

The Concept of Conscious Body in the Education Studies: a bibliographic review.

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Abstract. Many academic studies have been prepared on the subject of corporeality. It is now theoretically known and understood that a student has not only a mind but also a body. A body that has feelings expresses itself and has no place in the traditional school. I see an increase in studies in this area, but I found one concept during my journey in this topic that I could not forget and there is no other concept that made more sense to the reality that I see in schools every day nowadays. The concept of the Conscious Body, seen from the perspective of Paulo Freire. Through a bibliographic review, I have investigated in which way the concept of the Conscious Body, according to Paulo Freire, has been approached in studies set on the basic school environment. What had just been a personal question turned into a restlessness, and became the very issue of this paper. I have concluded that those fighting for this matter and this perspective of corporeality are mainly in the Physical Education field. It is time for pedagogues and educators to understand that you cannot focus on the cognitive side of learning only, directing your actions merely to the mind of the students.

Keywords. Conscious Body, Paulo Freire, School, Corporeality, Education Studies.

1. Introduction

It has been a few years since I started my studies on the subject of corporeality. As a pedagogue and a former dance teacher, I have experienced many different perspectives about the place of the body in the informal and formal education. Also, many academic studies are being produced on the subject of corporeality. It is now theoretically known and understood that a student not only has a mind, but also a body. A body that has feelings, that expresses himself/herself and that has no place in the traditional school. A body, as exposed by Bezerra and Furtado, is reduced to inert support to learning. [1]

I see an increase in the studies in this field, but there is one concept that I found during my journey in this topic that I could not forget and there is no other concept that made more sense to the reality that I see in schools every day nowadays. The concept of the Conscious Body, according to Paulo Freire's concept.

A concept that has a person, world, body, and mind in a dialectical unity. [2] That means that a human being has an essentially corporeal existence, and it is impossible to divide a person between mind and body. We do not live or experience the world only with our mind, because "my consciousness is not only in my brain, nor it is in my lungs or my heart. My consciousness is me, my body. And my body is a

constituted conscious body, while it relates to other persons." [3] (p20)

When I got into contact with this perspective of the nondichotomy of body and mind, I became intrigued to read and discuss the implications of this philosophy in educational studies. And since Paulo Freire is a well-known educator and published most in the 1900s, I believed that I would find many studies about the concept of the Conscious Body and its implication in the school praxis. However, instead of finding an incredibly high number of papers, I found a research gap.

Thus, I have started to ask myself in which way Paulo Freire's concept of the Conscious Body has been approached in studies set on the basic school environment. And this personal question turned into restlessness and became the very issue of this paper.

2. Research Methods

To investigate in which way the concept of the Conscious Body appeared in the research set on the basic school environment, I have decided to do a bibliographic review because it is the most appropriate methodology to approach this issue. I used many virtual databases and I will specify details about each one of them to make it possible to replicate my findings. I will also indicate where

problems have occurred and the journey I choose to lead my research.

The first database I used was the Web of Science. I did an advanced search using the terms “conscious body” and “school” (with Boolean Operators), on papers published within the last 5 years, maximum. I obtained 56 results. To be able to choose from those results, I set some criteria to select the ones that fitted my objective. I started by reading the titles of the 56 results, then reading the abstract, and finally doing a fluctuating reading. After each step, the papers that were not about the basic education environment and did not have the term “Conscious Body” created by Paulo Freire as a theoretical postulate, were excluded from the review. After this selection, I ended with 0 results from this database.

I did the same process on Science Direct and Scopus, and I also finished with 0 results from these databases.

Since Paulo Freire is a Brazilian Educator, and after zero findings on international databases, I opted to use two Brazilian databases to see if it would interfere with the results. I used the CAPES (Coordination of Superior Level Staff Improvement) platform and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD). After going through the same process as previously described, I also ended with 0 results.

As a last resource, I did an advanced research on Google Scholar with the terms “Conscious Body” and “school” in Portuguese, that should appear in papers published as of 2017. To my surprise, I had 646 results. I read the titles and obtained 61 papers, but after using my criteria I ended up with 10 papers. These 10 papers turned out to be the ones that I used in this research.

As I could only find articles in Portuguese, all quotes mentioned here are free translations done by myself.

3. Clarifying concepts

Before presenting the results of the bibliographic review, it is important to explain the principal concept used in this paper and the educator who created this term.

3.1 Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire was born in 1921. During his life he played a role as: Portuguese Teacher; Director of the Education and Culture section at SESI, in Recife (northeast of Brazil); High Education Teacher; Master and Doctor in Philosophy and History of Education; UNESCO Consultant; Secretary of Education of the Municipality of São Paulo (Southeast of Brazil); Patron of Education in Brazil; among many other roles.

He went to many places to spread his reflections: Bolívia, Chile, the USA, Switzerland, South Africa, and other countries. Some of them were during his exile

from Brazil. Because of the military dictatorship installed in Brazil in 1964, Paulo Freire only returned to Brazil in 1979.

“Every philosophy of education will depend on the philosophy one has about what a person should be”[4]^(p8100)which could not be different from Freire’s. All his works are a reflection of what he experienced especially as a wanderer around the world.[5]^(p1566)

His most famous works are centered on the education of working adults, more specifically the literacy of adult workers, a work that started among northeast peasants, the poorest region of Brazil with millions of illiterates.[4] His ideas were centered around the thought that he “(...) could not teach without ‘raising awareness’, without helping the peasants to become aware of their reality, and making them discover that they could transform that reality.”.[4]^(p8099)

Although Freire’s works are based on real situations, “The work, however, is not limited to reporting techniques and methods or discussing successful practices. The author (Paulo Freire) elaborates on an educational theory concerned with the person, as subjects of culture, knowledge, and history.”.[6]^(p19)

Through his philosophy of love, reflection, consciousness, and libertarian education, Freire “(...) called us to assume the **duty** to fight for education as a **right** of all in a **transformative and libertarian perspective**.”.[7]^(p2)

3.2 Conscious Body

A conscious body is “the body and consciousness together, as conscious bodies are dialectically constituted in the same movement. Conscious Body is the consciousness intended for the world.”. [2]^(p2) However, there is no possible individual consciousness. It is a process of freedom that only happens when persons “(...)engage in transformational relationships between themselves and the world.”. [3]^(p56)

Freire was not a researcher on the topic of corporeality. He does not have a book that concentrates all his ideas about corporeality. But it is a subject that runs through all of his works because when he talked about education he was talking about the education of real people. People that have “conscious bodies because they are being, because they are doing things because they are acting, because they are thinking.”. [8]^(p43) As Silva said [9]^(p30), “talking about school (...) comes up against talking about the bodies that give meaning to it.”.

Freire had as focus a libertarian education, in which awareness is explicitly the goal.[2] An education that defends that learning does not happen passively, but through the connection between the person that thinks and the thought object. These connections happen in the world, mediated by and with it. “The act of thinking, therefore, involves the whole body and not just the mind, since the human condition is

corporeal.”.[2]^(p5)

4. The Conscious Body in the Education studies: data obtained

As previously demonstrated I have reviewed 10 articles about the use of the concept of the Conscious Body in the Education studies. Before diving into each paper, I have to mention some interesting facts that I found during this research.

Paulo Freire did not create an educational method, but he formed a philosophy, a way to view the world and the relations in a society. So his reflections can and are used in many different areas of study. The most common one besides Education that I found in the databases was in the Art field. Other areas appeared during the selection of the papers, but the quantity in the Art field in many different art forms called my attention.

Another area where I found many papers is the Higher Education field. A lot of researchers concentrate their studies on the importance or relevance of the Conscious Body concept in Higher Education, more precisely on the courses that focus on the training of teachers.

A fact about the papers in this review is that all of them are talking about basic education in some way. However, 8 out of 10 articles are connected to the Physical Education field.

Correia[5] tries to conjecture possibilities of teaching Physical Education in Preschool based on the principles of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed uses the Conscious Body concept. He uses it to base his proposition of corporal practices, and how the teachers should view the body of the students. “We need to discover how the consciousness permeates the experience of the child’s body, making the child aware of his/her action, leading him/her to reflect on the bodily practices he/she performs”. [5]^(p1567)

Another proposition of pedagogical praxis in the Physical Education area was made by Lacerda[10] but anchored on the concept of Corporal Praxis in the perspective of “Be more”. She discovered that the concept of Conscious Body was used to base the approach called Corporal Praxis on the Curriculum Guidelines of the Municipality of Fortaleza for Teaching Physical Education in 2011. “(...) A Corporal Praxis in Scholar Physical Education that is based on a critical reflection-action on the reality revealed by the student himself, as the protagonist of the process in its different relationships.”.[10]^(p27)

In the Elementary School studies, we have Belli [11] analyzing the relations between the Elementary School curriculum of the State of São Paulo and the process of disciplining/coloniality of minds and

bodies through the teacher’s gaze. During semistructured interviews, he found one teacher that explicitly said that he/she understood corporeality through the perspective of Paulo Freire, which means through the concept of the Conscious Body. And two other teachers did not use the name of the concept, but their answers were very close to the definition of the conscious body. “Body knowledge and freedom of movement during classes guarantee the student a better understanding of themselves, of others and the knowledge itself.”[11]^(p75)

Silva [9] proposed to understand and reflect on the place of the body in school, based on the Common National Curriculum Base (BNCC) and the dialogue with teachers on the curricular component of Physical Education. She used the concept of the Conscious Body to defend the importance of the school considering the bodies of the students.

Bezerra and Furtado [1] discussed the crisis of legitimacy of Scholar Physical Education from the “body” point of view. They used the concept of Conscious Body to make a counterpoint to what is currently happening on school grounds, that is the “knowledge mainly existing in the mental content.”.[1]^(p7)

I found two articles that were written by Noronha [7,12], since the theoretical bases are very similar, I am not going to talk about them individually. Through her narrative, Noronha shows us her reflections as a Physical Education Teacher using the concepts of Paulo Freire to rethink her praxis, wondering if Physical Education takes care of the mind and the body.

Moura [6] demonstrates the contributions made by Paulo Freire on the subject of corporeality in the context of body education. During her years as a Physical Education Teacher, she verified that there still are many schools that are using mechanical techniques that are repetitive and uncritical to maintain the status quo. And only by using the concept of the Conscious Body and Freire’s teachings will the “(...) body education assume a fundamental role in the formation of human beings in its potential to integrate all dimensions of men and women.”. [6]^(p122)

Araújo, Siqueira, and Araújo [13] propose to identify the formulation of Paulo Freire’s thoughts on the subject of the body. During this journey, they questioned themselves and us readers on how to create and form Conscious Bodies with the students.

Almeida [14], in a more psychological area, has as objective to announce the urgent issues that arise from the body and their relevance to thinking about more meaningful educational paths for young people. She uses the Conscious Body as a way to “overcome the condition of the body as an instrument” [14]^(p27) and demonstrates how the “social demand to assume a body that needs to be productive to be validated” [14]^(p16) takes us away from the perspective of Conscious Bodies.

5. Conclusion

This research started with the restlessness to discover in which way the concept of the Conscious Body has been approached in the basic school environment. After the bibliographic review of the papers that I read within 5 years limitation, I have concluded that those fighting for this subject and this perspective of corporeality are mostly in the Physical Education area.

As Noronha said [7]^(p2), “it is known that the body is the object of studies in all areas of knowledge, but, in the school context, specific reflections on this human dimension are almost always due to Biology and Physical Education”. It is time for pedagogues and educators of any kind to understand that you cannot focus on the cognitive side of learning, directing your actions only to the mind of the students. Because “(...) the child does not leave his body at home to go to school, just as he does not leave his mind at school when he returns home(...)”. [15]^(p16)

The articles I reviewed showed me that the concept of Conscious Body is used to support an education that is a “(...)work committed to democracy, autonomy, citizenship, and collective work, with which the child is understood in its entirety.”. [5]^(p1562)

Paulo Freire always thought about the present while thinking about the future. All the papers reviewed here have the same tendency, to think with “futurity”.

I end this research with the feeling of understanding a little more about the present and being able to reach the future we want. The future that has education as a “place of fascination and inventiveness. Not to inhibit, but to provide that doses of enthusiastic consensual hallucination required for the learning process to happen with a mix of all the senses.”. [16]

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