53 - CULTURAL IDENTITY IN POSTMODERNITY

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INTRODUCTION

In the late 20th century, thoughts about the changes in the relationship between man and society, influenced by new paradigms and the paradigm crisis settled in science, education, culture and society due to globalization, led man to think and rethink his actions and to new interpretations of truth, once considered immutable; to other truths constantly moving and shifting – therefore, different and even divergent from previous thoughts.

Initially, one must understand what paradigms are, and, from the conceptual proposals, identify the paradigm crisis of the past century and its relation to the changes occurred at the turn of the century, as well as the emergence of new paradigms.

The paradigm crisis in educational environment was the subject of discussions and considerations at the seminar called “The Paradigm Crisis and Education”, held in 1993 by PUC-RJ. From the discussions at that event, one can identify some points that lead to a more complex thought and to concerns that we will try to understand in the course of this essay.

The notion of paradigm can be seen as identified by Danilo Marcondes (2002, p.14), from the classical thought of Plato, “where a paradigm is a model, an exemplary type, that finds itself in an abstract world, and of which there are instances, as imperfect copies, in our concrete world”, or from a contemporary thought in which he states that this term:

(...) on one side indicates the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques etc., shared by members of a given community. On the other hand, denotes a kind of element from this constellation: the concrete solutions to puzzles that, when employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for solving the remaining puzzles of normal science. (2002, p.218)

We can understand paradigm as “the existing models that support and guide the studies and research in the field of sciences”, and particularly here the field of Social Sciences. Conceptualizing paradigms is fundamental to understand the paradigm crisis that settled as early as the 19th century, when the existing truths handed over their place to other truths.

Starting from transformations in research, new scientific discoveries and perspectives, the existing paradigms, hitherto solid, undergo changes and transformations, and a paradigm crisis is established. The crisis of science paradigms extends to education and to other fields as a body concept, given the fact that it reflects changes needed to scientific thinking and new concerns.

The changes in 20th-century society, whether political, cultural or social, reflect in education at such extent that phrases like “emptiness of ideas” are identified in thoughts and speeches of social sciences and education scholars. In this process of change, education lives a moment of degradation influenced by mass education and technoscience. This fact is due to difficulties encountered when accredited “truths” were surpassed and when no support or a solid path appeared to guide the actions of man in modern society. In this context, education, as identified by Brandão (2002), has a role to play either as a servant of the existing model or as a critical reflection on this model, and, as a criticism, it seeks values of solidarity, freedom and equality – a sort of education disseminated in the social field.

This way, several paths appeared to be treaded by an individual choice, by a construction through plurality which allows constant change, without fear of mistakes and successes, i.e., education interacting with the world around it and in which it is inserted.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education influences scientific and cultural manifestations, generating emerging concepts involved in impact discourses. Considered as groups of less visible cultural factors, but not less constitutive of scientific questions, discursive practices and communication processes are established through a new language. Not the language in which the word identifies a meaning, but the language inserted in a body of scientific thought which states that semantics, metaphors and communications affect the scientific discourse and thought. Therefore, one considers that, according to Dora Schnitman (1996), “speech, communication, social practices and language are not passive instruments” of a social and cultural change, but an active construction. “Both science and culture are processes built of and built by social processes.” (SCHNITMAN, 1996, p. 11)

Changes in society since the Enlightenment, in which “Knowledge, Science and Education were its instrument” (MARCONDES, 2001, p. 22) have lead man to evolve and learn from his individual modification, influenced by these instruments. The Individual, the subject of the 19th century, changes influenced by cultural changes in society in which he is inserted.

The identity of man in the Enlightenment was defined by and set on the truth of science. Science was static and immutable and, for a long time, it guided the actions and perspectives of society at that time. Ideology was something that determined scientific ideas.

The individual, which until then possessed a defined and determined place of its own, in other words, based on rationality, changes as from these new ideologies to a subjective romanticism.

The behavioral changes that generate new thoughts put the subject in conflict with himself, thus creating a new paradigm and a new achievement in order to adjust to the new relationships and novelties that resulted from this new society.

Giddens (1999), in his book “Modernity and Identity”, states that modernity fragmentizes and dissociates. All changes in 19th and later in 20th centuries influence the transformation of subjects, since modernity changes the most personal aspects of our everyday life, interfere with habits, traditional customs, fears and uncertainties. The imminent risk of war, ecological catastrophe, collapse in economy and electronic devices are part of the contemporary experience of the individual in his everyday life.

Globalization brings structural changes to modern societies and generates subjects' identity crisis. The notion of

values, personal needs, respect for others and lifestyle takes particular meanings. Modernity establishes the differences of social classes and therefore "produces alterity, exclusion and marginalization" (GIDDENS, 1999, p. 13). These cultural transformations of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race and nationality are changing personal identities. Man loses his relationship with the "self" and seeks his new identity. This relationship is seen as a shift of the subject. "This double shift – decentration of individuals from both their place in social and cultural world and from themselves – constitutes an 'identity crisis' for the individual." (HALL, 2001, p. 9)

WHAT IS IDENTITY?

What is identity? According to Stuart Hall (2001), the concept of identity is complex, poorly developed and poorly understood in contemporary social science, and therefore it is impossible to determine conclusive statements. He also considers that identity is pondered only when it is in crisis. But pondering about the changes of the subject in society is pondering on the existing social and cultural changes, the changes generated in contemporary world considered as postmodern.

Man is part of this society as a participant being of the social paradigm shifts, in which "meanings, senses, coordination and conflicts emerge" (SCHNITMAN, 1996 p.17). Dora Schnitman (1996) realizes that contemporary culture influences and is influenced by so many changes and catalyzes the formation of new sciences and new perspectives on the sciences.

The complexity of existing problems in today's world creates a disconnection, a need for intellectual reorganization in order to reflect about complexity.

The thought is articulated in a plurality; multiple, problematic axis in contemporary culture; and a new awareness of discontinuity, alterity and need for dialogue as an operative dimension of construction of realities in which we live.

The order and disorder settled with so many changes and different paradigm crisis in science, education, social sciences and culture defies the centrality of the idea of origin of cultural theories. Now it is time to rescue creativity, dilemmas, location and the opening of new potentialities. It is time for decentralization of sciences, for construction and reconstruction of knowledge in culturally developed social, everyday life.

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CULTURAL IDENTITY IN POSTMODERNITY

This paper aims to understand and identify issues regarding cultural identity in postmodernity, resorting to literature reviews, which reflects conceptual discussions about the subject, education, science, culture and man's relationship in postmodern society as from the paradigm crisis settled in the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.

KEY-WORDS: subject, culture, education.

IDENTITÉ CULTURELLE DANS LA POSTMODERNITÉ

Cet article vise à comprendre et à identifier les questions relatives à l'identité culturelle dans la postmodernité, le recours aux examens de la littérature, ce qui reflète les discussions conceptuelles sur le sujet, l'éducation, la science, la culture et de la relation de l'homme dans la société postmoderne que de la crise de paradigme s'installe à la fin du 20e siècle siècle et le début du 21e siècle.

MOTS-CLÉS: sujet, culture, éducation.

IDENTIDAD CULTURAL, EN LA POSMODERNIDAD.

Este documento tiene como objetivo comprender e identificar las cuestiones relativas a la identidad cultural en la postmodernidad, recurrir a la revisión de la literatura, lo que refleja las discusiones conceptuales sobre el tema, la educación, la ciencia, la cultura y la relación del hombre en la sociedad postmoderna a partir de la crisis del paradigma establecido en el final de la 20a siglo XIX y principios del siglo 21.

PALABRAS CLAVE: sujeto, cultura, educación.

A IDENTIDADE CULTURAL NA PÓS – MODERNIDADE

Este texto tem o objetivo de entender e identificar questões a cerca da identidade cultural na pós-modernidade. Apropriando-se de revisão da literatura, que reflete discussões conceituais sobre sujeito, educação, ciência, cultura e a relação do homem na sociedade pós-moderna a partir da crise de paradigmas instalada no fim do século XX e em sua virada para o século XXI.

PALAVRAS - CHAVES: sujeito, cultura, educação.