

Extension or incommunication? For a New Meeting with Freire in Communications

Extensão ou Incomunicação? Para um Reencontro com Freire na Comunicação

■ EDUARDO MEDITSCH^a

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Jornalismo. Florianópolis – SC, Brazil

^a CNPq Researcher, Professor and Researcher of the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Jornalismo at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Visiting Professor at the Universidade de Brasília, and Doctor in Communication Sciences from the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. E-mail: emeditsch@gmail.com Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6045-1178>

ABSTRACT

This article starts from recognizing Paulo Freire as a fundamental author for the theoretical understanding of communication in the Latin American context. It also notes its underuse in teaching and research in this area of knowledge in Brazil. An explanation for this paradox is the unlikely compatibility between Freire's praxiological method and the dominant applicationist perspective in university teaching and research. As an alternative, it discusses the possibility of a Freirean conception of extension, proposed as a thesis in his time at the University of Recife, rejected as an antithesis in his work in Chile and reaffirmed as a synthesis by the Brazilian National Forum of Extension of Public Universities in the present.

Keywords: Paulo Freire, praxiology, university extension, communications

RESUMO

Este artigo parte do reconhecimento de Paulo Freire como autor fundamental para a compreensão teórica da comunicação no contexto latino-americano. Por outro lado, constata sua subutilização no ensino e na pesquisa dessa área de conhecimento no Brasil. Busca uma explicação para isso na improvável compatibilidade entre o método praxiológico de Freire e a perspectiva aplicacionista dominante no ensino e na pesquisa universitárias. Como alternativa, discute a possibilidade de uma concepção freiriana de extensão, proposta como tese em sua passagem pela Universidade de Recife, rejeitada como antítese em seu trabalho no Chile e reafirmada como síntese pelo Fórum Nacional de Pró-Reitores de Extensão de Universidades Públicas no presente.

Palavras-chave: Paulo Freire, praxiologia, extensão universitária, comunicação



INTRODUCTION

IN THE ACCLAIMED BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHY of Paulo Freire organized by Moacir Gadotti, the Ecuadorian educator Carlos Crespo Burgos (1996) proposes that Paulo Freire's pedagogical thought contributed decisively to the formulation of a horizontal and democratic communication model:

Although the only opportunity Freire explicitly referred to communication was in his book *Extension and Communication* [sic], in which he radically criticized the "extensionist" model, his proposals formulated from education had, especially in Latin America, a significant impact on communication theory in general. (p. 620)

It was precisely by criticizing extension as a mere unilateral diffusion of innovations, hegemonic in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, that Paulo Freire formulated the concept of communication that would become an essential reference for the area in Latin America. Throughout this paper, we will discuss why, despite this contribution and the international prestige earned, Freire's ideas have met and continue to meet obstacles to their adoption in Brazilian education and research in communication. Finally, then, we discuss how, paradoxically, it is in extension – an activity that Freire apparently rejected in his important work of 1969 – that there is a greater possibility of overcoming the lack of communication between his ideas and the academic practices in the area.

PAULO FREIRE AND THE COMMUNICATION AREA

In a panel during the XX Congress of the Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos Interdisciplinares da Comunicação (Brazilian Society for Interdisciplinary Communication Studies – Intercom) held in Santos in 1997, Colombian professor Jesús Martín-Barbero pointed out Paulo Freire (alongside anthropologist Renato Ortiz) as the most important Brazilian author for the development of Latin American thought in the area. Denise Cogo's survey (1999), carried out soon after, confirms this influence in several lines of studies and research in the communication area in the continent. Besides the rural communication area, his thought defined the investigation on popular and alternative communication and influenced the main authors in the communication and cultural studies area, both in the studies of reception and education for communication.

Venício Lima, an author who studied the concepts of communication and culture proposed by Paulo Freire in a thesis published as a book in Brazil in 1981, republished the work 30 years later, on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of

the educator's birth, drawing attention to the power of his thought in the new digital context:

The tradition of communication as dialogue acquires renewed importance and increases the possibility of permanent, online interaction in the act of communication itself. Freire theorized on interactive communication before the digital revolution, before the Internet, and its social media. As Freire himself did, we should refer to his reflections on the theory of knowledge, the basis of the concept of communication as dialogue. There we find a revitalized, creative, and challenging normative reference that will be of immense value in thinking of new communication technologies and also in thinking about their regulation. (Lima, 2011, p. 22)

In a more recent study, published in 2017, Cicilia Peruzzo notes Freire's continuing influence, although she points out that it manifests itself more intensely in the social practices of communication and non-formal education:

Although he worked essentially in the education area, his ideas contributed a lot to formulating concepts and practices of popular, alternative, and community communication – or horizontal, participative communication – in Latin America. Many Latin American authors who deal with this communication and communication for development and social change and the relationship between Education and Communication are based on Paulo Freire's conceptions or, at least, derived from his ideas. Meanwhile, the social practices in different regions and experiences echo the principles of dialogue, of popular protagonism, of horizontal participation, of criticality, and of emancipating education, especially when it comes to non-formal and informal education. (Peruzzo, 2017, pp. 8-9)

Despite this receptiveness in social practices, Freire's ideas have met obstacles to become inserted in the same way in formal academic life. Meditsch (2016) credits this underutilization to the dichotomy between theory and practice observed in university teaching in the area. Also, in research, the underutilization of Freire's work in the communication area in Brazil, compared to other areas of knowledge, is evident in the observation of the research groups registered at CNPq. The CNPq Directory of Research Groups lists 54 groups from the search for "Paulo Freire". Seventy percent of them (38) are in the Education area. Language and Literature, Ecology, Business Administration, Sociology, and Psychology have two groups each. History, Physics, Social Work, Physiotherapy, Geography, and Computer Science are the areas that have a group citing Paulo Freire as a keyword. Communication does not register any research group. The keyword



search in the Directory of Research Groups identifies the groups where the word appears in the group's name, its research lines, or its keywords. Although Paulo Freire is still being studied by some authors and applied in specific areas, such as popular and community communication and educommunication, he is not valued in Communication research in the same way he is in other areas of knowledge. This is demonstrated by the absence of his name among the keywords of the registered research groups¹.

¹ Query carried out on June 3, 2021.

According to a Freirean perspective, we could attribute this absence to more general ideological issues that were already criticized by Freire himself (1980), such as the difficult-to-overcome conditioning of Brazilian academic thought to culturally hegemonic countries:

Authentic thought language is engendered in a dialectical relationship between the subject and its concrete cultural and historical reality. In the alienated cultural processes that characterize dependent societies or object societies, the same thought language is alienated. As a result, during the most intense periods of alienation, these societies have no authentic thought of their own. As we experience it, the reality does not correspond to the objectively experienced reality but to the reality in which the alienated man imagines he finds himself. This thought is not a valid instrument, neither in objective reality, to which the alienated is not connected as a thinking subject, nor in imagined and expected reality. Dissociated from the action that supposes authentic thought, this way of thinking is lost in false and ineffective words. (p. 87)

However, the underutilization can also be explained by the difficulty of making the dominant model of formal teaching and academic production adopted at the university compatible with a method different from its own.

DIALECTICAL AND PRAXEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

In his book in dialog with Freire, published in 1985, Frei Betto makes this distinction regarding teaching methods, referring to popular education:

The traditional methodology is deductive and is based on learning concepts and notions within the teacher-student relationship. Paulo refers to this as “banking” because it reproduces the domination system prevalent in capitalist social relations. The teacher holds the knowledge monopoly, and the student pays and sacrifices himself or herself to obtain a portion of that knowledge. This relationship reinforces the intellectual authority of the teacher, as it further

reduces the student to his or her own ignorance. The starting and reference point is the teacher, or rather, the teacher's discourse. This discourse has the property of abstracting the real into concepts, to the point of accentuating more the importance of apprehending concepts than the importance of transforming the real. The real is something to be known, explained, analyzed, and not something to be transformed. (Freire & Betto, 1985, p. 76)

Then, Frei Betto proposes the alternative that underlies Freirean pedagogy:

In dialectical methodology, the starting point is not the educator's knowledge, but the students' social practice. . . . Here, the concept appears as a tool that helps to deepen the knowledge of the real, and not to make of it a mere abstraction. . . . Therefore, the dialectic methodology is inductive, and in it, the process of theorizing the real goes from the personal to the collective, from the biographical to the historical, from the local to the national, from the specific to the general, from the conjunctural to the universal, from the partial to the structural, from the concrete to the abstract. Theorization must return to the practice of the popular group in a new light. Light adds nothing to the real, but it allows us to see it better, understand it, and capture it scientifically. Finally, theory becomes a guideline for action that transforms the real . . . In methodology, it is essential to know which path the educational process takes theory-practice-theory or practice-theory-practice. (Freire & Betto, 1985, pp. 76-78)

In turn, the Canadian Maurice Tardif (2000), an educational researcher, observes how this method inversion has manifested itself in the university professional training. It adopts an applying perspective of knowledge that would be opposed to an "epistemology of practice":

We call the epistemology of professional practice the study of the set of knowledge actually used by professionals in their daily workspace to perform all their tasks. We attach a broad meaning here to the notion of "knowing", which encompasses knowledge, skills, abilities (or aptitudes), and attitudes, that is, what has often been called knowing, know-how, and know-being. . . . The purpose of an epistemology of professional practice is to reveal this knowledge, to understand how it is concretely integrated into the tasks of professionals and how they incorporate, produce, use, apply, and transform it given the limits and resources inherent to their work activities. It also aims to understand the nature of this knowledge, as well as the role it plays in both the work process . . . and the professional identity. (pp. 10-11)



In the exact text, the Canadian author notes that the dominant model of university training would be based on a different epistemological perspective:

The programs . . . are globally idealized according to an appliance model for knowledge: students spend several years attending classes that are course-based and made up of propositional knowledge. Afterward, or during these classes, they will take an internship to “apply” this knowledge. Finally, when the training is over, they start working on their own, learning their craft in practice, and finding, most of the time, that this propositional knowledge does not apply well in everyday action. (Tardif, 2000, p. 18)

For Tardif (2000), this model crystallizes in the institutionalization of a labor division in and from the university:

This appliance model is not only ideological and epistemological. It is also a standardized model throughout the university practice and career system. For instance, research, training, and practice constitute three separate poles in this model. Researchers produce knowledge that is then transmitted during training and finally applied in practice. The production of knowledge, the training related to this knowledge, and the mobilization of knowledge in action become, from that moment on, completely different problems and issues for different groups of agents. . . . In turn, each of these groups of agents is subjected to professional demands and trajectories according to the types of careers at stake. (p. 18)

Tardif’s text (2000), produced in and for the education area, deals with teacher training but reports a dichotomy between *knowing about* and *knowing how to do*, which is also present in the communication area. Paulo Freire developed his teaching-learning method and all his philosophical conception of education because he diagnosed this dichotomy and intended to face it in his area, pedagogy. In his conception, the theoretical understanding of reality is only a moment in the larger cycle that leads to its permanent transformation by the human being who understands it. In a text published during his period of exile in Geneva, Freire summarizes this understanding:

Separated from practice, theory becomes mere verbalism. Separated from theory, practice is nothing more than blind activism. That is why there is no authentic praxis outside the dialectical unity action-reflection, practice-theory. Likewise, the theoretical context does not exist outside the dialectical union with the concrete context. In this concrete context, where the facts necessarily happen, we find

ourselves involved by the real, but without critically understanding why the facts are what they are. In the theoretical context, keeping the concrete within our grasp, we seek the rationale for the facts. In this concrete context, we are subjects and objects in a dialectical relationship with reality. In the theoretical context, we assume the role of subjects who are aware of the subject-object relationship that takes place in the concrete context and then faces reality again as subjects. This establishes the unity, not the separation, between practice and theory, action and reflection. (as cited in Torres, 1979, p. 68)

In the same sense, the Chilean philosopher Antonio Faundez emphasized this inversion of the method in a book also dialogued with Paulo Freire, published in 1985, when they discussed the production of science. According to the author, this exact inversion is verified in research:

In summary, Paulo, true science is that which, starting from the concrete and mediated by the concept, returns to the concrete. Furthermore, this is a permanent cycle. However, as intellectuals understand it today and as it is taught in universities, science consists of starting from the concept, returning to the concrete, and then returning to the concept. Although also permanent, it is another cycle; we cannot simply say that when science is concerned only with the concept, it does not have the intentionality of the concrete. The concrete also constitutes its problem, but it is the concrete that appears as a mediator for the concept. Then, we have the inversion of the knowledge process to return to the concept; in this process, the concrete appears as a bridge element between the concepts. In this regard, you are right in saying that we should not stay in the concept. Erroneously we regard the concept's life as the reality, instead of the concrete's life, which, for us, is the true reality and includes the concept. In other words, it is a revolution because it is a new conception of science as a mediator for the understanding and transformation of reality. (Freire & Faundez, 1985, pp. 64-65)

For the German Heinz-Peter Gerhardt (1996), who deeply studied his life and work, "Freire proposes a *praxeological* approach to education, towards critically reflective action and critical reflection based on practice" (p. 169). This perspective would have led him to a rejection of university academicism while always generating, as well, criticism of his ideas from academia (pp. 153-154).

This misunderstanding is partly due to the influences that helped build Freire's thoughts, which are not currently the most usual in the university. In a 1963 text, for instance, Freire's religiosity is explicit as one of the primary sources and inspirations of his praxeological perspective (p. 5), which he would



recognize throughout his life, even after accepting the Marxist influence, as he did in the dialogued book with the US activist Miles Horton:

When I first met with peasants, men and women workers in the slums of Recife, to teach them and learn from them, I have to confess that I did so impelled by my Christian faith. . . . I have to say that I went there, the first time as if I had been sent. . . . I went there because I believed in what I heard and what I had studied. I could not standstill. I thought I had to do something, and what happened is that the more I went to the slum areas, the more I talked to the people, the more I learned from them. I was convinced that the people were sending me to Marx. Then I started reading Marx and reading about Marx, and the more I did so, the more I became convinced that we had to change the structures of reality and commit ourselves totally to a global process of transformation. However, what is interesting in my case – which is not the case for all people with a similar background as mine – my “meetings” with Marx never suggested that I stop having meetings with Christ. . . . I have always lovingly talked about both of them. You see, I feel comfortable in this position. (Freire & Horton, 2003, pp. 227-228)

However, between Christ and Marx, Paulo Freire went through many other influences. For the US professor Ann Berthoff (1990), who prefaces Freire’s dialogued book with Donaldo Macedo, Freire’s practice is entirely pragmatic:

Paulo Freire is one of the true heirs of William James and C. S. Pierce. He tells us: *the way your theory works and what it does change will tell you better what your theory is*. He wants us to consider the value of an idea by asking how much it matters. He wants us to think about the dialectics of ends and means, about the mysteries of despair and hope. Moreover, he encourages us not to put off change until a propitious moment; not to be wasteful in getting people to be ready to change, ready to learn . . . I believe Paulo is telling us, “There is no way to transformation; transformation is the way”. This is not mystification, and it is not a paradox of spirit that we must solve: it is a dialectic that we must enforce. (pp. xxvi-xxvii)

Although he recognizes the importance of this influence in his education, Freire (2000) will later distinguish between a pragmatism that he learned from John Dewey’s (1965) New School, based on the dissemination of his work in Brazil by Anísio Teixeira and which he considers progressive, and another “pragmatism”, put in quotes, typical of neoliberalism, which leads to fatalism and accommodation, with which he does not identify (pp. 123-124). In addition to US pragmatism, Freire was influenced by the concept of praxis that he found in

his reading of Gramsci, Marx, and their interpreters, and that would later help to ground his pedagogical proposal, itself explained as a “theory of knowledge put into practice”. Freire’s theory of knowledge will be drawn from philosophers such as Karel Kosík, Adolfo Sánchez-Vásquez, and Álvaro Vieira Pinto, as well as from works by Marx himself. On several occasions, Freire refers to the *Theses on Feuerbach*, highlighting that the German thinker wrote in only two and a half pages one of the most important works of Western philosophy.

In a conversation with Carlos Alberto Torres reproduced in the book *A Educação na Cidade*, Paulo Freire (1991) summarizes his praxeological perspective:

I emphasize the need for us, within the theoretical context, to distance ourselves from the concrete, in the sense of perceiving how, in the practice exercised in it, is embedded its theory, which sometimes we do not suspect or hardly know. . . . The central issue for us, educators, in the chapter of our permanent training, is how, from the *theoretical context*, taking distance from our *practice*, we extricate our knowledge of it. In other words, it is how from the *theoretical context*, we “take distance” from our practice and become epistemologically curious to grasp it in its rationale. By unveiling what we do in this or that way, in the light of knowledge that science and philosophy offer today, we correct and improve ourselves. That is what I call thinking the practice, and it is by thinking the practice that I learn to think and practice better. (pp. 103-105)

However, since the *concrete context* of practice is always historical and situated, the methodologies tried out by Freire cannot simply be transposed to other realities. Freire himself insists on this issue when reviewing his experience with Miles Horton:

For example, your experience and also mine in the sixties in Brazil did not occur in a vacuum. They took place in a historical space, in a context with special historical, political, social, and cultural elements. It is possible that we would not get the same results now. However, it does not mean it is not possible to achieve similar results in some areas of the country at certain times. . . . This is precisely why knowledge is always undergoing transformation. That is, the act of knowing has historicity, so today’s knowledge about something is not necessarily the same tomorrow. Knowledge transforms as reality also moves and transforms. So, the theory also does the same. It is not something stable, immobilized. (Freire & Horton, 2003, pp. 108-114)

In another of his dialogued books, with the US professor Ira Shor, in 1986, Freire moves forward in this observation in a propositional sense: “It is for no other



reason that I always say that the only way anyone can apply, in his or her context, some of the propositions I have made is exactly to remake myself, that is, not to follow me. To follow me, the key is not to follow me” (Freire & Shor, 1986, p. 41).

FREIRE AND THE REINVENTION OF EXTENSION

Freire’s method and philosophy have their origins in the early 1960s in the experience of the Popular Culture Movement, introduced during the administration of Miguel Arraes in the Recife City Hall, of which he was one of the coordinators, and matured in the Cultural Extension Service (SEC) of the Universidade de Recife (nowadays Universidade Federal de Pernambuco). He was its director and was discovered by the then Minister of Education, Darcy Ribeiro, who supported him with funds and the projection of his work beyond Pernambuco (Freire, 1963, p. 19). The celebrated experiment that proved the effectiveness of his literacy method in 40 hours of classes given to peasants in Angicos, Rio Grande do Norte, was carried out as a SEC extension project (Pelandr , 2002, p. 53).

Professor Jarbas Maciel (1963) witnessed this experience at the time while making clear the critical perspective with which extension was dealt with in the institution:

Cultural extension, for us who are part of Prof. Paulo Freire’s work team and who are immersed in an intense activity of democratization of culture among the people, means something more than what is generally attributed to it in the university centers of Europe and the USA. The *extension* is a dimension of the Brazilian Pre-Revolution since it also – and not only man, in Gabriel Marcel’s fortunate expression – is *situated* and *dated*. Certainly, it is no longer possible to understand, in Brazil today, a university turned in on itself and to the past, unconcerned about the crucial problems that afflict the people it is supposed to serve. . . . Its motivation has its roots in the great contradiction of the Brazilian University that, among other things, clashes 1% of our population against the remaining 99%, in the most complete spiritual blindness and brutalized in the abandonment of a form of social and economic enslavement. . . . Therefore, to be truly functional, the *extension* must be aimed at these 99% – the immense majority of the Brazilian people – towards simply paying off a heavy debt that is not only accidental and not recent, because it is a historical debt. When we undertake cultural extension in these terms, we are fighting even against the errors and vices of our colonial past. (pp. 25-26)

In this spirit, the Cultural Extension Service planned publications, lectures, and created the University Radio (today called Paulo Freire Radio), considering the Adult Literacy Method as only one of the stages of what would be a Paulo Freire

System of Education that “is already being formulated and, some of them, experimentally applied, leading to an authentic and coherent Popular University” (Maciel, 1963, p. 26). The SEC project came to a halt with the 1964 coup d’état, when the Cultural Extension Service of the Universidade de Recife was invaded, and all its assets were destroyed. However, it left behind Paulo Freire’s first theoretical formulation on extension, a thesis that would later be denied by its antithesis in the educator’s Chilean experience, eternalized in the book *Extensão ou Comunicação?* (1969), which would mark the pedagogue’s main incursion into our area. José Eustáquio Romão (2018) contextualizes this turn:

Always concerned with the etymology of words and the historical trajectory of the original meanings, which are being transformed and gaining other meanings – are being “re-signified”, to use a trendy neologism –, Paulo Freire takes the word “extension” (from the Latin *extendere*: ex = outside + *tendere* = stretch) and lists some of its meanings, highlighting the one in the sentence: “Pedro is an agronomist and works in *extension*”. We can see from the example that Freire is conditioned, as was common in the 1960s, by “Rural Extension”. It is worth remembering that he wrote the text in Chile, when he was working at the *Instituto de Capacitación e Investigación en Reforma Agraria* (ICIRA), directed by Jacques Chonchol, who, by the way, wrote the work’s preface and who would be, some years later, Salvador Allende’s minister. At that time, the University “Extension” was strongly linked to rural assistance, in the sense of taking knowledge and techniques produced inside the University to the rural environment, to expand the production of the economy’s primary sector. Toward demonstrating that words intrinsically carry contextually and ideologically marked meanings, Paulo Freire uses the concepts of “linguistic field” by Jost Trier (1894-1970) and “associative fields” by Charles Bally (1865-1947) (27) to vehemently resist the term “extension”. (p. 189)

In this exposition, Freire (1969) describes extension in its most unidirectional sense, proposing rejection of the term and the practice:

Extension... Transmission

Extension... Active subject (the one who extends)

Extension... Content (which is chosen by the extender)

Extension... Recipient (of contents)

Extension... Delivery (of something that is taken by a subject who is “behind the wall” to those who are “beyond the wall”, “outside the wall”. That is why we talk about extramural activities)

Extension... Messianism (on the part of the one who extends)



Extension... Superiority (of the deliverer's content)

Extension... Inferiority (of those who receive)

Extension... Mechanism (in the action of the one who extends)

Extension... Cultural invasion (through the content taken) reflects the worldview of those who take it, which overlaps with those who passively receive it. (p. 22)

As an alternative to extension, Freire (1969) proposes that “true communication does not seem to be in the exclusive transfer or transmission of knowledge from one subject to another, but in their co-participation in the act of understanding the signification of meaning” (p. 70).

Curiously, starting from this antithesis, Freire does not deal specifically with the university extension issue in his later works and the many interviews he answered recounting his life experience, he was not asked about the contradiction between the thesis of the Cultural Extension Service of the Universidade de Recife and the antithesis stated in *Extensão ou Comunicação?* (1969). The dialectical synthesis that will overcome it, at least in theory, will appear in the reinvention of extension from creating the Fórum Nacional de Pró-Reitores de Extensão das Universidades Públicas Brasileiras (National Forum of Pro-Rectors of Extension of Brazilian Public Universities). According to Antunes et. al. (2018),

The creation of the *National Forum of Pro-Rectors of Extension of Brazilian Public Universities* – today “Fórum de Pró-reitores de Extensão das Instituições Públicas de Educação Superior Brasileiras” [Forum of Pro-Rectors of Extension of Brazilian Public Higher Education Institutions] – the FORPROEX, in November 1987, was decisive for the advance that followed. For FORPROEX, University Extension was understood as an educational, cultural, and scientific process that inseparably articulates Teaching and Research and makes possible the transforming relationship between University and Society. For FORPROEX, University Extension is “a two-way street” between University and society. Academic knowledge and popular knowledge met once again. Then, came the 1988 Constitution, which consecrated the principle of “inseparability between teaching, research, and extension” (Article 207) and the 1996 LDB (National Educational Bases and Guidelines Law – Law no. 9.394/96), which established University Extension as one of the University's purposes (Article 43). The transformation of University Extension into an instrument of social change and the university itself has been underway along with the conquest of other rights and the defense of democracy. (p. 210)

Although the synthesis has been achieved in theory, in practice, the thesis and antithesis remain in force, still according to the authors:

In practice, *two strands* of University Extension have confronted each other: one that is more assistentialist and the other that is not, or, as they say, an extensionist practice and a non-extensionist one. The first one understands University Extension as the vertical transmission of knowledge, an assistance service, ignoring culture and popular knowledge. Essentially, this conception holds that “those who have, extend to those who have not”. Thus, this assistentialist view brings a unilateral direction. It is a kind of one-way street: it only goes from the university to society. The other way around is not considered. It is interpreted as non-existent. . . . The second strand understands extension as a communication of knowledge. It is a non-assistentialist, non-extensionist view of University Extension. Paulo Freire’s proposal to replace the extension concept with the communication concept is along these lines. It is based on a theory of knowledge, answering the question: how we learn and produce knowledge. A theory of knowledge based on an anthropology that considers every human being as an unfinished, incomplete, and inconclusive being who does not know everything but also does not ignore everything. In these last decades, FORPROEX has acted strongly to overcome the extension’s more assistencial profile. (p. 211)

Moreover, “dialogic interaction” is the first guideline proposed for extension actions, followed by “interdisciplinarity and inter professionalism”, “inseparability of teaching-research-extension”, “impact on student education”, and “impact and social formation”, according to the National University Extension Policy defined by the Fórum de Pró-reitores de Extensão das Instituições Públicas de Educação Superior Brasileiras (2013):

The *Dialogical Interaction* guideline directs the development of relationships between universities and social sectors marked by dialogue and exchange of knowledge, thus overcoming the discourse of academic hegemony and replacing it with the idea of an alliance with social movements, sectors, and organizations. It is no longer about “extending to society the knowledge accumulated by the University” but about producing new knowledge in interaction with society. A knowledge that contributes to overcoming inequality and social exclusion and building a more just, ethical, and democratic society. This objective presupposes a two-way action: from the University to Society and from Society to the University. (p. 48)

In the academic field, this synthesis, once put into action, would represent the dialectical leap capable of overcoming the lack of communication between theory and practice that still prevails in its teaching and research. However, for this to happen, it would be necessary to “start a process of transformation



of the university as a whole” (Antunes et al., 2018, p. 212). José Eustáquio Romão (2018) proposes that in the history of the Brazilian University, we could establish a chronology in *three phases*, according to the importance given to each of the institutional missions “First, the emphasis was given to Teaching and then to Research. Only the future will tell when it will be Extension’s turn” (p. 189).

However, the practical realization of this new emphasis and the pro-rectors’ proposal would depend on more than goodwill. In a rare allusion to extension after his 1969 book, in a letter commenting on Renato Quintino dos Santos’ work on the subject, published in 1986 and included in this book as a preface, Paulo Freire expresses a certain skepticism regarding the extension orientation that comes from a conservative university, while observing that the absence of extension would be another manifestation of the institution’s elitism:

I have carefully read your work, in which you make clear your rejection of any kind of political-educational action of an authoritarian character. Generally speaking, extension efforts are hardly ever free of the authoritarian trait you criticize. Authoritarianism is sometimes covert, disguised, sometimes explicit. Nevertheless, with regard to the University’s participation programs in popular areas, there is also a way of being elitist authoritarian without being culturally invasive – that of simply denying the University the exercise of such a task. (Freire, 1986, p. 7)

In the same preface of 1986, Paulo Freire briefly indicates how, in his view, a dialogical and emancipatory extension activity should be oriented:

Ultimately, the University’s presence in popular areas through cultural and educational programs – never neutral – is only justified to the extent that it contributes to the establishment of the dialectical unity between practice and theory, sensitivity to the concrete and exact knowledge of the concrete, popular wisdom and academic scientificity. It is towards this end, in fact, that we should strive to make the University’s presence in popular areas real. (pp. 7-8)

The Guidelines for Extension in Brazilian Higher Education, foreseen in the country’s educational legislation to be implemented by December 2021 (Resolution No. 7, 2018), provide the introduction of mandatory extension activities in the curriculum of all undergraduate university programs (and elective ones in graduate studies). Through its practical implementation, in the next few years, the academic area of communication as a whole will be able to demonstrate how interested and prepared it is for a reunion with Paulo Freire.■

REFERENCES

- Antunes, A. B., Gadotti, M., & Padilha, P. R. (2018). Reinventar a universidade a partir da extensão universitária. In M. Gadotti & M. Carnoy (Orgs.), *Reinventando Paulo Freire: A práxis do Instituto Paulo Freire* (pp. 209-227). Instituto Paulo Freire; Lemann Center; Stanford Graduate School of Education.
- Berthoff, A. E. (1990). Prefácio. In P. Freire & D. Macedo, *Alfabetização: Leitura do mundo, leitura da palavra* (pp. 9-21). Paz e Terra.
- Burgos, C. C. (1996). Paulo Freire e as teorias da comunicação. In M. Gadotti (Org.), *Paulo Freire: Uma biobibliografia* (pp. 620-621). Cortez; Instituto Paulo Freire.
- Cogo, D. (1999). *Da comunicação rural aos estudos de audiência: Influência da obra de Paulo Freire no ensino e na pesquisa em comunicação latino-americanos*. Comunicação ao Fórum de Estudos sobre Paulo Freire. Pós-Graduação em Educação da Unisinos.
- Dewey, J. (1965). *Vida e educação*. Melhoramentos.
- Fórum de pró-reitores de extensão das instituições públicas de educação superior brasileiras [Forum of pro-rectors of extension of Brazilian public higher education institutions]. (2013). *Política nacional de extensão universitária*. Prorext; UFRGS.
- Freire (2000). *Pedagogia da indignação: Cartas pedagógicas e outros escritos*. Unesp.
- Freire, P. (1963). Conscientização e alfabetização: Uma nova visão do processo. *Estudos Universitários – Revista de Cultura da Universidade do Recife*, (4), 5-23.
- Freire, P. (1969). *Extensão ou comunicação*. Paz e Terra.
- Freire, P. (1980). *Conscientização*. Moraes.
- Freire, P. (1986). Prefácio. In R. Santos, *Educação e Extensão, domesticar ou libertar?* (pp. 7-8). Vozes.
- Freire, P. (1991). *A educação na cidade*. Cortez.
- Freire, P., & Betto, Frei. (1985). *Essa escola chamada vida*. Ática.
- Freire, P., & Faundez, A. (1985). *Por uma pedagogia da pergunta*. Paz e Terra.
- Freire, P., & Horton, M. (2003). *O caminho se faz caminhando*. Vozes.
- Freire, P., & Shor, I. (1986). *Medo e ousadia: O cotidiano do professor*. Paz e Terra.
- Gerhardt, H. (1996). Arqueologia de um pensamento. In M. Gadotti (Org.), *Paulo Freire: Uma biobibliografia* (pp. 149-170). Cortez; Unesco; Instituto Paulo Freire.
- Lima, V. (2011). *Comunicação e cultura: As ideias de Paulo Freire* (Edição comemorativa de 30 anos de publicação em homenagem aos 90 anos de nascimento de Paulo Freire). Editora UnB; Fundação Perseu Abramo.



- Maciel, J. (1963). A fundamentação teórica do sistema Paulo Freire. *Estudos Universitários – Revista de Cultura da Universidade do Recife*, (4), 25-59.
- Meditisch, E. (2016). Paulo Freire nas práticas emancipadoras da comunicação: Ainda hoje, um método subutilizado no Brasil. *Alaïc – Revista Latinoamericana de Comunicação*, 13(25), 132-143. <https://bit.ly/2UxvSCp>
- Pelandré, N. L. (2002). *Ensinar e aprender com Paulo Freire: 40 horas 40 anos depois*. Cortez; EdUFSC; Instituto Paulo Freire.
- Peruzzo, C. (2017). Ideias de Paulo Freire aplicadas à comunicação popular e comunitária. *Revista Famecos*, 24(1), Article ID24207. <https://doi.org/10.15448/1980-3729.2017.1.24207>
- Resolution nº 7. (2018, December 18). <https://bit.ly/3m1P4Sw>
- Romão, J. E. (2018). Paulo Freire e a extensão universitária. In M. Gadotti & M. Carnoy (Orgs.), *Reinventando Paulo Freire: A práxis do Instituto Paulo Freire* (pp. 189-207). Instituto Paulo Freire; Lemann Center; Stanford Graduate School of Education.
- Tardif, M. (2000). Saberes profissionais dos professores e conhecimentos universitários. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, (13), 5-24. <https://bit.ly/3ETS4cd>
- Torres, C. A. (1979). *Diálogo com Paulo Freire*. Loyola.

Article received on June 15 and approved on August 7, 2021.