generalized awareness of the close link between history and language. That is, linguistics and historicity are treated as two internal dimensions to what we call ‘the world’, ‘the experience’ or ‘social reality’ (Sebastián & Fuentes, 2004). In fact, Reinhart Koselleck (1923-2006), while sharing with linguistic contextualists that the context is important for the understanding of the historical text, invested decades of his intellectual activity to elaborate a peculiar interpretation of the new one of the western modernity (*Neuzeit*), titled by him of *Sattelzeit*, literally, ‘time of saddle’, but, more appropriately, time of acceleration and radical alteration of historical consciousness (Palti, 2004). In such an interpretation, it is based on the identification of a dialogical relationship between what he calls ‘fundamental concepts’ or ‘collective singular’ and the own reality⁴. Koselleck introduces a distinct way of reflecting on the tension between the temporalities of the past, the present, and the future, and strives to understand the relation between internal semantic transformations to a concept and its extralinguistic manifestations through a hermeneutic approach of Gadamerian inspiration.

For Koselleck, each gift not only reconstructs the past from questions raised in the present, but also re-signifies both the past, which he calls the field or space of experience, and the future itself, which he has named as the horizon of expectations. The interesting element in relation

⁴ Koselleck elaborates four hypotheses of work on what happens with the concepts in this time curve titled by him of *Sattelzeit*. In his scheme of work, there were four major metamorphic transformations around language (concepts). For him, in this period, language has been democratized (democratization), politicized (politicization), acquired a strong ideological bent (ideologization) and concepts have also undergone a process of internal ‘temporalization’. The consequence is that this temporalization between the past and the future is gradually being implanted, and in a concomitant way, a new structure of political language is gradually observed that affects all concepts, including, from our point of view, the educational concepts (Koselleck, 2006).

to these categories and temporalities is that “[...] each of the temporalities - the past, the present, and the future - can imaginatively change, contract, or expand according to each epoch or society, changing also the way they are thought and felt the relations between them” (Barros, 2010, p. 67). The implications of this reasoning are enormous for research within the History of Education, since it redefines the researcher’s own view of his/her object of study, making him/her see elements of change, permanence and rupture, among other aspects. In this redefinition, the researcher is guided by a non-mechanical look, but rather a consequence of the internal dynamicity itself to the historical process. Hence the need to consider ‘temporalization’, just as Koselleck does in relation to political and social concepts (Sebastian, 2004), as an element to be assimilated to the treatment of educational concepts. Next, we will present the possibilities of articulating Koselleck’s effort in the sense of criticism of ideas and of modernity itself.

Diagnosis and criticism of modernity

Over a few decades, it has been possible to observe the development of a critique of the traditional way of treating ideas in the most varied spheres of knowledge. At the same time, innovative points of view emerged from different contexts, guided by similar concerns, whose tendency was to cast doubt on modernity itself and its legacy founded on the reason and universal character of certain ideas. Today’s classic criticism of Lucien Febvre (1989) to disincarnate ideas was one of those important moments in Western thought. In addition, a very interesting and critical perspective arises, more recent, derived from the innumerable developments brought about by ‘The Linguistic Turn’ and which has tended to resonate, albeit in several other elements, in criticism of a certain type of more orthodox (*Althusserian*) structuralism. Richard Rorty’s writings (2007, p. 52) and his critique of truth in the sense of thinking human life as “[...] a history of successive metaphors [...]” are prototypical of this particular turn. Others derived from it: aesthetic, material, imagery turn, among others. These so-called ‘postmodern times’ (Skinner, 2005) have brought many consequences for the treatment of ideas and the history of concepts, but not only for these perspectives, as is well known, for the idea of text, in general, is brought to the humanities stage⁵.

⁵ In fact, although there is a field of tension between our interpretation and the possibilities that the text provide, the words have no meaning in themselves, but they change according to the historical period, the linguistic group and the readers. This

That is, the criticism derived from some of these places of reflection identified common elements that brought out attempts to reconcile the study of ideas, currents of thought, distinct ways of thinking thought, the worn figure of the intellectual, the various facets of sociability and their networks, among other aspects that are part of the internal transformations to this field of research. In addition, brought to the scene the debate between contextualism and internalism that, from our point of view, is a kind of false debate that ended up generating typologies, the most varied, to situate authors, works and methodological approaches.⁶ This is not to say that ideas are absent but are not conceived in an abstract way as in their traditional treatment: they are within systems, currents of thought and in the dialogical character that grounds the relation between social structures and individual action. There may lie our great problem and challenge. How to produce writing, for example, about the figure of the intellectual, of the ideas and perspectives of analysis, and of the History of Education itself, by “[...] interpreting the uniqueness of their problems, just as they articulate them to movements, tendencies, and scenarios more broadly, avoiding both the determinism of contextualism and the a-historicism of textualism” (Vieira, 2015, p. 8).

In the context of the History of Education produced in Brazil, perhaps derived from the transition between the History of Pedagogy and the History of Education as a consequence of the linguistic turn of the 1960s (Torrano & Castillo, 2014), there is a certain departure from

means that certain terms may change completely meaning or even have no meaning for a contemporary reader. That is, from the ‘linguistic turn’, ideas of reading and interpretation can be thought not only as a field of tension and dialogic process, intersubjective, but also as a social element of production of meaning. It is interesting to note that the early writings of Koselleck, Quentin Skinner, and Michel Foucault are published between 1967 and 1969, apparently in reaction to the structuralism we discussed above.

⁶ The idea ended up becoming a sort of dichotomy: “[...] the former defined as those which seek the meaning of works in a historical frame of reference, the latter as the ones that circumscribe the interpretation to the scope of the text, discarding the consideration of any extra-textual references” (Lacerda & Kirschner, 2003, p. 29). Safeguarding the probable exaggerations, there would be, for example, on the one hand, orthodox Marxism guided by explanations based on the economic dimension, and, on the other hand, Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics and its apology to text and language. Koselleck’s methodological choice implies a sort of intermediate point, since he considers the inseparability between language (concepts) and social reality (extralinguistic) without, however, disregarding different paths and choices.

concerns about the nature of ideas⁷. At the end of the 1970s and 1980s, the critical reaction was closely associated with the figure of Professor Demerval Saviani and his writings (Saviani, 2008), whose main target was thought considered non-critical, traditional, and some of the characters linked to it, especially intellectuals like Fernando Azevedo, for example. This criticism reflects the distrust of canonical intellectuals and the transcendent character of ideas, since, from the author's point of view, they disregarded the socioeconomic structure as a determinant of the manifestation of the educational phenomenon.

This reading is part of an idea outlined by Vieira (2015), which identifies, within the scope of the History of Brazilian Education, the existence of two groups of researchers that have distanced themselves due to their interest in pedagogical ideas as transcendent or conditioners of actions. In the case, there is a certain approximation with the treatment of the idea and concept as transcendent. In general, besides the element identified by the author, we believe that this distance is due, on the one hand, to the very discredit associated with the area over a few decades and to the historiographical writing, sometimes anecdotal and individualistic, and also to the thesis, long since abandoned, that preoccupation with ideas was detrimental to the social conditions of its production. On the other hand, it is due to the emergence, in the last decade, of new types of sources and areas of research, which may have seduced many researchers in the area, as for example with printed matter.

The history of concepts is inserted in this movement of criticism that not only revigorates the treatment of pedagogical ideas, but also introduces an element of dynamicity in this transition of interests. In the wake of the argument of teachers Torrano and Castillo (2014), the History of Pedagogical Thought is conceived as a synthesis of the History of Pedagogy (thesis) and History of Education (antithesis). The emphasis is not on ideas or acts of speech, but on the transformation of words into concepts, since

⁷ The argument of teachers Torrano and Castillo (2014) seems an interesting clue to be investigated. That is to say, it motivates to investigate if the writing of History of Education produced in Brazil could be thought from this kind of transition between a History of Pedagogy to a History of Education owing, in part, to the elements highlighted above.

[...] the study of concepts and the variation of their meanings over time is a basic condition for historical knowledge. [...] a procedure that allows us to apprehend the complex process of re-signification of some concepts over time. More than a method to be applied or an autonomous discipline, the history of concepts would be a complementary and necessary instrument for historical interpretation (Kirschner, 2007, p. 49).

Thus, perhaps the main contribution of Koselleck is the fact that he considers the historicity of concepts and political thought in the wake of the linguistic turn, articulating them with reality and hermeneutics. In this sense, he draws attention to the dynamicity of “[...] seemingly diverse meanings within the same epoch and even within the same social group” (Bentivoglio, 2010, p. 215), explaining the formative and pragmatic element of the constitution and use of ideas in the history of social and pedagogical thought. At the same time, it puts into question ways of dealing with ideas that reduce them to ideology, representations or discursive relations. In the next section, we will present other elements to better understand the nature of the history of concepts.

From History of Ideas to History of Concepts and Language

The discussion around the history of concepts in Brazil is still relatively timid, although it is consensual about the importance it has in other production contexts⁸and, in the context of the History of Education, even more. This is partly due to the fact that there are few translations of the works related to it and, in the case of Reinhart Koselleck (1923-2006), that there is not much familiarity with the German language in the Brazilian academic sphere, besides discussion is not a common intellectual

⁸ For some (Torrano & Castillo, 2014), Koselleck promotes a ‘revolution’ in the molds instituted by Dilthey in relation to Kant, since he makes use of categories of antithetical (transcendental) pairs that allow the historicization of the experience of time. Perhaps this is because, as will be seen below, he is the chief heir to the spirit sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) and the works of Dilthey, Droysen, Heidegger and Gadamer, forged around the reflection on the possibility of historical knowledge. The ideas of understanding and hermeneutics are to be found in Koselleck, but they are far from the psychological sense which approaches them in the first phase of Dilthey’s thought. In it, the concept acquires a social and cultural dimension that has affinities with certain sociological approaches. What he does is to shift “[...] the dimension of particular experience (*Erlebenis*) to the field of shared experiences (*Erfahrung*) and disregard preexisting and immutable meanings underlying human thought and action” (Bentivoglio, 2010, p. 121).

tradition in teaching and research contexts at undergraduate and/or graduate levels⁹.

The history of concepts originates from the seminal collective project for the production of the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe, Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Fundamental Historical Concepts. Historical Lexicon of the Political and Social Language in Germany), edited by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Koselleck from 1972. The project brings together about 120 concepts distributed in a set of monographs with a few dozen pages. In the words of Melvin Richter, one of the promoters of this historiographical modality in the United States, the purpose was the following:

[...] systematically gathering extensive citations from original sources, provide, for the first time, reliable information regarding past (in Germany) uses of political and social concepts; to characterize the ways in which language both shaped and recorded the processes of change that transformed every area of German political and social life from about the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century; to sharpen the awareness of how political and social language is used today (Richter, 2006, p. 42).

However, beyond the purposes of Koselleck and the organizers at that time, the dictionary is now a paradigm (Chignola, 2003). This historiographical perspective is not a specialty of a subdiscipline of Philosophy, although, from its origin, a historiographic and a philosophical tendency can be identified, with very porous distinctions between them that have only elicited fruitful developments in both areas (Coves, 2009).

This modality of intellectual history, which because of the primordial importance it attaches to contexts - both in its linguistic and political-social

⁹ *Futuro passado* (Koselleck, 2006) and *Estratos do tempo* (Koselleck, 2014) are books that, published in the last decade, contribute to the introduction of his thinking and treat, in his own words, a common problematic: “[...] the temporal structures of human history, their experiences and their narratives” (Koselleck, 2014, p. 7). Such books would comprise the first, according to Koselleck himself, of three volumes that would bring together his texts produced throughout his life, a project that, unfortunately, was aborted because of his death. In any case, they allow the reader to have contact with his main ideas, as well as with the unfolding of his work methodology, especially with his semantic treatment of concepts such as modernity, utopia, revolution, *bildung*, progress, among others.

aspects - is postulated as a new political history of political thought, or, if one wishes, as a social history of ideas, is thus much closer to a new social and political-cultural history than to the traditional history of philosophy or political ideas (Sebastián & Fuentes, 2004, p. 22).

In this new perspective of study of the political, social and educational languages, there are involved researchers of several countries of Europe, Latin American and the USA. Articulated around research projects, journals and regular meetings, they have made public contributions to a conceptual approach to historical, political, and social problems. About 20 years ago, 1998, a group of teachers founded the History of Political and Social Concepts Group (HPSCG). This foundation took place in London, during a first congress, in which its main researchers met. Among them, stand out Reinhart Koselleck, Quentin Skinner, John Pocock, Kari Palonen, Jacques Guilhaumou, Pierre Rosanvallon and Melvin Richter. The common denominator that brought them together was

[...] a common concern for the analysis of political languages in time and the study of the different ways in which arguments, concepts, and discourses interact with each other and interfere with the factual plane of historical processes (Sebastian, 2002, p. 332).

The diverse character of their intellectual origins (Philosophy, History, Political Science, Linguistics), as well as the variety of themes investigated by these teachers, translate an important element of the Conceptual History: its character of transdisciplinarity (Coves, 1998). This element allows or renews the interest to bring the History of Education closer to this research paradigm:

First, because constantly asking about the relationship between the word, thought and political action in time raises and covers a series of themes - history, politics, language, subject, temporality, modernity [...] - that invite to look at all these issues from many different angles (epistemology, history of thought, political philosophy, linguistics, hermeneutics [...]). Second, because concepts, by their very nature, pass between one and the other fields of knowledge - very often using the path of metaphor for this penetration -

thereby drawing a whole set of connections and bridges of communication between different areas of knowledge (Sebastián & Fuentes, 2004, p. 11-26).

In fact, concepts and discourses are found in all areas, the fields of knowledge or the different types of cultures that constitute us. Nevertheless, although a variety of theoretical and methodological practices are perceived (Cultural History and Social History, for example) that focus on the educational phenomenon and perceive themselves as distinct, these, even separated from the institutional point of view, sometimes cloud, the possibility of going through internal mutations to a concept. In turn, conceptual history, seeking to articulate concepts and discourses around a history of pedagogical thought (Torrano & Castillo, 2014), based on its political, social and educational dimensions, presents itself as a kind of integrative practice that stimulates interdisciplinarity and comparative and cross-cultural investigations. It thus provides “[...] a fruitful hybridization between social history, cultural history and political history, hybridization that would go a long way to the history of discourses and political languages” (Sebastián & Fuentes, 2004, p. 23)¹⁰.

Although the Conceptual History is very much associated with the figure of Koselleck, it is not possible to affirm that it is restricted to him. In general, there is a certain consensus in distinguishing two perspectives internal to it, consequence from the ‘linguistic turn’, which configure different ways of proceeding in the context of the History of Ideas. On the one hand, there is that which derives from analytic philosophy (Austin, Searle, Saussure); on the other, that derives from the European continental philosophy, represented by the hermeneutic tradition and that finds in Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer their theoretical inspirations.

The relationships between Heidegger, Gadamer and Koselleck stem from a number of elements, but mainly from how Koselleck confronts the problem of historical experience, the possibility of historiography and the

¹⁰ The articulation of discursive and conceptual elements is now a very common proposition among researchers within this paradigm (Sebastián, 2002; Dutt, 2010) and brings the concerns between conceptual changes (Koselleck) and the analytical dimension of concepts, that is, their uses (Skinner). Historical semantics and historical pragmatics become closer than separated: “It is understood in this context that the reconstruction of the pragmatic dimension of concepts must take the path of reconstruction of the pragmatic dimension of texts or - if you prefer this concept - of discourses, employed in the respective concepts of research objects” (Dutt, 2010, p. 41).

social ontology of temporality (Chignola, 2003). Concepts familiar to hermeneutic and Gadamerian language, such as hermeneutic circle, fusion of horizons, effective historical consciousness, interpretive hypotheses and, especially, the possibility of understanding the past based on the present, besides the emphasis on the understanding as a result of the conversation and dialogue with the past and present aspects of tradition, can be observed directly or between the lines of his texts.

However, perhaps the main point that Koselleck identifies, and makes a point of emphasizing in some of his main writings, is the separation between concepts (text/language) and state of affairs (reality) (Sebastián & Fuentes, 2006). In this sense, he departs from Gadamer and more orthodox hermeneutics, as well as some postmodern perspectives that reduce reality to language, such as Derrida's deconstructionism, for example. Another element that separates him from Gadamer is that he does not conceive that History, from the point of view of its philosophical hermeneutics, has methodological tools. Koselleck, on the other hand, is as much in methodological as in theoretical reflection on the possibilities of historical knowledge. In his texts more directly involved with theoretical reflection, such as *On the need for theory in the discipline of history*, his concern is to face a certain neo-Kantian legacy, which brings the history of a self-definition, implying questions that involve the individual and specific, while the natural sciences would be concerned with what is general (Koselleck, 2002). The hybrid element, internal to the conceptual history that approximates cultural, social, political, and educational aspects of the election of the 'concept' as a proper place of historiographical investigation, is the critical proposal to the false dichotomy inherited from classical historicism and its discussions about method (*Methodestreit*).

In the wake of Austin's speech acts, there is the so-called Cambridge School. Its main representatives are Quentin Skinner and John Pocock, whose emphasis is the investigations that fall on the pragmatic sense of the texts in a determined linguistic context. Based on the hermeneutic tradition, one finds the historical semantics of Reinhart Koselleck that can be understood as a way to approach ideas, thoughts and practices. His concern with the semantic factor

[...] is a sort of vaccine against our temptation to simplicity from the moment we begin to realize that the lenses with which we see the world, our conceptual lenses, which we cannot stop using, under penalty of losing all vision, have

always been (and always are) subject to more or less sudden or gradual changes in color or focus (Sebastián & Fuentes, 2004, p. 15).

To introduce this vaccine, the look of Koselleck and some of his fellow historians of the mid-1950s and 1960s turns to Western modernity and to the theoretical inadequacy they attribute to *geisteswissenschaften* and *ideengeschichte*, which deal specifically with the German context and carelessly transfer to the past modern expressions (Koselleck, 2006). Therefore, the discussions and proposals derived from them result from the impressions of these historians on the role that certain concepts have played in the constitution of what Koselleck calls modernity or *Sattelzeit*¹¹. That is,

In German-speaking countries, it is possible to verify the frequent occurrence of term re-signification processes since 1770, as well as the creation of neologisms which, with frequent use, have transformed the field of political and social experience, defining new horizons of expectations (Koselleck, 2006, p. 101).

The main point is that we create and make use of concepts in our day to day life. However, the teachers organizing the Dictionary note that, especially in the curve between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there is a significant change: in this period, a series of new concepts were produced that would define the course of what we mean by modernity

¹¹ The use of the concept of *Sattelzeit* by Koselleck is somewhat complicated and leaves a set of doubts about its imprecision. Sometimes, in addition to *Sattelzeit*, he also uses the term *Schwellenzeit* or threshold period. Here is a very brief explanation. At first, its translation, as outlined above, would be time for saddle (riding on horseback) or saddle season or even riding time. Koselleck, in one of his last interviews, acknowledges that the term is somewhat confusing. He says: “[...] one of the meanings of *Sattel* (saddle) refers to horses, in an equestrian scope, and the other meaning refers to the situation that occurs when you climb to the top of a mountain and from there you are offered the possibility of contemplating a wide landscape [...] I do not like the term (*Sattelzeit*) because it is very ambiguous” (Koselleck, 2006, p. 162). The initial aim would be to refer to the specific acceleration of modern experience in the world, but for some this is not achieved because of the strangeness and ambiguity of the concept. In spite of this, it tends to appear in the literature that deals with the history of concepts. In any case, despite the problems, it is necessary to derive from it only the central idea of the expression that refers to the acceleration of time and its impact on the concepts and self-perception of consciousness and subjectivity in modernity.

(*Neuzeit*). In this way, other concepts become obsolete and end up falling into disuse. Therein lies the great challenge of these teachers and the very production of the Dictionary. This because,

[...] despite the continued use of the same words, political-social language has changed. The coefficients of change and acceleration have transformed old fields of meanings and therefore also political and social experience. Previous meanings of a taxonomy that is still in use must be apprehended by the historical method and translated into our language. This procedure presupposes a framework of reference which has been clarified theoretically; only within such a framework can such translations be made visible. We speak here of the saddle period (*Sattelzeit*) [...]. This period thematizes the transformation of the pre-modern use of language into our use, and I cannot emphasize strongly its heuristic character (Koselleck, 2002, p. 5).

These changes and the accelerated inner character of them bring innumerable challenges to the investigation concerning the uses and disuses of the words. One word loses the capacity to represent a fundamental concept and falls into disuse when it “[...] is no longer able to bring together enough of new experiences and to aggregate them into a common concept coupled with the expectations to be fulfilled” (Koselleck, 2012, p. 38). It is important to emphasize that the creation of concepts and their use are derived from the type of experience that individuals have, that is, there is a dialogical relationship between life and language. Koselleck refuses to see the formation of concepts and language as epiphenomena determined by the external forces of historical reality (Richter, 2006), a theoretical posture that translates his effort to conceive the inseparability between history of concepts and Social History.¹²

However, not every word is a concept. Koselleck’s distinction between word and concept has important implications in the relationship

¹² In several of his writings, there are examples of conceptual changes as well as concepts that have layers without which their understanding is not possible. Secularization, bourgeois, utopia among others. On the concept of revolution, for example, he states: “[...] at its origin it presented a modeling formula for the possible return of events. However, the meaning of the term was reformulated, starting to indicate a teleological concept of historical-philosophical character, along with a second and new significance as a concept of political action, becoming, in our view, the indicator of a structural alteration” (Koselleck, 2006, p. 103).

between conceptual history and hermeneutics, as well as the very understanding of the historian's place in the investigation.¹³ His idea is that social and political concepts, and why not to say also educational concepts, have pretension to generality, being associated to them many layers of meanings, condensed in a set of experiences organized in a social-political context¹⁴. Another difference is that the word in use may be ambiguous, but the concept does not. This relationship between concept (language) and reality (extralinguistic), its creation and its decay over time, is perhaps the central element in the argument. Koselleck states:

How is the temporal relation between concepts and states of affairs articulated? No doubt, the key to conceptual history lies here. What can and should be conceived lies beyond concepts. All semantics refers to something that is beyond itself, although no field of objects can be conceived and experienced without the contribution of semantics to language. All the current theories that reduce reality exclusively to language forget that language offers and conserves two facets: on the one hand, it registers - receptively - what is external to it, manifests what is imposed without being linguistic, that is, the world as presented pre-linguistically rather than linguistically. On the other hand, language provides actively - all states of affairs and extralinguistic facts. So that the extralinguistic can be known and understood, it must be reflected in its concept. As it is said at the beginning: without concepts, there is no experience and no experience there are no concepts (Koselleck, 2012, p. 31-32).

From these ideas about generality and its relational understanding of temporalities one deduces the existence of layers of meanings internal to

¹³ For Koselleck, the historian "[...] uses texts only as witnesses, to extract a reality that exists beyond them. Therefore, more than all other exegetes of texts, he highlights an extratextual fact, although reconstructing it by linguistic means. It sounds like an irony. In the comparison with the spirit sciences, the historian depends less on texts than the jurist, the theologian, or the philologist. When they are transformed into sources by the questions he formulates, the texts have only an indicative value for the stories he wishes to know" (Koselleck, 2014, p. 107).

¹⁴ Koselleck (2014, p. 19), for example, uses the expression *stratum*, which refers to "[...] geological formations that refer to different times and depths, which transform and differentiate one another at different speeds in the course of the so-called geological history [...]", as a metaphor for thinking about the various temporal planes, or layers.

the same concept, from which derives its ambiguous character. For some, this is one of the critical elements of *Begriffsgeschichte*¹⁵. However, to understand the history of the concepts that are available to us is to understand better “[...] how they lead us to think along certain lines, making ourselves capable of knowing how to act according to alternative and less restricted definitions of our situation” (Richter, 2006, p. 43). The concept of teaching, for example, common to the writing of the History of Education in this temporal turn driven by the accelerated character of time, leads us to discuss its reference in very particular contexts, considering that it is easily observable the distance between accumulated experience and expectations about what one wants to teach and/or learn. Perhaps because concepts are not reduced to their temporal singularity, they can help us to understand not only the peculiar character of past meanings, according to their structure and their character of repetition, but also “[...] the contemporaneity of the non-contemporary, irreducible to simple chronological discourse” (Merlo, 1998, p. 87).

This understanding that separates word and concept stems from concerns about the appearance of the new idea (*Neuzeit*) and, with it, modernity itself, as well as a kind of subjective experience that is conditioned by a rhythm or lifestyle much more accelerated. Obviously,

¹⁵ Here it is possible to sketch Skinner’s criticism of Koselleck. Skinner (1988, p. 283) says: “[...] in order to understand a concept, it is necessary to retain not only the meanings of the terms used to express it, but also the variety of things that can be done with it. That is why, despite the long continuities that have undoubtedly marked our inherited patterns of thought, I remain convinced in my belief that there can be no history of concepts as such; there can only be stories of their uses in the argument” (Skinner, 1988, p. 283). Koselleck responds to Skinner’s argument, agreeing on the impossibility of writing a history of a particular and concrete concept, but stresses that it is undeniable that a concept, irrespective of its original use, has gradually acquired and lost in the historical process a diversity of meanings, and thus it becomes plausible to write the history of the temporal strata of meaning (Coves, 2009). A broader distinction between the Cambridge and Bielefeld Schools (Koselleck’s long-standing university) implies that while the latter are “[...] more important in socio-political contexts, they insist on the transformative capacity of concepts, and from a chronological point of view, follow the history of concept over extended periods of time (though its preferences are certainly inclined to the critical phase 1750-1850 known by *Sattelzeit*), Pocock and Skinner stress the decisive character of the intellectual or linguistic contexts, emphasizing the intentions of agents and rarely exceed the chronological limits of the so-called Modern Age; while the latter focus their studies, especially on big individual authors and in specific languages, Koselleck and his school pay more attention to political and social movements and the concepts on which discourses are articulated” (Sebastian 2002, p. 346).

when he refers to this distinction, he does not treat it in a static way, but emphasizes the dialogicity internal to these elements guided by the floating character of ideas of experience (past) and expectancy (future). That is to say, concepts not only have accumulated experience in themselves, “[...] they no longer serve to apprehend the facts in such a way, they point to the future” (Koselleck, 2006, p. 103). As already mentioned elsewhere, the thinking sketched by him does not share a certain radicalism of some authors associated with the titled textualistic turn that attribute autonomy to the text. On the contrary, for him:

Historical events are not possible without acts of language, and the experiences we acquire from them cannot be transmitted without language. But neither the events nor the experiences are reduced to their linguistic articulation. Because in every event, numerous factors come into play that have nothing to do with language, and there are excerpts from experience that are subtracted from all linguistic proof. Of course, in order to be effective, almost all the extralinguistic elements of events, natural and material data, institutions and modes of behavior, depend on the mediation of language. But they are not restricted to it. Pre-linguistic structures and linguistic communication, by virtue of which events exist, remain intertwined, though they never coincide fully (Koselleck, 2006, p. 267).

Although the diagnosis of a brand-new time derived from a new temporal experience was already present in the eighteenth century, the term new (*Neuzeit*) makes its appearance in the nineteenth century. Along with it, the ideas of acceleration and experience arise, essential for understanding the redefinition of past, present and future temporalities, as well as the accent that will be given to the relation between the new and the idea of tradition. There are several developments in the writing of a history of education, especially with regard to the treatment of accumulated experience that tradition holds in its inevitable dialogue with the new and with the discourses of innovation common in modernity (Sebastián, 2013). Rewriting the concepts, semanticizing their contents according to the time in which such writing was given and being careful about reading and using the concepts produced in the present and embedded in very particular expectations of the future are some of the possible contributions, but the story is not exhausted in them.

History of Concepts and History of Education: an inevitable (dis)encounter

Numerous elements, besides those mentioned up to now, can provide a very positive approximation between this historiographic modality that is the conceptual history and the writing of the History of Education. If, for some, history is the observatory of education (Magalhães, 2016), History of Education is the observatory of life in society. To think of this observatory based on the introduction of concepts, their internal changes and their uses can help us to understand the evolution and development of societies. Further, based on the understanding of the relationship between history and education in modernity, we can understand the very importance of both for the survival of societies (Magalhães, 2010). However, the conceptual approach introduces important theoretical and methodological tools related to the nature of historical time, which implode archaic but persistent forms of thinking the past, present and future. The relations between tradition and innovation or the new, the idea that rupture and new are not dichotomous pairs that separate from the past, think the educational or the idea of educability beyond the walls of Pedagogy and in dialogue with the languages that cross it, to identify the moment when the changes actually occur, to think of the present as a place where the future is also thought, among others, are actions that need to be redefined.

When we ask ourselves where the new is in an intellectual or even educational movement, such as the New Education Movement, or in individuals and in their writings, we need to face questions that bring together issues such as ‘where the new begins in the New Education Movement, what remained of tradition and what is in fact the new?’ The discourse on innovation translates into the various rhetorical strategies used by the subjects and these need to be questioned.

The various lenses and rhetorical figures used allow us to draw links between authors or intellectual formations of the past - affiliations and changes of course; genealogies, overlaps, antagonisms, points of rupture and lines of continuity - thus composing authentic narrative identities (Sebastián, 2013, p. 57).

Likewise, ‘what is education in thought, in ideas, in concepts manipulated by an author?’ It is the word education that has to be

investigated, considering the various contents and meanings that are internal to it and are manipulated in the work and thinking of subjects who also say about the contents of the concept, its intellectual dimension (Magalhães, 2016). The idea of educational reform is another example that, in the context of the History of Education, contains substantial force. We ask: at what point, after all, does this reform begin, materializing in an official text? In the meetings, in the ideas, in a lost correspondence, in the diverse texts generated and/or in the different places advertised, in the forgetfulness of something? How many contents are not associated with the concept of reform throughout modernity, so what is reform and what is new in it? That is, which layers of meaning are handled?

However, there are several elements involved in the doubts produced in this writing and in conceptual history, whose various questions, semantic (Koselleck) or analytic (Skinner), can assist the analysis, since they are less driven by anachronistic, doctrinal choices or by the biographical illusion of coherence and imperviousness to criticism.

On the other hand, when we refer to a definite period in a calendar, such as, for example, Eight hundred and the Republic, we have to ask ourselves: 'at what time does the Eighteenth begins or ends'; 'In what moment does a revolution begin or which contents or layers of meaning are associated with that concept?'. We have already referred to the French Revolution, but if we recall the various revolutions derived from the contents associated with it, we will certainly be able to understand the mutations and displacements effected around and beyond the concept in its origin in the *Sattelzeit*. If we move some of the contents associated with the concept of revolution in modernity, articulating them with the writing itself and the History of Education, we will come across a (dis)encounter, since the writing of education itself and its changes teaches us that these do not occur in the radicality of the classical idea of rupture and that when we think about the future, in fact, it is already in the present. It is thus a much more complex and dynamic process involving past, present and future temporalities and the relationships between accumulated experience and the expectations of the future.

Final considerations

To consider these implications is to make an important critique of the History of Education and the certain salvific dimension associated with it. To constantly temporize the writing of the history and the concepts with which it deals, as well as the inevitable internal changes of these own

concepts is one of the ways to be followed. This is because, while it would be possible to identify repetitions and retained materialized structures (institutions and culture, for example), one could question certain types of rhetorical resources used in academic writing itself, such as rupture, new, novelty, traditional, among others, to refer to the History of Education. Thus, the investigator would have a place immersed in historicity similar to what is being investigated. In this way, he/she places him/herself not as a herald of truth but only modestly in that of a historical actor who contributes as a teacher and researcher in the History of Education to a dynamic writing of his/her place, from the constant transformations in his/her temporalization.

Now, this writing, this understanding, can be the result of a greater sensitivity to the polysemic character of educational concepts and to the dynamic aspect of intellectual and cultural processes related to the History of Education. This is because, throughout this history, there are diachronic and synchronic elements that are central in this area of investigation and must be considered, combined with a plural set of theoretical and methodological principles that seek to equate, in an historical operation of difficult resolution, an infinite variety sources, cultural diversities and narratives (Magalhães, 2010). It is also necessary to consider that ideological and often faith choices that designate research groups, fragmented and non-organic themes and forms of reflection on the object of study, play a compromising role in this writing.

In spite of this cognitive and epistemic multiplicity, the History of Education, concomitant with the development of the History of concepts, also carries out a self-criticism, derived from the so-called 'linguistic turn' in the 1960s, thus distancing itself from the associated messianic and salvific nature associated with the History of Pedagogy, whose origins lie in historicism itself and in its understanding of the transcendent nature of ideas inspired by Hegelianism (Vilanou, 2006a). Although it needs to be better explored in order to better visualize the kinds of changes that have occurred in the specific domain of writing and the representations of education, this self-criticism has approached seemingly distinct areas and encouraged efforts that consider the variations and singularities derived from cultural, local and/or global particularisms, both of a theoretical and methodological nature, in a writing that can answer questions that are posed in the short, medium or long term.

In this sense, as in the case of conceptual history, the History of Education would, from our point of view, by means of a critical examination of its writing, think of the changes, the constant consequences of the experience accumulated in its past and its present and the plural character of the temporalities that establish multifaceted relations between the layers of various meanings internal to the concepts. Based on such concepts, it is possible to represent reality, act upon it and modify it, as well as materialize it in its writing. Conceptual history, in this sense, reverses the traditional nature of the concept idea. Whereas, from a classical point of view, the role of the researcher is to group the experience perceived into a concept that is solid and immutable and transmitted to future generations in a homogeneous way; this mode invites us to see transience, dynamicity and impurity, but also the repetition and the internal permanence to the diverse layers of meanings constituting a concept.

Thereby, considering some elements of this historiographic modality may perhaps help in the understanding of transformations internal to concepts and their uses, sometimes paralyzed in writing, such as pedagogy, secularization, schooling, childhood, revolution, intellectual, etc., taking into account the inevitable interweaving between concepts, discourse and culture, a history of pedagogical thought could be started reflexively and critically (Torrano & Castillo, 2014).

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