


UP CLOSE NOBODY IS NORMAL!

DE PERTO NINGUÉM É NORMAL!

¡DE CERCA NADIE ES NORMAL!

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RESUMO

O artigo critica as práticas pedagógicas e discursivas que estigmatizam pessoas com deficiência no ambiente escolar, criando uma "cultura dos incapacitados" que leva ao fracasso escolar. Inspirado na mitologia de Procusto, aponta como essas práticas normalizadoras excluem e hierarquizam, reforçando um "darwinismo perverso". No século XX, o discurso médico-psicológico, influenciado por movimentos como o dos higienistas, moldou a Educação Especial, segregando os "diferentes". A partir dos anos 80, a perspectiva pedagógica ganha força, promovendo inclusão, cidadania e respeito às subjetividades. Contudo, o texto questiona se essas mudanças superaram a exclusão, alertando para a persistência de discursos normalizadores.

Palavras-chave: Exclusão. Normalização.

ABSTRACT

The article criticizes pedagogical and discursive practices that stigmatize people with disabilities in the school environment, creating a "culture of the disabled" that leads to academic failure. Inspired by the mythology of Procrustes, it highlights how these normalizing practices exclude and hierarchize, reinforcing a "perverse Darwinism." In the 20th century, medical-psychological discourse, influenced by movements such as the hygienists, shaped Special Education, segregating those who were "different." Beginning in the 1980s, the pedagogical perspective gained strength, promoting inclusion, citizenship, and respect for subjectivities. However, the text questions whether these changes have overcome exclusion, warning of the persistence of normalizing discourses.

Keywords: Exclusion. Normalization.

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RESUMEN

El artículo critica las prácticas pedagógicas y discursivas que estigmatizan a las personas con discapacidad en el ámbito escolar, creando una "cultura de la discapacidad" que conduce al fracaso académico. Inspirado en la mitología de Procusto, destaca cómo estas prácticas normalizadoras excluyen y jerarquizan, reforzando un "darwinismo perverso". En el siglo XX, el discurso médico-psicológico, influenciado por movimientos como el higienista, moldeó la Educación Especial, segregando a quienes eran "diferentes". A partir de la década de 1980, la perspectiva pedagógica cobró fuerza, promoviendo la inclusión, la ciudadanía y el respeto a las subjetividades. Sin embargo, el texto cuestiona si estos cambios han superado la exclusión, advirtiendo sobre la persistencia de discursos normalizadores.

Palabras clave: Exclusión. Normalización.

FULL TEXT

The title of this article is a provocation, a theoretical-methodological opposition to the discursive constructions and pedagogical practices observed in the school locus and in the social environment. The normalizing and stigmatizing character form in the school environment what Macdermott (1995) called the "culture of the disabled", which systematically leads to the school failure of people with disabilities. Macdermott found that these same tasks applied in communities of practice and in their contexts result in cognitive success and learning. Thus, the mechanisms of exclusion build a sometimes silent and dangerous process of selection between the "most capable and the least capable"; "those who learn and those who do not learn", amalgamating the assertion: "the person with disabilities does not learn!". It is a kind of perverse Darwinism, in which "those who win" the selective stages receive the insignia of: "capable and productive".

We can also refine our discussion by bringing in the mythology that evokes the figure of Procrustes, and is not unknown to the academic and literary world. According to Greek legend Procrustes, he was a bandit who offered his hospitality to lost travelers. He laid them on an iron bed, and if the bodies were longer than the bed, he cut them until they fit within the edges of the iron. If they were shorter, I stretched them violently. He was, so to speak, a **normalizer**.

In a vertical perspective, we can analyze that the history of intellectual disability has been a constant process of appropriation by normalizing discursive practices of a psychiatric, psychological, pedagogical and political order. These multiple discursive practices, however, are not elaborated by their protagonists, but are engendered by intellectuals from the areas of Psychology and Education who appear as their "spokespersons". These professionals start to use a systematic, analytical, demonstrative, heuristic language that belongs to the universe of literate, academic, clinical culture, attached to the "normality" of analytical reasoning. In other words, the studies on the so-called "intellectually disabled" treat him, from the discursive location, as an object of society and culture, but he himself is not present, but only as a field, as a theme, as an object of evaluation. He cannot listen to us, and, in this sense, to study him is to treat him as external, as another of us researchers: in other words, it is a discourse of exclusion (Wanderley, 1997).

These discourses and practices have been constructed throughout the history of humanity. In the last century, for example, with the creation of specialized institutes for the mentally handicapped (D.Ms), discursive practices received massive influence from a medical/psychologizing model, impregnated with the conceptions of disability, abnormality

and exceptionality. With this perspective, the conception of Special Education as the space for the agglutination of the "different" and deviants from the school began, and as a consequence the denial of universal schooling, justified as a natural consequence of biological-psychological differences. Thus, Special Education can be considered, in many moments, as a pedagogical and health care modality¹. Along with this type of practice, it can be assumed that the doctor's discourse is introduced in the school. In Donnangelo's sense⁴, this discourse is constructed in a "complex economic and political dynamic in which the interests and power of different social classes are expressed", and, placed at the service of symbolic structuring, extending the representations of health and disease to the entire school system, delimiting their respective fields of manifestation. The student with disabilities seems to figure as a legitimate representative of the "disease", who needs to have his behavior disciplined through the establishment of a method and, to put it better, a discourse about the disease.

In Brazil, we highlight, as one of the great heralds and exponents of this medical/psychologizing discourse, the movement of hygienists, in the first decades of the twentieth century. This movement was present in the constitution of the model of health care and school education, instrumentalizing them at the service of the legitimation of the emerging National State and the political forces it represented.

The basic proposal of the hygienists was to establish the "sanitary", medical and moral order that would encompass the entire social space, and with this, it contributed to give ideological support to the state standardization of society, especially with regard to individual behavior, physical health and social organization, subordinating them to the economic and political order, progressively based on capitalist relations of production and on the increase of urbanization and industrialization of the country. In this way, his action reached those who were on the margins of society and who needed to be. From the hygienists, several changes erupted in schools, in line with their ideal and that even affected people with disabilities and the structuring of their school education. As an example of this, we have in the State of Pernambuco the figure of Ulisses Pernambucano, a physician who proposes, in a pioneering way, a strengthening of the relations between community-school-family, then creating the service of school visitors (precursors in the function of social workers). In addition, he also created the first school for exceptional people in Brazil, whose purpose was the experimentation of pedagogical innovations and the application of techniques from emerging scientific psychology, that is, a psychology that advocated the measurement of individual differences through IQ (intelligence quotient)

⁴ DONNANGELO, M.C & PEREIRA, L. Saúde e Sociedade. 2nd ed. São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1979.

tests. In this context, the "disability" was no longer detected with the "naked eye" and taken from the community (as occurred in the case of the Institutes' clientele), but the school itself began to be in charge of the diagnosis and screening of the student.

In summary, we can say, then, that the creation of school hygiene services and the insertion of Psychology, as a fundamental instrument for the elaboration of pedagogical processes compatible with "individual potentialities", reveal the concern of Medicine with school health. However, this reflected, in the context of nascent special education, that "(...) education of the people should be placed under the neutral sign of science, reaching universal dimensions" (Monarcha, 1989, p.55), as he preached the separation of the "good scholar" from those who had intellectual, moral and pedagogical abnormalities.

Taking Foucault's conceptualizations as a reference, we can say that the use of psychometric tests and the evaluation of the "good scholar" served as a combination of the techniques of hierarchy that "watches" and those of the "sanction that normalizes", establishing a visibility on individuals through which they are differentiated and sanctioned. In this process, a "homogeneous" social body is forged by the adjustment/training of deviations and the production of reality by the fabrication of individuality as a fixation on the singularities of each one, which makes each individual, in the sense of Foucault⁵ (1989, p. 170): "a case that has to be trained or retrained, has to be classified, normalized, excluded, etc." The Procrustean bed is created in schools, excluding otherness and not welcoming the differences of social Others.

In the 80s, a significant change will take place: the person with disabilities begins to be seen and perceived from another perspective - the pedagogical one (although we find the marks of the medical discourse of the last century and the first half of this century). Thus, the central focus of the 1980s will be the redefinition of the modalities of services provided to people with disabilities and other "deviants". From this decade on, Special Education increasingly became a pedagogical modality, defined according to educational policy guidelines and thus moving away from the medical tradition. In the State of Pernambuco, this change is also installed as the Special Education technician himself begins to condense and agglutinate, in addition to the medical-pedagogical function, a humanitarian function in which it was attributed, almost exclusively, to the conquest, participation, social insertion and citizenship of people with disabilities. In the context of the 1980s, associations and representative entities also played a leading role in the search for a national debate on intra- and extra-school issues, leading to an increase in special education services to a level of better quality.

⁵ FOUCAULT, Michel. *Microphysics of Power*. 8th ed. Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal, 1989.

In the 90s, the discourse that emerges in the Brazilian educational scenario points out paths that indicate that the person with disabilities is much more focused on an eminently pedagogical intervention. In this sense, space is opened for pedagogy to account for the interdisciplinary character of the problems of Special Education, and to create new methodologies, proposals and guidelines. In this sense, the proposal of the "inclusive school" stands out, which tries to account for the various nuances, configurations and nuances of a school system based on the social diversity in which we are immersed. We can believe that the "pedagogical" look allows the presence of distinct interlocutors who start to instigate, tension and inaugurate the discourse of "difference". And, here we can ask whether a new phase of observation and respect for the subjectivities of people with disabilities has been introduced? Can we speak of an effective rupture of the character of repudiation and exclusion promoted by the medical/psychological gaze of the first decades of this century?

In other words, did the discursive turn implemented in special education in the 80s and 90s from a medicalizing/psychologizing discourse to an eminently political-pedagogical discourse, generate respect and the production of new subjectivities? Has it stopped stigmatizing and normalizing students?

It is worth noting that that moment was permeated by slogans that were hard to achieve linguistic and political success, being embraced and disseminated by Brazilian educators, composing a kind of pedagogical dictionary of the 80s and 90s, current and consensual: democracy, exclusion, citizenship, popular hegemony, civil society, pluralism... In this context, people with disabilities were raised to the condition of active (potential) citizens, and for this purpose, a work of re-education of the inclusive society was enough to prepare it to welcome them as equal and singular members.

We can say, then, that to speak of students with social protagonism, autonomy and independence, with active and intervening citizenship, is to construct an extremely seductive discourse, with the advantage of obtaining easy adhesions because it mobilizes spheres of repressed desire, of fantasy of reconciliation, which integrates what is separated. Here, our Procrustes reappears, a legendary figure, who, even offering his hospitality to travelers, acted by "stretching" and "cutting" them, that is, framing and normalizing them. Let us make him the representative of those who use projects based on re-education. It is worth noting that the emergence of these proposals emerged in popular governments that also had a normalizing character, as well as Procrustes.

Within this perspective, populist governments, such as that of Miguel Arraes in 1988-1991, needed to talk about citizenship for all the excluded, including people with mental

disabilities (at the time this was the terminology) and, transforming them into a "pedagogizable" and "politicizable" object, discursively constituting them as this object. The policy of the Arraes government embodied the effort of the modern democratic society to integrate these subjects, intrinsically different, into the social environment. It acted, therefore, exerting a normalizing power over these individuals, as it tried to submit them to a mainstream of thought and to a pedagogical vocabulary of the 80s, especially influenced by theorists such as Gramsci (1978). These "governments" (and at that time few people would dare not to identify the Arraes government as "popular") represented a kind of "return of the repressed": from the popular defeat of '64, from the repression that followed, the "repressed" (the banished, the exiled) reemerges, not to take revenge on its censors, but to carry out the sublime work. If the drive strategy of the "classical" bourgeoisie, as Marcuse wanted, was to orient institutionality towards the "sublime" world of production and work, diverting it from heretical and subversive external objects, there, at that moment, the "popular" drive strategy was directed towards another target: active participation in the public sphere, with a view to transforming the quality of our social relations. In this context, "the order was given" that would name all the banished, the repressed, the repressed, the exiles of the civilian world as "excluded". And, if exclusion is a sign of "objectification", active integration into the public space is a sign of "subjectation", becoming a Subject, to use the conceptions of Figueiredo⁶ (1995), a political subject, evidently, endowed with consciousness, power of word and action, to interfere in the course of its own destiny, formulator of its own demands.

The mentally handicapped person, already incorporated into the pedagogical field of "re-education", now appears not only as a pedagogizable object, but also as a "politicizable" one. Annexed to the indistinct sphere of the "excluded", and abolished all internal differentiation, all possible hierarchy, all distinctive boundaries that could separate the different, the excluded, or hierarchize them according to social, cultural, and professional interests, there he was, the mentally handicapped person, raised to the condition of active (potential) citizen, and for this purpose, all it took was a work of re-education of the inclusive society that would prepare him to welcome him as an equal and singular member.

In a society that has not even come close to a democratic and republican ideal, of the public domain of equals, for which difference is translated into hierarchy and this into privilege, it is understandable that the enthusiasm of "re-democratization" has assailed the spirits: to realize the equality demanded by democracy, as an action and as a concept. And

⁶ FIGUEIREDO, Luís Cláudio. Modes of Subjectivation in Brazil and other writings. São Paulo: Editora Escuta, 1995.

this ideal of equality has perhaps gained dominance over the idea of democracy as the public coexistence of those who are different.

Thus, we can perceive that investigating the discursive history of intellectual disability, based on the theoretical assumptions we have chosen, seems to show us that, more than the existence of subjects deviating from normality (which also already constitutes a discourse), this history is a constant appropriation by an order (psychiatric, psychological, pedagogical, political) of the object "mental disability", re-instituting itself at every step. Its subtraction from the specific universe of psychiatric discourse and its annexation to the domain of the pedagogical provided, in our view, the possibility that that "object" gained an unprecedented political dimension in a culture in which the pedagogical is understood as an epiphenomenon of the political; To make mental disability a field of re-education is to quickly allow its transit to (political) "intervention" in reality.

However, studying the theme in the scientific field excludes, by its own language and purposes of systematization and analysis, the individual about whom one speaks, because, as Mannoni (1995) tells us, "every word, as long as the individual is involved in it, is the discourse of the Other, part of the Other". In this sense, we can say that this text, our own text, deals with the person with disabilities from the point of view of the naming, the theoretical and discursive location of an object of society and culture, but it is only "present" as a field, as a theme, as an object of evaluation, as a "public policy". He can't hear me. And, in this sense, to "study" it is to treat it as "external", as the other of us, researchers. In a nutshell, it is to exclude it. In this way, the very generative grammar that governs the discourse about the person with disabilities, when deciding what it is and how it should be treated socially and pedagogically, reveals the ambiguity and tutelary tone of a "citizen" discourse.

However, studies like this serve to unveil the various mechanisms of exclusion existing in the social and school environment built on Procrustean beds, and generating microcapillary social stigmas, as Foucault warns us. In this sense, we call on our peers to defend the discourse of difference, to inaugurate a new phase of respect for the subjectivities of people with disabilities and to defend the premise that "up close no one is normal"!

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