

The Discrepancy Between Educational Management in São Paulo and Paulo Freire's Studies

Hilda Maria Gonçalves Silva¹
Aline Michelle Dib^{II}

¹Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP), São Paulo/SP – Brazil

^{II}Universidade de São Paulo (USP), São Paulo/SP – Brazil

ABSTRACT – The Discrepancy Between Educational Management in São Paulo and Paulo Freire's Studies. This research examines the concept of teaching work within the São Paulo Basic Education System to identify its similarities and differences with Paulo Freire's postulates regarding educational management. The analysis focused on the São Paulo Curriculum, a guiding document for teaching action. The study employed content analysis supported by the NVivo software to categorize the prevalent ideas in the document. The analysis delved into competence, engagement, and autonomy advocacy categories. Among the main findings, it is noteworthy to mention the contradictory stance of the São Paulo State Department of Education (SEESP), which presents a discourse aligned with Freirean premises while exhibiting a mechanistic teaching approach that reproduces neoliberal paradigms.

Keywords: Teaching Practice. Paulo Freire. *Currículo Paulista*.

RESUMO – O Descompasso entre a Gestão da Educação Paulista e os Estudos de Paulo Freire. Esta pesquisa analisa a concepção de trabalho docente do Sistema de Ensino Básico Paulista, para identificar suas proximidades e distanciamentos com os postulados de Paulo Freire acerca da gestão do ensino. A análise teve como objeto o *Currículo Paulista*, documento orientador da ação docente. O estudo foi desenvolvido por meio da análise de conteúdo apoiada no *software* NVivo para a categorização das ideias prevalentes do documento. O recorte da análise foram as categorias competência, engajamento e defesa da autonomia. Entre as principais constatações, cabe mencionar a postura contraditória da Secretaria de Educação do Estado de São Paulo (SEESP) ao apresentar um discurso que se aproxima das premissas freirianas e uma ação mecanicista de ensino, que reproduz paradigmas neoliberais.

Palavras-chave: Prática Docente. Paulo Freire. *Currículo Paulista*.

Introduction

The significance of studying the ideas propagated by Paulo Freire regarding education is timeless. Freirean thought is fundamentally political, envisioning education as an instrument of transformation to be wielded by an oppressed social class in pursuit of self-determination. In this sense, popular education, according to Freire, is a form of struggle aimed at overcoming the deep asymmetry inherent in social relationships.

Freire's legacy encompasses not only theoretical concepts but also practical engagement. On one hand, he authored numerous works primarily dedicated to comprehending the paths that could lead to the construction of emancipatory education. It is in this vein that his works address issues directly influencing the realm of education: the oppression of the marginalized layers of society; the pathways to advocating education within and for autonomy; and the characteristics of a liberating, emancipatory, and, above all, reality-transforming political engagement. On the other hand, the thinker engaged in adult education, implementing a literacy method he himself created, which lifted thousands out of illiteracy and was considered revolutionary. Freire served as the Secretary of Education for the Municipality of São Paulo between 1989 and 1991.

For the purposes of this research, it is crucial to highlight that Freirean thought is guided by a Marxist political and social conception. Thus, the division of society into classes pits oppressors against the oppressed within a spectrum of domination that encompasses not only economic aspects but also discursive power, crucial in terms of social and political positioning.

In this perspective, Paulo Freire's understanding of the importance of constructing an education that values popular knowledge emerges from his critique of the devaluation of the knowledge of the working class. This understanding should not be imposed upon the people, but rather developed in collaboration with them. It represents a concept of liberating education that goes beyond merely teaching language and arithmetic. Instead, it seeks to unveil historical and social relationships, fostering the development of individuals who are conscious of the reality surrounding them and capable of transforming it.

Freire criticized the prevailing traditional education of his time, which continues to have remnants in the present day. He referred to this education, which disregards social actors as subjects of their own learning, as "banking education". This term alludes to the idea that the teacher's role is to "deposit" pre-packaged knowledge into the student's mind, leading to mechanical reproduction. Freire's propositions were revolutionary for popular education, as they positioned women and men from marginalized communities as knowledge creators and their reality as a space for knowledge construction. Furthermore, he conceived education as a tool for the emancipation of individuals, a means to combat the verticalization of social relations that oppresses the marginalized.

The town of Angicos in Rio Grande do Norte became the focal point of Paulo Freire's involvement in popular education. It was in that environment, in 1962, that Freire first applied his newly developed literacy method, successfully teaching three hundred people to read and write within a span of 40 hours. The then-President João Goulart was so impressed that he established the National Literacy Plan, led by Paulo Freire. The military coup of 1964 forced Freire into exile, and he would only return in 1980. During this period, his literacy method was disseminated in the various countries he visited, gaining prominence far beyond his initial context.

In 1989, Paulo Freire assumed the position of Municipal Secretary of Education in São Paulo and pioneered discussions on curriculum and educational technologies. He brought his conception of education as a political action and a tool for transformation to the municipal administration. The political view of education propagated and practiced by Paulo Freire stands in contrast to the general characteristics of educational policy in the state of São Paulo over the past decades.

The management of education in the São Paulo basic education system, as part of governmental policy, has been led by officials affiliated with the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB, in Portuguese) since 1995 up to the present day. Throughout this period, the social policies implemented by these administrators have displayed recurring features, including the centralization of administrative and financial management, the decentralization of pedagogical management, and the accountability of policy implementers for outcomes.

In this context, starting from 1996, a process of decentralization of basic education was carried out in the state of São Paulo, with actions that led to a progressive increase in the municipalization of this level of education. Currently, the municipal sphere is responsible for 3,848,780 enrollments in basic education, which represents approximately 52% of students attending public schools in São Paulo. On the other hand, the state network is responsible for 3,567,229 enrolled students.

Within the context of the São Paulo state education system, the centralization of administrative and financial management can be observed in various aspects, including the discretionary actions of school principals. The funds allocated directly to schools arrive with predetermined destinations, leaving little to no room for decision-making on the part of these administrators. This centralization also extends to administrative procedures: the directives from the São Paulo State Department of Education (SEESP, in Portuguese), even the more technical actions, follow standardized guidelines for all institutions, centrally defined. In these activities, there is a clear tendency towards a process of administrative decentralization, which primarily involves centralized decision-making and procedure definition, followed by decentralized execution (Ramos, 2015, p. 559). Consequently, there remains limited autonomy and reflection within the realm of teaching practice.

Programs and pedagogical projects stemming from educational policy reach the grassroots level, particularly teachers, with predetermined guidelines for mere “participation”. The decision-making phase is established by the central bodies of the SEESP. This participation is often superficial and artificial, lacking effective involvement in the establishment of directives. An example of this practice is the *São Paulo Faz Escola*, which translates to “São Paulo Makes School” in English, it maintained the same structure from 2007 to 2019. The curricula within this program were conceived and developed within the Coordinating Offices of the Department of Education, and consultations with teachers had little to no impact. A clear illustration of this is the absence of changes to the program over those 12 years, despite the numerous criticisms raised by various agents at the grassroots level (Silva, 2017). Starting in 2019, under the government of João Dória, a new *Currículo Paulista*, which refers to the curriculum base of the state of São Paulo (São Paulo, 2019), began to take shape within the *São Paulo Faz Escola* program, characterized by a structure closely resembling those described above.

Lastly, a significant aspect contributing to the characterization of the management style adopted within the state of São Paulo's basic education system is the extensive use of external assessments, such as the *State of São Paulo School Performance Assessment System* (Saesp, in Portuguese), established in 1996 and ongoing to the present day. Saesp, as part of large-scale assessments and aligned with them in terms of result verification and accountability for grassroots agents, carries the notion of controlling education, schools, and teachers. It aims to relieve the state of responsibility for the outcomes of the public service provided.

In this context, the goal was to establish a dialogue between Freire's ideals of education as a form of politics and the education policy in the state of São Paulo. The focus was on the classroom management profile, particularly teaching work, in accordance with the principles of these policies

For categorization, a content analysis guided by the principles of Bardin (2016) was employed. To establish the ideological characteristics that define the pedagogical management of basic education institutions within the São Paulo public school system, the *Currículo Paulista* (São Paulo, 2019) was analyzed, with special attention to the curriculum presentation document and the Teacher's Handbooks for the final years of elementary school

The study of documents and Freire's theory regarding education management focused on three categories: competence or methodological rigor, engagement, and defense of autonomy. Throughout the analysis, the similarities and differences between the teaching management ideals conveyed by Freire's conception and those of the SEESP were identified within each of these three categories.

Paulo Freire's Concept of Education

Breaking away from a conservative approach to education that upholds hierarchy, where centralized power influences the development of teaching practices that dissolve into the learning experiences of individuals, is an ongoing challenge. Paulo Freire's works are globally recognized for offering precise contributions against this classic and universal pedagogical perspective (Gadotti, 2000). Much of this recognition stems from the fact that these contributions are grounded in premises that view pedagogy as a cross-cutting science, expanding the notions of school and pedagogical work organization.

Firstly, it is important to explore the field in which Freire presents his ideas before discussing the act of teaching as something that extends beyond the four walls enclosing the classroom. Along this path, the arguments put forth by Freirean theory reveal the significance of educational dimensions that surpass physical and curricular structures, delving much deeper. This approach takes into account the human condition, both individually and within social relationships, fostering a mutual development of individuals in different roles within the learning process.

Under a humanistic backdrop, Freire (2002) equates access to education with liberation from the ideal of rote memorization and the dissemination of information within rigid structures. In this concept of transcendence, education is portrayed as a practice that extends beyond the accumulation of knowledge, aiming to shape individuals to generate and transform knowledge (Freire, 2002). While the faint lines forming this process may appear on the verge of intersecting, the philosopher's intentionality in broadening professionals' perspectives to break free from traditional ideals and perceive education as a political realm can be deduced.

This is because there is a consensus that the contemporary pedagogical field is still heavily influenced by practices that prioritize memorization of information over genuine reflection and contextual connection for students. In a similar vein, Freire (2002) reiterates that the act of teaching and the dimensions that surround it extend beyond the mere transfer of knowledge. Reducing the essence of learning to such a limited scope disregards the pedagogical, political, ethical, epistemological, and ontological reasons that demand recognition.

For Freire (2002), departing from a conservative stance and embracing a more democratic one that prioritizes the critical development of the individual depends on how educators and, even more significantly, educational programs comprehend, analyze, and guide the course of action within schools. Thus, a need arises to integrate the roles of teachers and principals as central agents in this process.

Regarding the school routine, the Freirean perspective asserts that it should be conceived and sustained with a focus on supporting, stimulating, and promoting actions that already engage or aim to en-

gage in liberating education (Freire, 1981). However, programs should not exercise ideological control over professionals working daily in educational institutions, nor guarantee a unanimity of values. From Freire's standpoint, what is essential is rigorous training for those involved, especially grassroots educators, which establishes a shared commitment to overcoming authoritarianism that limits the capacity to learn and develop knowledge. This commitment aims to foster an awareness of education as a potentially transformative force in society (Freire, 1981).

In Freire's conception (1981), within a socially inclusive education, the management of Education Departments is responsible for connecting educators with grassroots initiatives. This linkage ensures that the perception of democratic and liberating education is translated into teaching practice. The viability of an educational program, such as the Curriculum of the State of São Paulo (São Paulo, 2019), for instance, is contingent upon its ability to learn from these educators who, as agents at the grassroots level, have much to offer (Freire, 1981). Thus, an interdependent relationship is expressed between grassroots educators and central administrators in defining pedagogical work directives which, in practice, are often hastily conceived and then interrupted or distorted due to communication breakdowns.

Furthermore, maintaining transparent and continuous communication with educators is inherently essential. Such dialogue should facilitate the integration of pedagogical work and serve as an opportunity to encourage the sharing of observations, critiques, and opinions about their understandings (Freire, 1981). Additionally, expanding boundaries through communication and consequently intensifying cooperative efforts is a pivotal measure for overcoming autocratic management methods. On this matter, Freire (1981, p. 22) emphasizes:

Therefore, the more bureaucratic a central team is, not only from an administrative perspective but especially mentally, the narrower and more supervisory it will be. Conversely, the more open and receptive it is to creativity, anti-dogmatic, and the more evaluative, in the sense described here, it will be.

The extracted passage highlights important aspects that contribute to the discussion proposed in the paper. Firstly, it should be mentioned that the evaluative sense referred to by the author differs from inspection, as it prioritizes its dialogic nature, where all individuals are subjects of analysis while also expressing opinions (Freire, 1981). This highlights a structure that, despite having a hierarchy, is inclined towards substantive practices, such as evaluation, and places them in a horizontal disposition where managers not only evaluate but are also evaluated.

Having said that, it is essential to emphasize the accountability attributed to the intentional work posture of a team. Freire's perspective (1981) aims to elucidate the subordinate condition of managerial work to its methodology, which is manifested in accordance with the

adopted paradigms, their interests, and viewpoints on various aspects of daily school life. In this context, a work methodology that is not open to ideas, lacks inclusivity and active participation of different social actors involved, can become excessively technical and overlook opportunities to address challenges.

To comprehend the issues encompassing the *São Paulo Faz Escola* program through the analysis of the *Currículo Paulista* (São Paulo, 2019), it will require the evaluation of the prevailing perspectives found in Freire's works that pertain to the management of pedagogical work. Firstly, to delve into this realm of concepts, it is essential to consider that the school's daily routine must be approached from a collective and participatory perspective so that challenges are not solely concentrated between standardization and supervision. On the other hand, pursuing a collaborative path while inadvertently assigning the educator as the sole entity responsible for identifying, deliberating, and resolving obstacles within the classroom contradicts the dialectical movement that needs to remain consistent (Freire, 1981).

Aspects of Categorization

Before delving into the main discussion prompted by the study, a decision was made to elucidate the aspects of the content analysis conducted on the *Currículo Paulista* (São Paulo, 2019) that are associated with the Freirean conception of education. Drawing upon Bardin's theory (2016), the steps of content analysis were delimited as follows: preliminary reading of the material, followed by the process of categorization, culminating in the identification of outcomes.

To enhance the categorization phase, the qualitative data analysis software NVivo was employed. As highlighted by Nodari, Soares and Wiedenhof (2014), NVivo serves as a tool capable of providing analytical directions to the researcher while simultaneously enhancing the methodological rigor of the study.

When employing the Teacher's Notebooks as the research object within the software, a list of the 30 most frequent words was extracted. It is worth mentioning that the decision was made to exclude prepositions, conjunctions, interjections, and pronouns from the list, as these elements might serve only as auxiliary morphological functions in the texts and not reflect the main idea of a sentence that could contribute to exploring the material. The generated list of words is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – 30 Most Frequent Words

	Word	Count	Similar Words Considered
1	different	881	different, differences
2	practices	496	practice, practices
3	life	477	life
4	identify	448	identify
5	reading	448	reading, readings
6	processes	372	process, processes
7	knowledge	344	knowledge, knowledges
8	writing	324	writing, writings
9	world	316	world
10	analyze	308	analyze
11	education	298	education
12	teaching	283	teaching
13	cultures	235	culture, cultures
14	development	230	development, developments
15	times	230	time, times
16	elements	213	element, elements
17	skills	210	skill, skills
18	recognize	206	recognizes, recognize
19	social	206	social
20	analysis	204	analysis, analyses
21	work	201	work, works
22	action	200	action
23	relations	197	relations
24	place	192	place, places
25	construction	191	construction
26	linguistic	184	linguistic, linguistics
27	problems	183	problem, problems
28	situations	183	situations
29	understanding	180	understanding
30	measures	179	measure, measures

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As a way of visualizing the list in a hierarchical manner, a word cloud was created to represent the frequency of appearance based on the size of the terms. In other words, the more times a word appeared in the document, the larger it is represented in the generated image (Figure 1).

Table 2 – Detailed Overview of Analysis Categories

Categories	Keywords	Exemplary Extracts
1. Competence/ Methodological Rigor	1.1 Identify; reading; processes; writing; elements; skills; analysis; construction; linguistic; measures.	1.2.1 Use, propose, and/or implement solutions (processes and products) involving different technologies to identify, analyze, model, and solve complex problems in various areas of everyday life, effectively exploring logical reasoning, computational thinking, investigative spirit, and creativity (São Paulo, 2019, p. 41, emphasis added). 1.2.2 Utilize various software tools and applications to help understand and produce content across various media, simulate phenomena and processes from different knowledge areas (São Paulo, 2019, p. 41, emphasis added). 1.2.3 Record observations, manipulations, and measurements using multiple languages (São Paulo, 2019, p. 75, emphasis added). 1.2.4 It is expected that these indications can guide schools to strengthen actions that ensure students' transposition of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values (São Paulo, 2019, p. 45, emphasis added).
2. Engagement	2.1 Relations; understanding; development; cultures; situations; problems; recognize.	2.2.1 In this way, it affirms the commitment to students' development in their intellectual, physical, socioemotional, and cultural dimensions, listing the essential competences and skills for their participation in contemporary society and its complex, multifaceted, and uncertain scenarios (São Paulo, 2019, p. 28, emphasis added). 2.2.2 Theater contributes to contextualizing knowledge and artistic practices. They allow understanding the relationships between subjects' times and social contexts in their interaction with art and culture (São Paulo, 2019, p. 213, emphasis added). 2.2.3 Childhood refers not only to chronological time, a stage of development, but also to a social and symbolic place constructed in different cultures. Therefore, it is necessary to talk about childhood in the plural, respecting the diversity of local cultures (São Paulo, 2019, p. 51, emphasis added). 2.2.4 Its study should enable students to understand the world they live in and develop the ability to describe, represent, locate themselves; study their position and movements; identify shapes and relationships between elements of flat and spatial figures, thus developing geometric thinking (São Paulo, 2019, p. 321, emphasis added).
3. Defense of Autonomy	3.1 Life; different; world; performance; practices; knowledge; work; times.	3.2.1 Living, learning, and relating in this new context require greater autonomy and mobilization of individuals' competences to access, select, and construct viewpoints in the face of a substantial volume of information and knowledge available, to seek creative solutions, and make choices consistent with their life projects and the impact of these choices (São Paulo, 2019, p. 29, emphasis added). 3.2.2 This phase of life cannot be seen as static but as a process that produces constitutive marks of subjectivity, establishing ways of being, existing, and acting in the world (São Paulo, 2019, p. 52, emphasis added). 3.2.3 To fully perform the role of an Early Childhood Education teacher, it is essential to learn to interpret ongoing processes and understand children's perceptions, ideas, and thoughts about the actions of adults and their peers (São Paulo, 2019, p. 57, emphasis added). 3.2.4 In times of rapid and significant changes, the school has strengthened as a privileged space for the experience of self-awareness, identity construction, and life projects; for authorship, critique, and creativity in knowledge production; and for participatory, collaborative, and co-responsible practices within the local and planetary context (São Paulo, 2019, p. 31, emphasis added).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Given the foregoing, it is evident that the prevailing ideas in the text, identified through a thorough analysis of the most frequent words, point to a direct association with Freire's theory, especially regarding teacher-oriented and integral education, seen as a fundamental part of a nation's education. Nevertheless, on its own, the analysis in NVivo does not facilitate a reflection on the underlying nuances within the discourse of SEESP. Therefore, it becomes necessary to proceed with a deeper analysis of the categories, using the literature of Freire (2002) as a foundation.

Freire and the Guidelines for Education Management in the State of São Paulo

Navigating the context of teaching action guided by autonomy, competence, and effectiveness is a constant exercise, as the pursuit of breaking free from a reactionary understanding of education and entering the trend of pedagogical, social, and democratic quality brings with it the need for mastery of some essential dimensions. It is from this perspective that this article chose to work with the categories of competence, or methodological rigor, engagement, and defense of autonomy. The analysis conducted aimed to promote a dialogue between Freire's conception and the guidelines of the SEESP regarding these three dimensions within the scope of education management.

According to Freire (2002), the democratic educator is also responsible for carrying out a teaching practice guided by rigor, because the methodological rigor sought here is far from a rigidity of teaching focused on the repetition of information to be mechanically memorized.

It is a fact that the educator drives and gives materiality to a learning process. However, the path taken by contemporary education systems under governmental control is one that standardizes the supplies that promote learning and limits the teachers' work in terms of implementing actions that bring education closer to a practice of freedom (Gadotti, 2000). The idea of rigor discussed by Freire (2002) directly echoes this issue. This rigor refers to the commitment to creating an environment conducive to experiencing learning. The teacher's work is of paramount importance in building this environment.

With attention to these issues, the research focused on the analysis of the *Currículo Paulista* for the final years of elementary education. The presentation of the current state curriculum is laden with directive guidance that leaves little room for the essence of teaching work based on integrated action/reflection in dialogue with the student. Freirean praxis seems compromised right from the first pages of the document in question:

Thus, the Curriculum clearly indicates what students should 'know' (in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values) and, above all, what they should 'know how to do', considering the mobilization of these knowledge,

skills, attitudes, and values to address complex demands of everyday life, full exercise of citizenship, and the world of work (São Paulo, 2019, p. 35).

This passage indicates that it concerns an inflexible curriculum, with limited room for everyday experiences, for valuing students' reality in knowledge construction, and for the exchange of learning between educators and students, concepts highly valued by Paulo Freire within the realm of rigor and competence. Beyond the Curriculum presentation, the collection of documents comprising it includes Student and Teacher Notebooks for each subject. It is important to grasp how this directive approach may compromise teaching work.

From this standpoint, as per Freire (2002), addressing rigor also encompasses considering an aesthetic dimension surrounding pedagogical practices. The educator's work should be propelled by a desire for change, seriousness, and respect for their labor. This notion is often misconstrued by the generalized perception that educators should solely be motivated by the prospect of contributing to education as a whole and ensuring the delivery of prescribed content from the curriculum. According to Freire's theory, the rigor of an educator's work and their commitment to liberating education enable them to witness significant changes in each student. This process intertwines theory and practice, crafting a praxis in which educators are persistently motivated to accompany these changes and their own process of transformation (Freire, 2002).

It is challenging to satisfy this aspect of rigor, as highlighted by Freire, within the confines of a Curriculum composed of what can be termed a closed set of content and predetermined themes, where educators are expected to merely reproduce the prescribed content, and school administrators oversee adherence to the vertical plan. Consequently, the rigor embraced by the educational system (SEESP) diverges from the concept of praxis and leans more towards standardizing actions and implementing didactic materials. Within this framework, educators and school administrators assume diminished roles, as though the Curriculum, once implemented, could independently foster knowledge (re)production.

Freire's studies also emphasize the issue of ethics in the pursuit of rigor. In this regard, Freire (2002) draws attention to the depth and multivalent nature of ethics since the ethics of educators are perpetually susceptible to the influence of market ethics. This clash undermines the notion of fostering a respectful, democratic, and emancipatory approach to education. Although the philosopher views the suppression of this issue as a utopian concept within the pedagogy of autonomy, establishing a universal ethical commitment among education professionals is pivotal. Within the context of SEESP, there is only room for ethical action in the manner delineated by Freire, in the struggle to transform the São Paulo Education System and resist this standardized model of education. This is because this management model lacks room for criti-

cal thinking, a collaborative process in which both learners and educators jointly construct knowledge.

Similarly, according to Freire, critical thinking is what equips educators to be prepared for the unpredictable, subjective, and externally conditioned aspects of the school environment, which are not fixed (Freire, 2002). Therefore, pursuing rigor doesn't entail stifling work practices or compromising educators' liberty to evolve. Instead, this rigor is directed toward the educator's commitment to upholding the teaching path advocated by the philosopher.

Furthermore, this process doesn't occur in isolation and cannot be accomplished through unilateral effort alone. Freire (2002) clarifies that engagement is a vital element for reconciling all the interests involved in creating liberating education. Moreover, engagement in education is how the school expresses its understanding and support for diverse socio-cultural, economic, and learning conditions of students and the entire school community (Freire, 2002).

The challenges posed by the characteristics of state management hinder the engagement of school directors and educators within the school environment. Engagement entails autonomous, conscious, and proactive work, contrasting with standardization and mechanistic practices detached from dynamic processes of dialogic construction.

For Gadotti (2000), the concept of democratic and participatory management is prevalent in Freire's works, primarily addressing a historical lack of commitment persistently present in Brazilian education. The suppression of pedagogical dimensions in favor of managerial actions exacerbates this issue and undermines efforts to establish democratic management. However, engagement in the learning process doesn't commence in the classroom; it must be manifested in the surrounding environment to impact the educator's work in defending the universal right to education (Freire, 2002).

Regarding pedagogical work, Freire (2002) contends that educators need to be cognizant of their role and responsibilities, but also require improved conditions to fulfill their duties effectively, encompassing the physical space, hygiene, and aesthetic conditions that provide resources for their work. Despite seeming like minimal school prerequisites, societal fluctuations increasingly demand resources that alter conditions. The absence of programs and public policies to address these conditions became more evident and critical with the demands brought about by the Coronavirus pandemic, which necessitated a more urgent and complex need for technological resources due to the shift to remote learning.

In the same vein, it is necessary to highlight another intriguing facet in Freire's discourse on engagement: engagement in the process of change. Given that profound transformations in education demand constant and wholehearted commitment, professionals in the field must offer lucidity and understanding of the need for their efforts to contribute to societal transformations (Freire, 1981). Hence, the issue of

individual engagement is multifaceted, involving educational management, school administration, and teaching work, all culminating in the support of change across different aspects.

Once again, it becomes evident how inhibiting the São Paulo curriculum is to autonomy and, consequently, to engagement. The “prescriptive” nature found in student and teacher notebooks even extends to activities related to socio-emotional “development,” within a curriculum component labeled “Life Project,” designed for high school. It is concerning to believe that engagement can be promoted among directors, teachers, and especially students, within a highly relational component, through standardized materials, limiting teaching practice to mechanical actions around artificially produced themes. As an example, Activity 3 in this curriculum component is presented in Table 3:

Table 3 – Activity Proposed in the Student Notebook

Learning Situation: SUPERPOWERS CHALLENGE! Focused Socio-Emotional Competencies: tolerance for frustration, enthusiasm, focus, determination, artistic interest, and respect.				
MISSION 1: DISCOVERING “SUPERPOWERS”				
Likely, at some point in your life, you’ve imagined what it would be like to have superpowers. Being invisible, having the strength of a giant, running faster than the wind, or being able to read minds are powers we see in superhero movies. If you could choose to have superpowers, which ones would you pick?				
Stepping out of the realm of superhero imagination, know that you have your own powers. This means you have qualities and values that make you unique and special. No one else in the world is the same as you! To think and understand what your powers are, you need to reflect on yourself.				
To discover more about your qualities, do this quick exercise. In 5 minutes, complete the following table. If needed, copy the table into your Diary and add more rows.				
I’m good at	I need to learn how to	I’m afraid of	I get excited when	I don’t like

Source: São Paulo (2021, p. 263).

Observations suggest that the learning situations shed light on what is expected of teachers in the state education system, as defined by SEESP. Developing pre-established activities represents a mechanistic endeavor, reproducing concepts and paradigms defined by third parties, leaving the responsibility of reflecting on educational practice to others, while teachers are meant to engage in exercise and action. This highlights a disassociation between theory and practice, burying the necessary praxis for the teaching task. Building upon this point of discussion, one can retrace in Freire the link between competence and the construction and implementation of educational work, in contrast to the task executor envisioned by the São Paulo educational management. According to Freire (2002, p. 47), “[...] a teacher who does not take their own training seriously, who does not study, who does not strive to meet the demands of their task, lacks the moral strength to coordinate

the activities of their class.” This excerpt underscores the importance for education professionals to acquire technical competencies enabling the exercise of a practice-bound job, thereby becoming professionals conscious of the character, not only methodological and conceptual, but also the political nature of their actions.

Even though the educational context is often marked by unpredictability, it can be deduced that the critical ability to deal with unexpected situations also stems from professional competence. In this regard, as opposed to what is revealed by the SEESP document analysis, in Freire’s theory, placing the question of competence in terms of preparing teachers for the unexpected fosters democratic education, as efforts are directed towards overcoming challenges, embracing creativity, and assuming responsibility for one’s actions (Freire, 2002).

It must not be overlooked that educators need to adopt an authoritative stance to command respect for their work. On this point, Freire (2002) reiterates that it should be a consistently democratic authority, rooted in the certainty that its purpose is to create a space for students to navigate, and under no circumstances should it be used to curtail the sought-after freedom. At a certain point, the concept of authority aligns with the perspective of competence advocated by the philosopher, given that through the pursuit of competence, other important aspects that contribute to this authority manifest, such as confidence in executing actions, cognitive background, and the level of quality in task execution (Freire, 2002).

The mastery of the educator’s work, therefore, stems from this testimony of ethical labor in support of autonomy. Concerning autonomy, Freire (2002) points to the power of the term in practice and ideological discourse, particularly due to the inversions that occur in neoliberal mentality. In this sense, given the possibilities for interpretation and application, autonomy can be political, social, economic, or cultural and may vary according to the dominant interests, objectives, and intentions within a social sphere. In terms of pedagogy, the autonomy advocated by Freire (2002) is geared towards attesting, by the subject as well, to the knowledge, freedom, and rights they possess through education.

The defense of autonomy doesn’t culminate in the effects the individual will generate in society after the training period, because it is equally essential throughout the process. Not respecting students’ histories, their curiosities, concerns, preferences, and life trajectories undermines educators in their duty to be respectfully present to teach and inspire a formative experience for learners based on ethical principles (Freire, 2002). Thus, it’s vital in a learning process that educators realize their work involves respecting the autonomy of all and not stifling the freedom that education affords through authoritarian and disrespectful practices.

For Freire (2002), there is no genetic, historical, philosophical, or sociological justification that favors moral superiority among individu-

als, regardless of race, gender, or hierarchical position. The pedagogical autonomy espoused by the philosopher originates from respect for individuals' identities and must be consistently present in the daily school life, as defending autonomy is an essential element in implementing democratic perspectives across various aspects of pedagogical work organization.

Going even further, autonomy serves as the foundation for the development of work practices that consider the pluralities of educational institutions and the communities surrounding them, instead of standardizing actions based on a mechanistic view of tasks and action plans. On this matter, Freire (2002) emphasizes the centrality of autonomy, as its entire context, spanning teacher training, alignment of the administrative team, connection with the community, and teaching practices, must all operate in favor of students' autonomy and their capacity to handle the unpredictabilities of any challenges that may arise in this context.

Final Considerations

Given the significance of Freire's work for national education, the necessity to reflect on Freirean premises to transform the commodified education perspective, which has been propagated through reforms, plans, projects, and programs in São Paulo, became evident. Consequently, this study aimed to categorize the key ideas of the São Paulo Curriculum (São Paulo, 2019) and analyze them through the lens of Freire (1981; 2002) concerning teaching work.

The reflection on teachers' work paved the way to emphasize aspects of SEESP's discourse that align with a mechanistic educational policy, draped in pedagogical veneer while proposing reproductions of neoliberal concepts and paradigms. Thus, the research presented Freire's perspectives (1981; 2002) on education that would genuinely be democratic and rooted in recognizing individuals as critical beings.

To achieve this educational ideal, it was underscored that teachers hold a crucial role in delivering professional, competent, and socially attuned performance. More specifically, the categories of analysis — methodological competence or rigor, engagement, and advocacy of autonomy — contributed to defining the limits and possibilities of ethical and committed teaching work, aiming to grant broad access to education rights.

In conclusion, the presented analysis establishes a connection between teaching work and Freirean principles that foster a humanized learning process geared towards societal development as a whole. It envisions a scenario where marginalized communities can witness access to knowledge, their rights, and their freedom legitimized through education.

Received on January 31, 2022

Approved on March 2, 2023

References

- BARDIN, Laurence. **Análise de Conteúdo**. São Paulo: Almedina Brasil, 2016.
- FREIRE, Paulo. **Ação Cultural para Liberdade**. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1981.
- FREIRE, Paulo. **Pedagogia da Autonomia**. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 2002.
- GADOTTI, Moacir. Saber Aprender: um olhar sobre Paulo Freire e as perspectivas atuais da educação. In: CONGRESSO INTERNACIONAL – UM OLHAR SOBRE PAULO FREIRE, 1., 2000, Évora. **Anais [...]**. Évora: Universidade de Évora, 2000. P. 1-10. Disponível em: http://siteantigo.paulofreire.org/pub/Institu/SubInstitucional1203023491It003Ps002/Aprender_ensinar_Freire_2000.pdf. Acesso em: 7 abr. 2021.
- NODARI, Felipe; SOARES, Mauren do Couto; WIEDENHOFT, Guilherme Costa. Contribuição do Maxqda e do NVivo para a Realização da Análise de Conteúdo. In: ENCONTRO DA ANPAD, 38., 2014, Rio de Janeiro. **Anais [...]**. Rio de Janeiro: EnAnpad, 2014. P. 1-16. Disponível em: https://repositorio.pucrs.br/dspace/bitstream/10923/10235/2/Contribuicao_do_Maxqda_e_do_NVivo_para_a_Realizacao_da_Analise_de_Conteudo.pdf. Acesso em: 10 abr. 2021.
- RAMOS, Alberto. **Administração Pública**. Rio de Janeiro: FGV, 2015.
- SÃO PAULO (Estado). **Currículo Paulista**. São Paulo: Secretaria de Estado da Educação, 2019. Disponível em: [v http://www.escoladeformacao.sp.gov.br/portais/Portais/84/docs/pdf/curriculo_paulista_26_07_2019.pdf](http://www.escoladeformacao.sp.gov.br/portais/Portais/84/docs/pdf/curriculo_paulista_26_07_2019.pdf). Acesso em: 1 jun. 2021.
- SÃO PAULO (Estado). **SP faz Escola: caderno do aluno. 3ª série: Ensino Médio**. São Paulo: Secretaria da Educação, 2021. Disponível em: https://efape.educacao.sp.gov.br/curriculopaulista/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Caderno-do-Estudante_3%C2%AA-s%C3%A9rie_volume-2_2%C2%BA-semester_para-impress%C3%A3o.pdf. Acesso em: 12 jan. 2021.
- SILVA, Hilda Maria Gonçalves da. Os Dados do Saresp entre 2008 e 2014 e os Usos desses Resultados pela SEESP. **Revista de Educação Pública**, Cuiabá, UFMG, v. 26, n. 63, p. 801-816, 2017.

Hilda Maria Gonçalves Silva is an Associate Professor in Education, affiliated with the Graduate Programs in School Education at São Paulo State University (UNESP), Araraquara campus, and in Planning and Analysis of Public Policies, Franca campus. She is a faculty member of the Department of Education, Social Sciences, and Public Policies at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, UNESP/Franca.

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2877-0536>

E-mail: hilda_gs@yahoo.com.br

Aline Michelle Dib is a doctoral candidate funded by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) at the Faculty of Education, University of São Paulo (USP). She holds a master's degree in Planning and Analysis of Public Policies from São Paulo State University (UNESP), Franca campus. Additionally, she is specialized in School Management from the “Luiz de Queiroz” College of Agriculture, University of São Paulo, Piracicaba campus.

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3461-8725>

E-mail: aline.dib@usp.br

The Discrepancy Between Educational Management in São Paulo and Paulo Freire's Studies

Availability of research data: the dataset supporting the results of this study is published in this article.

Editor in charge: Carla Karnoppi Vasques

