

## Escola e internet: espaços de formação para a cidadania

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### Resumo


Diante da recente crise social causada pela pandemia da Covid-19, é tarefa urgente do campo revisitar fundamentos da educação na cultura digital, para potencializar uma perspectiva emancipadora da educação na atualidade. Apesar da promessa de ampliação democrática trazida pela internet e demais tecnologias digitais de informação e comunicação, ao que assistimos é uma reconfiguração da indústria cultural pela proliferação de discurso de ódio, fake news, marketing político digital, capitalismo de dados, entre outras violências nas redes digitais. A tarefa da pesquisa em educação no momento é refletir e enunciar os desafios postos pela integração de tecnologias na vida cotidiana enquanto procura espaços de possibilidade para a existência e formação crítica de cidadãos no contexto da cultura digital. O artigo elabora uma reflexão teórica para consolidar as bases de um outro paradigma de educação, baseado na educação em direitos humanos em uma escola conectada com o mundo. A partir de uma perspectiva crítica, propõe que a educação se ocupe da leitura crítica das mídias, mas também de experimentar formas de apropriação criativa que formem sujeitos como autores e produtores de sua história.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação para a cidadania. Tecnologia e Educação. Cultura Digital.

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**Abstract**

**Keywords:** Public Civic education. Education technology. Digital Culture.

**Schools and internet: spaces for civic education**

In face of the recent social crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, it is an urgent task for the field to revisit the fundamentals of education in digital culture to enhance an emancipatory perspective of education today. Despite the promise of democratic expansion brought by the internet and other digital information and communication technologies, what we are seeing is a reconfiguration of the cultural industry due to the proliferation of hate speech, fake news, digital political marketing, data capitalism, and other forms of violence on digital networks. The task of research in education at the moment is to reflect and enunciate the challenges posed by the integration of technologies in everyday life while looking for spaces of possibility for the existence and critical formation of citizens in the context of digital culture. The article elaborates a theoretical reflection to consolidate the bases of another educational paradigm based on human rights education in a school connected with the world. From a critical perspective, it proposes that education deals with the critical reading of the media, but also with experimenting with forms of creative appropriation that educate subjects as authors and producers of their history.

**Resumen**

**Palabras clave:** Educación ciudadana. Educación y tecnología. Cultura Digital.

**Escuela e internet: espacios de educación ciudadana**

Frente a la reciente crisis social causada por la pandemia Covid-19, es una tarea urgente para el campo revisar los fundamentos de la educación en la cultura digital para mejorar una perspectiva emancipadora de la educación actual. A pesar de la promesa de expansión democrática que aportan Internet y otras tecnologías de la información y la comunicación digitales, lo que estamos viendo es una reconfiguración de la industria cultural debido a la proliferación del discurso de odio, las fake news, el marketing político digital, el capitalismo de datos y otras formas de violencia en las redes digitales. La tarea de la investigación en educación en este momento es reflexionar y enunciar los desafíos que plantea la integración de las tecnologías en la vida cotidiana buscando espacios de posibilidad para la existencia y formación crítica de la ciudadanía en el contexto de la cultura digital. El artículo elabora una reflexión teórica para consolidar las bases de otro paradigma educativo basado en la educación en derechos humanos en una escuela conectada con el mundo. Desde una perspectiva crítica, propone que la educación se ocupa de la lectura crítica de los medios, pero también de experimentar con formas de apropiación creativa que configuran a los sujetos como autores y productores de su historia.

## Introduction

Brazilian society began the year 2021 in a deep crisis. The pandemic caused by Covid-19, which not only revealed the fragility of democracy in our country but also exposed unsolved historical problems. The relationship between technology and society is a case in point. As schools and workplaces were closed as a health safety measure, requiring that communication in education and at work suddenly depended on the use of digital technologies, we saw old issues being brought back to the agenda and sought to accelerate decisions that had been embargoed for many years.

Therefore, it becomes urgent to revisit the fundamentals of education in the digital culture to strengthen and enhance the possibility of a critical and creative approach from a democratic and emancipatory perspective. From the promise of democratic expansion that the creation of the Internet has allowed, including the revitalization of civism in social movements, articulated both in social networks and in the street, to the consolidated scenario of fake news dissemination, the customization of digital political marketing, data capitalism, the proliferation of hate speech and other violence in digital networks, we need to take stock of the existence and formation of citizens in digital culture. It is an urgent task for educational research to reflect on its role and the place of the school in the creation of emancipatory alternatives in this context. Describing and enunciating what is happening, seeking to re-signify the theories that guide us from a critical perspective, may come to identify spaces of opportunity for the critical formation of subjects in the school connected to the world. This is the main objective of this article.

The current scenario is not encouraging. In most human development indicators, such as access to education and health, Brazil occupies intermediate positions. The exception to our presence at the extremes of the rankings is in a single piece of data: income inequality. “This indicator stands out from the other numbers and makes Brazil unrecognizable among its partners in GDP [Gross Domestic Product] and population. It is anomalous” (MENDONÇA, 2008, p. 230). In income inequality, we occupy the worst positions in the world, traditionally figuring among the last ten. The Covid-19 pandemic aggravates this scenario: in Brazil, 2021 began with more miserable people than a decade ago, according to research from Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV), based on data from the National Household Sample Survey (Pnad).

This situation reveals a crisis scenario of the democratic ideal described by Boaventura Santos (2016) as a balance between freedom and social justice. For the author, democracy is precisely the process of transforming unequal power relations into shared relations of authority. Thus, he asks: “Is there a future for democracy in a world dominated by global financial capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy in social relations?” (SANTOS, 2016, p. 203). In his understanding, we live in politically democratic and socially fascist societies.

More data from before the Covid-19 pandemic corroborate this perception. According to a report by the international organization Oxfam, which annually publishes data on inequality in the country, the income ratio of the black population to the white population has been stagnant since 2011, and in 2018 we witnessed the first setback in income equality for women (PAÍS..., 2018).

In this scenario, how can we talk about the exercise of the right to create and develop a life project, as recognized by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights? The jurisprudence assures each person the autonomy to make choices about which paths to follow to be existentially fulfilled.

The right in question expresses that every individual, in his condition as a subject of rights, must enjoy the necessary assumptions to develop his/her personality, make choices according to his/her values and objectives, participate in public deliberations and economic, social and political actions (HACHEM; BONAT, 2017, p. 83).

In other words, the right to a life project is about what Amartya Sen (2000) calls the agent condition, which refers to the possibility of people choosing and creating conditions to live meaningful lives. Such a perspective is directly related to Santos' (2016) defense of the need to transform unequal power relations into shared relations of authority.

This understanding of democracy that goes beyond the mere creation of norms and procedures to legitimate the holding of power (BOBBIO; MATTEUCCI; PASQUINO, 2010) calls for the formation of subjects willing and able to understand and criticize systems of power and injustice - Gee's definition (2000) for critical thinking. Thus, we see an indelible link between the challenges presented here and education, both in its dimension of universal access and in the quality of critical training. We are dealing here with a certain conception of education that aims at social emancipation and claims an active role for the State. Thus, education, especially public education, becomes a privileged space to address social inequalities and promote equal opportunities.

It is no wonder that the right to education, as advocated in the Federal Constitution of Brazil, is not only about training for the labor market. The terms of the Law are clear and much broader, explicitly stating that they aim at "[...] the full development of the person, his/her preparation for the exercise of citizenship and his/her qualification for work" (BRASIL, 1988, Art. 205). This means that, while being qualified for work, each person has the right to have the training and tools to choose his/her own life projects, being compulsory basic education a decisive space in the guarantee or not of this and other human rights, considering that there is already a consensus on the fact that education is a way to prevent human rights violations.

It is about recognizing education as a space for the empowerment of the subjects through a formation for citizenship that is committed, active, and engaged with the context of their daily lives. Empowerment is understood in its dual dimension, individual and social, as well as to be directed, always, to the reduction of the asymmetry in power (FORTUNATI, 2014).

However, thinking about education in the current conjuncture demands the consideration of the lived context, permeated by the culture engendered from the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), the digital culture. If already in the middle of the last century the Frankfurt School critique pointed us to the strategies of manipulation and social control through communication mediated by technologies, today we can observe the penetrability of ICTs in all areas of life (economic, social, cultural, political, etc.), a reconfiguration of the cultural industry in the reproduction of one-dimensional men and intensification of people's voluntary adherence to domination strategies that are infiltrated by digital means, increasingly disseminated in society.

Therefore, talking about citizenship education in the context of digital culture leads us to an urgent reflection on the tensions that ICTs have been imposing on democracy, individuals, and schools. Knowing the determinations posed by technologies and making a critical reading of the world as it presents itself is the first condition to designing a better world. For, even if communication through digital media is a new modality of the cultural industry 2.0 (DUARTE, 2011), the critical perspective will seek the gap, the possibility of subverting the programmed logic (MACHADO, 2007), through the critical appropriation of the media (LAPA, 2013). An appropriation that requires not only a conscious and critical use but also a creative and authorial production with for and through the media in digital culture.

## Democracy and the Internet

### *The Promise*

As Pretto (2017) reminds us, the creation of the Internet happened in a shared and socialized networked way. It emerged as a *rossio* (SIMON; VIEIRA, 2008): a public space that enables exchange between people. In the words of Berners-Lee (2017), the creator of the protocol that was fundamental to the popularization of the Internet, the World Wide Web (WWW): the Internet is “[...] an open platform that allows anyone to share information, access opportunities, and engage in collaboration regardless of geographic barriers” (our translation).<sup>1</sup> From this behavior derives the strengthening of the idea of the network as a place to create communities.

In the beginning, blogs and other forms of online communication gained adherence: chat rooms, instant messengers, voice connection services, games, and photo publishing sites (which at first allowed the upload of only one image per day). This completely communicative context has led to the emergence of net culture - network culture, literally translated. That is, the communicative exchange in these spaces gave rise to a

common code for users of these technologies, the result of the formation of communities, the spaces for shared reflection, and the emergence of a collaborative culture (MALINI, 2007).

We are especially interested in this recap of the emergence of net culture, in the participatory role that was envisioned for the subjects at that moment. The perception of the Internet as a space of possibility to contest already constituted power structures (be it political, economic, or media) begins in 1999 with the independent coverage that was given on the net to the protests that took place during the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in the city of Seattle (United States). It gave birth to a worldwide network of independent journalism, Indymedia, which three years later already had 89 sites, distributed in 31 countries (ESPIRITUSANTO; GONZALO, 2011).

In 2007, another wave of protests, this time the Saffron Revolution in Burma, turned the Web into a strategic tool for protesters through the dissemination of images of state violence during the repression of protests. By studying these demonstrations, researcher Mridul Chowdhury (2008) concludes that even authoritarian regimes fear public opinion and that the possibility of mass self-communication through the Internet (CASTELLS, 2013) possibly saved the lives of thousands of people.

The phenomenon of popular appropriation of the media space brought tension not only to the political manifestation of power; its influence also affected the culture industry. Throughout the first decade of the 2000s, collaborative practices and file sharing on the Internet imposed a revision of the business model of the entertainment industry, which culminated with the emergence of streaming video and music services. The relationship with the culture industry was also destabilized due to the possibilities of public creation, which were expanded with the chance of collaborative work; dissemination and direct dialogue with the public; and interaction with works of commercial culture, from copies and re-readings (JENKINS, 2009).

These and many other examples were perceived as incontestable signs that a fundamental change was happening in the field of communication with ramifications throughout society. The Internet presented itself as an alternative for decentralizing the influence of the mass media, governments, and companies. Amidst all the discussion about the changes that ICTs brought to society, there were unquestionable reasons for optimism about the possibilities of contesting hegemonic structures, mainly due to the use of communicative autonomy created with the network (CASTELLS, 2013) for the organization of political mobilizations.

Renowned theorists pointed out the elements that could give rise to a radical social transformation from the practices that consolidated themselves in networks. Benkler (2006) wrote that, as the people began to integrate and interfere in the media agenda, how social positions are crystallized would change. Shirky (2011) demonstrated the creative potential of participatory culture. Moreover, Jenkins (2009) called attention to the collision between an emerging media culture with more public protagonism.

## The consolidated scenario

We are not implying here that the optimism regarding the possibilities of social transformation from the use of the net was unfounded. Quite the contrary. There are plenty of examples of how the Internet was important to articulate social change also during this second decade of the 2000s. We tried to present some of the construction of the understanding of the Internet as a place for the possible revision of practices, which could expand the possibilities for social emancipation. We noticed, however, that many implications were brought to this horizon, as other actors, such as the market, became prominent in the network.

The non-profit non-governmental organization Mozilla, which works to maintain the Internet as a global public resource, open and accessible to all, lists five main axes of attention concerning the Internet: security; openness; digital inclusion; education for media use; and control (MOZILLA FOUNDATION, 2018).

Reflecting on the democratic potential of the Internet means dealing with the long-awaited passage from consumers to citizens (CANCLINI, 1999). Evidently, it implies people's access to the net not only in the dimension of its use but also in its production. Regarding the first aspect, 28% of Brazilian households have no Internet connection (CETIC, 2019). The second, the cell phone application industry is based only in countries with high economic indexes (95% of the value moved in this sector comes from 10 countries) (MOZILLA FOUNDATION, 2018), which means to say that the others just use solutions that were not created for their reality. Moreover, 75% of web developers are men, according to data from UN Women.<sup>2</sup>

The presence of large corporations mediating communication on the Internet, as well as the policies of network regulation,<sup>3</sup> worries those who have glimpsed its transformative potential: "The system is failing. The way advertising revenue works with click-through content is not accomplishing the goal of helping humanity promote truth and democracy. So I'm concerned" (BERNERS-LEE, 2017, emphasis added).

The Internet Monitor report, produced by the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University (USA), is categorical: "Private companies control the vast majority of the Internet's physical infrastructure and much of the software that rests on it, and thus play a profoundly influential role in defining online spaces" (GASSER *et al.*, 2014, p. 31).



It is precisely in private spaces that users spend the most time browsing. In Brazil, the average time spent on Internet social networks is 3 hours and 31 minutes per day, according to the Global Digital Overview 2020 survey (KEMP, 2020). The country ranks third in the world, behind Colombia (3 hours and 45 minutes) and the Philippines (3 hours and 53 minutes), also according to the study.

The main social networks are owned by companies, which, driven by their profit motive, design the architecture of this software. A metaphor used by intellectuals and activists to describe the current Internet context is that it was designed to be a square and ended up becoming a shopping mall, since it is in a private environment, like a mall, and not in public ones, like a square, that most of the traffic happens.

As Zuboff (2015, 2019) reminds us, the companies that now concentrate on Internet browsing are sustained by the data collected from the activities of citizens on the network, who often do not realize that they are not using a free service. Thus, what Nick Srnicek (2018) calls Platform Capitalism has constituted.

Thus, social networks operate what Pariser (2011) called filter bubbles: algorithms that privilege certain subjects over others based on the preferences that users show for their online interaction habits. When describing them, the author drew attention to the tendency to eliminate contact with dissonant thought or thought different from one's own.

In previous research (COELHO, 2015), we verified the existence of the trend presented by Pariser (2011) in our country. From analyses of conversations held on Twitter during the protests over fare increases in the 2013 to 2015 protests in Brazil, we noticed that: a) the reaffirmation of one's own perspective was much more recurrent than the willingness to understand and establish a relationship with different ideas (almost 80% of the messages studied); b) the relevant presence of aggressive messages with posts that contained contempt, irony, prejudice and incitement/apology to violence (48% of the sample) (COELHO, 2015).

Another aggravating factor is the spread of false content, often driven by software that simulates human users (the so-called bots, short for robots, robots in English), to favor a particular agenda. The challenge on the Internet, more than talking, is to be heard (CASTELLS, 2013). Therefore, the battle for attention integrates the creation of dialogue dynamics on the network. The bots have even participated prominently in recent political events in Brazil, such as the protests for the impeachment of the President of the Republic Dilma Rousseff, and the presidential elections of 2014 (ARNAUDO, 2017) and 2018 (NOBRE; ALMEIDA; FERREIRA, 2019).



## The role of education and school

So far, we have tried to present the growing picture of inequality in Brazil and how the Internet has promoted its exacerbation, instead of contributing to its confrontation. Despite being a more democratic medium, which was born by collaborative initiatives and proposed a reorganization of powers in communication and society, there also extended capitalist, colonialist, and patriarchal practices that continue to impose themselves in Brazil, preventing the strengthening of democracy to higher stages. Thus, we rescue the defense of the critical perspective of technological non-determinism and of the latent potentiality inherent in the forms of appropriation that subjects are capable of engendering when they seek to subvert the programmed logic in search of alternatives. Hence, we reaffirm the relevant role of education as a space of empowerment of the subjects in a formation for citizenship.

Even though we agree that after the growing access to information and all sorts of socially produced knowledge through the Internet, education for citizenship, which, we know, can happen anywhere, has its privileged place in schools, especially public ones. Because, despite the school being the place where children and young people are socialized and the prevailing power structures are reproduced, it is also the place to provide equal access and training for the critical and creative use of technologies, essential knowledge in contemporary culture for each person to be able to establish their own life projects, seeking the means to achieve them. With this, we emphatically state: the school is the space controlled by the prevailing forces precisely because it has the potential to subvert them through an emancipating education for the subjects. The bet is on how to promote the formation of citizens capable of thinking critically, projecting alternative futures, and acting for their transformation. For this possibility to exist, we need to guarantee, as warned by Feenberg (2002), appropriate institutions to exercise human control over technology. We are talking about the school that integrates ICTs with this critical proposal.

## ICT at school: challenge and opportunity

When we talk about school, the common speech is that of need. Some facts help us compose the not-very-encouraging scenario. According to data from the Regional Center for Studies for the Development of the Information Society (Centro Regional de Estudos para o Desenvolvimento da Sociedade da Informação (CETIC, 2020)), in 2019, 99% of schools located in urban areas had at least one computer with Internet access. It sounds good, but if we detail this data, we realize its limits. The profile of resource use by students shows differences: while in private schools, 82% access the Internet in the classroom, in public schools the percentage is 63%.

Internet connectivity is a factor that leads to inequalities: while a connection of 11Mbps or higher is a reality in 52% of private schools, only 27% of public schools have this speed of access. Moreover, the students

who answered the survey said they are not allowed to use the school's Wi-Fi (52% in public schools and 46% in private schools).

Largely, this reality explains the frequent complaints by teachers about the lack of adequate conditions in the public school system. However, it is worth making a caveat about the uniformity of this generalist reading of public schooling, because there are distortions that are clarified by the distinct financing contexts (municipal, state, and federal). Such a fact was evident when the federal institutes were correctly reincluded in the statistics released about public school quality in the Enem 2018 and Pisa 2015 scores.<sup>4</sup> The drastic rise in the rates showed that public schools, when they have the resources and conditions to offer their teachers, can guarantee a quality education (BORGES, 2016).

Having made the exception about the structural conditions that limit the actions at school, we will focus on the challenge, which is not small, of integrating ICTs in education. That is, when ICTs are present at school, their integration generally takes on an instrumental perspective.

### *The practices that are carried out with ICTs*

In a face-to-face classroom context, before the Covid-19 pandemic, the ICT Education survey (CETIC, 2019) shows that the main activities developed by teachers with ICTs were: making content available to students (44%), clearing doubts over the Internet (36%), and using educational computer programs (23%). Creative activities based on interaction with the Web were rarer: only 11% developed projects with the students, 3% created sites, pages, or blogs, and 1% created computer games or applications.

In the classroom, the use of the Internet in pedagogical activities is mostly done through private access. Access to the Internet at school is restricted, and not all Internet sites and platforms are accessible to students. Moreover, perhaps precisely because of this, 49% used the 3G/4G of their own cell phone for activities, against 27% who used the school's Wi-Fi.

It is evident from the data that the use of ICTs in the collective production of knowledge at school is insignificant, and that most teachers still use technology as a tool for a more performative presentation of content. That is, school innovation is reduced to the presence of technology in the same traditional pedagogy, generally transmissive and banking, either due to the restriction of infrastructure (broadband Internet available to students, for example), or due to the training of teachers, focused on the instrumental training of resources (LAPA; PRETTO, 2019).

However, outside school, children and young people have used the Internet and other technological resources as the foundation of contemporary culture. Like prosthetics, gadgets are part of the daily lives of these youngsters, as a cultural context, as a foundation that shapes other ways of thinking, knowing, and relating (to others and to the world).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, in which ICT became a condition for the continuation of pedagogical work, the Undime survey on Back to School 2021, conducted by the National Union of Municipal Directors of Education (UNDIME, 2021) in municipal schools in 67% of the country's municipalities, shows that:

- 1.9% of schools worked in 2020 only with non-face-to-face activities;
- Of the strategies adopted for non-face-to-face pedagogical activities, printed material was the main resource (95.3%), followed by guidance sent via the WhatsApp application (92.9%). Next, come recorded classes (61.3%), orientations sent by other applications (54%), the use of educational platforms (22%), synchronous video classes (21.3%), TV classes (4.1%), and radio classes (2.6%).

The survey also revealed that apps that are more specialized platforms may be a reality in larger municipalities, but are not dominant. Student participation was less than 75% in more than half of the responding municipalities (60%).

According to another study conducted by Fundação Carlos Chagas (FCC) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) still in the first months of the pandemic (May 2020), the main strategies for continuity of teaching activities were: sending digital materials via digital networks (77.4%), sending guidance to families (54.2%), publishing materials on the websites of the Education Departments (47.5%) and recorded video lessons (38.3%), sending printed activities to students (37.2%), and holding live classes (29.8%). In other words, most of the practices are those conducted with static materials, which do not allow interaction between the class and the teachers (FCC; UNESCO, 2020).

The situation presented above describes and updates the school's mismatch with the digital culture, which separates the current processes of social mediation of knowledge construction in schools and in the contemporary public space (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2005, 2014; ORÓZCO-GOMEZ, 2007; BUCKINGHAM, 2007).

And, with it, we saw the rebirth of the school obsolescence discourse inspired by Illich's (1971) defense of de-schooling, as if, through free and unlimited access to information available in digital communication networks, an autonomous subject could learn alone, that is, as if the Internet could now be his/her school. We believe that this is a mistaken view since we can adopt the understanding that we have moved from a society with an education system to an educational society (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2014), or that the Internet can be an educational public space (NÓVOA, 2015), from which several social and cultural formative spaces emerge under the responsibility of various institutions. Even recognizing the educational potential of practices carried out on the Internet, we cannot neglect the role of the school as the primary space of education for citizenship, as it is the space of social coexistence and collective construction of meaning, which transcends, and much, the simple individual 'acquisition' of content.

The danger here is precisely the tendency to disqualify the school and not transform it. As Freire (1987) said, education has not been a tool for the transformation of society precisely because it could be. Therefore, the weakening of the public school is not due to the lack of a project for education, but because there is a clear project, which, under the appearance of neutrality, is, deep down, neoliberal in its practices, which consolidates and amplifies social inequalities through the control over the power of birth of the opportunities for transformation, that is, the critical formation of citizens.

Assertively, Martín-Barbero (2005, p. 67) describes this problem:

The media and information technologies mean for the school above all a cultural challenge that makes visible the gap every day larger between the culture from which teachers teach and students learn. For the media not only decentralize the ways of transmitting and circulating knowledge but also constitute a decisive sphere of socialization, identification/projection devices of behavioral guidelines, lifestyles, and standards of taste (emphasis added).

Understanding the importance of education for citizenship as a privileged place for a change to occur, we turn our gaze to the school with ICTs in search of alternatives. Moreover, we observe that education and school do not occur, as such, in the singular. We are talking about education, as Pretto and Pinto (2006) say, and schools, which, despite all the restrictions and dangers pointed out above, happen in a multiplicity of formats and experiences built every day by different people who conform schools as multifaceted spaces of diverse initiatives that escape from the standard. They are spaces of opportunity. They are created at school, daily, despite all the pre-dispositions to the contrary.

### **The school is connected to the world: the place of the subject**

Therefore, the key question lies in what this school of digital culture could be like. Returning to Paulo Freire (1987; 1989), we seek his emphasis on the consideration of the context in every educational process, especially when he says: “Authentic education, we repeat, is not done from A to B or from A over B, but from A with B, mediated by the world” (FREIRE, 1987, p. 97). So that a school education that pretends to be detached or exempt from what happens in digital culture, even if under the argument of protecting children and young people against media exposure, is just another pretext to perform a decontextualized education and, therefore, restrict the conditions of critical training of citizens.

Twenty-five years after the commercial Internet, the network can no longer be understood as a novelty or a new factor, as it happened in most studies about communication and society in the 1990s or 2000s, which treated the Internet as an entity apart from culture, displaced in its own culture (FRAGOSO; RECUERO; AMARAL, 2012). The current social context is permeated by the dynamics of digital communications, which make the public space a hybrid space, resulting from the interaction between face-to-face and digital practices (CASTELLS, 2013), that is: “[...] the world now is no longer something that is spoken about with false words, but the mediator of the subjects of education, the incidence of the transforming action of men, resulting in their humanization” (FREIRE, 1987, p. 75)

The starting point is precisely the man-world relationship, “[...] in its here and now that constitute the situation in which they are sometimes immersed, sometimes emerged, sometimes inserted” (FREIRE, 1987, p. 74). Since it is not the body (or its avatar, as Gibson first enunciated in 1984) that navigates in different spaces: actual and fictional, material and immaterial, inside the school and outside, on the Internet. This conception is the same one that has often denounced the fragmentation of the personality of individuals, now divided into their various profiles and applications.

In fact, we argue that what navigates are the different spaces that enter the subject's body and are signified in it. All the profiles, all the virtual and material spaces inhabit the same body, with inconsistencies and contradictions. Thus, the subject is the place of confluence of online and offline learning spaces, inside and outside of school. It is in the subject that learning becomes a body. All of them, those that happen inside and outside the school walls, are under the apparent control of the school, but also under the apparent freedom of the Internet. The subjects' learning experiences shape their existence in the world, which is an online and offline hybrid.

For this reason, the professionals of education at school, aware of this power that is the possibility of training critical subjects for transformative and emancipatory political action in the world, in fact, have a huge responsibility in promoting or not this opportunity by the way they integrate ICTs to their pedagogical practices. Certainly, they will not be able to create alternatives if they reduce the presence of technologies at school to instruments of a pedagogy that preceded the diffusion of the Internet, to simple means to improve the exposure of content, or even to a specific curricular component. If they do not achieve an integration that promotes autonomy, creation, and production of knowledge and meaning collectively, with and through the means of digital culture, they will not yet be promoting critical training for citizenship in the context of digital culture.

The determining factor for the school to be the place of education that promotes empowerment and citizenship training is the understanding of the student as a subject, which is, as we have been dealing with, the individual capable of making sense of his experiences, elaborating concepts, ideas and theories (LAPA et al., 2018). A subject that makes a critical reading of the world he lives in and seeks alternatives to

transform the world into what he would like it to be. Besides these two reflective stages, there are those of action: finding the means to effect change and choosing to act. Because it is in projecting a better world and seeking, in praxis, its realization that the four stages of the search for freedom can be concluded. It is also worth mentioning that the world we are dealing with is already, inevitably, crossed by ICTs, and it is with and through them that people express and produce culture. Therefore, the critical formation of subjects for political action in the world cannot do without going through all these stages of the search for freedom well grounded in digital culture, with the critical and creative appropriation of ICTs that we proposed before.

In this perspective, the desired education is the one that makes students able to be authors, the subjects of praxis, with participative and modifying conduct of their community, aware of the world in which they live, to act to transform it and create a counterpoint to the hegemonic discourse.

Exactly because of this, we suggest here another appropriation of the internet: one that goes beyond the mere reproduction of the programmatic content and establishes a channel for knowledge, meaning, and appropriation of reality, with a view to the creation of the students. In addition, we suggest the explosion of the concept of a limited and contained common sense school, because schools, according to the perspective we have developed so far, would be even more indispensable. What we defend is that they could be thought of as centers of culture, as the spaces of knowledge production that are, in their interrelation with the world, immersed, and not as a complement to the outside world and the digital culture, because there, the walls are membranes permeable to the world and its diverse forms and contexts of learning.

## Final considerations

In our research, we seek to develop the inclusion of the theme of digital culture in reflections about a conception of education committed to the formation of individuals who are able and willing to act on the social structure to claim rights for those who are increasingly deprived of humanity in the current situation. An education, as Freire (1987, p. 91) prescribes as a practice of freedom:

I think it is fundamental that, understanding history as a possibility, the educator discovers education also as a possibility, insofar as education is profoundly historical [...] even if they recognize that education in the next century will not be the key to the transformation of the concrete for the recreation, the resumption of freedom, even if they know it is not that, they are convinced of the effectiveness of educational practice as a fundamental element in the process of redeeming freedom.

We verified that, although the Internet was created under aspirations of expanding democracy and it was seen as an environment on which social emancipation could be built, this space is today crossed by multiple contradictions. Although it is an important place for the articulation of social movements, it is also developed from structures that aim at the commercialization of products,

In which the flow of communication is permeated by false, or artificially manipulated, content to defend political ideas.

Therefore, we believe that it is fundamental for the field of education to approach the digital culture critically and creatively, because it is also, where the present is developed. However, this is not how we see that ICTs have been incorporated into the daily life of schools, as shown by the data from the ICT Education survey cited in this paper. As it has been described, the use of ICTs occurs mainly as a performative update of the same traditional and outdated pedagogy.

Thus, our proposal aims to make the school a place for reflection about the programmed and programming logic of the technical artifacts that are part of our lives, and, simultaneously, for the authorial, protagonist, and transforming action, for the world and with the world, with and through ICTs. As Feenberg (2002) argues, we understand that if our tools decide the meaning of being human, the resumption of civic-mindedness for technological development is a *sine qua non*-condition for it to be oriented to democratic values. For this, knowledge about the software and hardware we use needs to be profane, which is, desacralized, accessible, and manipulable - the way Masschelein and Simons (2017) argue knowledge should be. We can think of no better place for this than school.

In the same way, we understand that it is up to us to reflect and give space in class to the learning that students build in virtual social spaces. Mediate the repertoire they build on the Web based on a republican and democratic ethic, which are central, as Benevides (2007) states, the respect for laws legitimately made, the priority of the public good over personal interests or specific groups, the responsibility of our actions as citizens, the values of equality, freedom, and solidarity.

For us, the possibility of the existence of subjects resides in the critical awareness of the conditions placed in a context of domination, as well as in the search for alternatives to it, since the world presents determinations, but is never already determined. Hence, we understand it is necessary to look at ICTs as spaces of possibility for the transformation of the world, both through critical understanding and through the reinvention of the present, which goes far beyond understanding them as pedagogical resources.



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## Notes

- 1 “[...] *an open platform that allows anyone to share information, access opportunities and collaborate across geographical boundaries*”.
- 2 Cf.: <https://bit.ly/3AWoL6e>. Access at: Apr. 7, 2021.
- 3 In this interview, Berners-Lee was referring to the intention of US President Donald Trump’s Administration to pass a law that would suspend the guarantee of net neutrality in the country - a principle that determines the non-differentiated traffic of all packets of information on the Internet, regardless of who is the sender. In practice, this means that no one can pay more to have their content distributed with greater priority to the detriment of others, which is considered central to equality on the Web.
- 4 The International Program for Student Assessment (Pisa), of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in which Brazil ranked 63rd among 72 countries.

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