

Education and Consumption: a critical perspective

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Abstract

Nowadays, citizens are being socialized in a culture of consumption, of satisfaction, and convenience, as well as of unprecedented spending. Citizens are growing up and maturing within a structure and lifestyle typical of a capitalist and neoliberal society. What is more, human values are being destroyed in that society and the values of the market, capital, and consumption are being promoted. As a result, this generates discrimination and exclusion in terms of economy, social class, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes which noticeably demonstrate a lack of solidarity. We think that there is a need for social intervention which protects, defends, and trains citizens so that they make free decisions, based on truthful information and accompanied by rationality. It is necessary to equip people with defense mechanisms, the most powerful of which is education, and in this case Education for Consumption. In this work, we present the characteristics of a consumerist pedagogy covered by neoliberalism and backed by the laws of the market. As opposed to this pedagogy of consumption, we present a critical pedagogy of consumption based on a pedagogical intervention, which is founded on a framework of cognitive, attitudinal, and procedural application. In addition, it is based

on a methodology that favors students' critical and autonomous development.

Keywords: *Education, Consumption, neoliberalism, economic literacy, critical pedagogy*

Introduction. Capitalism and Consumer Society

Neoliberalism, as a political ideology that advocates a return to the historical principles of liberalism, has proposed an exaltation of the market since the second half of the 20th century. Nevertheless, it is unbridled, without limits, sponsored under a false premise of freedom and guardian of class privileges. Among its basic approaches, besides the economic ones, it presents an identity of its own for other spheres of society, culture, economy, and education. The rich are rich because they deserve it, ignoring the unequal access to social goods that should be universal, such as education, health, culture. Neoliberalism is so ubiquitous, and works so sibilantly, that its creed is accepted without criticism as if there were no alternative and It seems that neoliberalism has come to stay in the current education system (Jones et al., 2008; Maisuria, 2014). It is alarming to see how our western society presents and extols a subject characterized by individualism and materialism. Moreover, globalization and capitalism have placed the market and the economic interests above people's well-being. In this showcase, the media transmit a consumerist pedagogy based on a sensorial, hedonistic, and selfish way of life. Authors like de Mooij (2019) called (2019) *Global Consumer Culture*. Such a way of life is backed up by dreams of progress that promote superficial forms of living and they are sustained in the exaltation of frivolous forms of consumption. Capitalism and its flagrant consumerism exert a consumerist pedagogy that grips people and turns them into weak and unprotected beings at the mercy of market trends.

Additionally, these trends dazzle them with attractive delusions of grandeur as well as social and personal well-being.

The signifier of the dreams of the new generations is no longer the ideals of integrity, honesty, and equality, but it has been subjugated towards individual good, selfishness, self-profit, and individual moral codes. Furthermore, these moral codes are sponsored under the umbrella of capitalism and consumerism, exploiting human beings to achieve greater economic benefit. This also creates false prosperity and happiness masked in progress and well-being with the false illusion of having more, producing more, and consuming more.

The wealth of nations began to depend on the consumption index of their population. So, since then, the focus of the countries has been creating consumers (Eguizábal, 2007). Shopping centers were created to be fantasy machines, where everything had to be fused. As a result, distances and time were canceled and it generated a confusing collection of fragments and experiences, arranged and organized to be consumed and not experienced or represented (Crawford, 1992).

This is in conjunction with the establishment of advertising and marketing as tools of information and persuasion. Consequently, products and goods were turned into authentic objects of desire, inviting and even inciting the population to consume externally constructed needs. Advertising, television, and the media are not innocent and innocuous, but they become informal educational agents which "promote and reinforce the hegemonic belief that the consumption of goods and services is the primary means of fulfillment and happiness" (Wright and Sandlin 2017: p.83) and drive the need to increase production and consumption. People consume to be happy, or at least that is the idea which capitalism propagates. Although there is some relationship between psychological well-being and material wealth, Górník-Durose (2006) indicates

that wealth meets human needs concerning comfort. Nevertheless, he qualifies that when subjects achieve a certain level of wealth, obtaining more resources does not increase happiness since that surplus of possessions forces users to fight with the additional psychological costs. As a result, it is necessary to have an education that surpasses these contradictions.

In this continuous process of change, uncontrolled economic progress has a leading role. Even though it is indispensable to address vital, cultural, and social tasks, it is questionable whether human beings' adaptability to it is being deficient and erroneous (Godoy, 2016). Human beings have become a consumer good, which is alienated and is a new species, called *Homo consumens*, the final consumers, whose goal is to gather more, spend more, use more, have more, and to compensate for their emptiness, anxiety, and loneliness (Fromm, 1981). What is more, in this consumerist maelstrom, children are especially vulnerable, as they lack the necessary tools to filter advertising products. In this sense, Calvert (2008) indicates the need to critically literate children about advertising and consumption, especially due to their influence in decision making when buying and consuming.

Society gives meaning to consumption by allowing people's classification, categorization, measurement, and standardization. However, these meanings are not exempt from a neutral particularity— they offer a distorted reality. Crawford (1992) stated that consumption builds how the world is viewed. Therefore, it is necessary to give new generations critical tools for life. These tools allow them to articulate the political, economic, social, and cultural complexities which they are going to find. Hence, this allows them to achieve some clarity about who they are and how they are represented in the environment which surrounds them. To achieve this, the political reflection, citizen's participation, and people's education as consumers must become key

elements of the construction of identities (Alonso & Fernández, 2010) that do not perpetuate that *Homo consumens*. Instead, they derive in the construction of a free and emancipated individual, not subject to classification, t number of downloads, number of purchases, or transactions, etc.

The power elites place the market and profit above other considerations and understand learning in terms of economic growth. Additionally, these elites dominate the education discourse, practices, and policies (Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2016; Hursh & Henderson, 2011). Against that dominance, we propose a social intervention that protects, defends, and trains citizens so that they make free decisions, based on truthful information and accompanied by rationality. We can talk of a new model of consumption management and, therefore, of consumers' needs as well as of the resources of the planet. Societies should continue to promote this responsible and sustainable consumption. However, in order to achieve this, we must equip the population with defense mechanisms, the most powerful of which is education, and in this case Education for Consumption.

Postmodern Consumption. Neoliberalism and Consumer Market

The political, social, economic, and philosophical climate changed by easy access to information, consumer goods, and the loss of great cultural references which characterize society, resulted in a change of paradigm from modernity to postmodernity. Featherstone (1988) already announced that, in addition to the break with modernity, the emergence of postmodernity meant the onset of a new social structure with new organizational principles, including consumption. Within this novel postmodernist compendium, Porcelli and Martínez (2015) pointed out that the establishment of the New Economy concept was very important. The economist Brian Arthur coined this concept and it was

popularized by Kevin Kelly, founder and executive director of the American magazine *Wired*.

The technological advances of the last thirty years, the evolution of energies, such as oil and electricity, have helped to establish the so-called *Consumer Capitalism*, characterized by the establishment of a new organization of the chain work, the reduction of working hours, raising the level of wages, creating new needs.

The modern lifestyle has become unpredictable and unforeseeable, there is a high urgency for immediate gratification, for the need for novelty, for reaching continually new sensations. We can speak of a society that is constantly unsatisfied, hedonic, and wasteful, where subjects frequently forget the value and the effort which has meant to achieve the goods that they enjoy (Bericat, 2003). From the current postmodern discourse, marketing budgets study the consumer as an emotional, narcissistic subject and who uses consumption as a way to construct meaningful experiences (Skandalis et al., 2019).

The current consumerist ecosystem feeds back and gives meaning to the postmodern paradigm. Alvin Toffler (1970) predicted that the throwaway civilization was coming. Products, needs, experiences... are currently created to be used only once or for a short period. Verdú (2003) stated that consumption is speed, impatience, and continuous simulation of rebirth. As Lipovetsky (2002) said, the ephemeral is the greatest exponent of Postmodernity. What it is ephemeral and easily derived in a contradiction of consuming less but doing, consuming, or enjoying the most. This provokes the birth of forms of consumption that try to achieve that sensation of use that is derived from the fact of committing acts of a consumer and fast lifestyle.

Lunt and Livingstone (1992) concluded that most people considered that the vertiginous changes which the era of consumerism was causing, pushed the population away from its old value system and its old forms of social organization. The consumer culture, in which the world was involved, shaped the identity of people into two streams: it increased personal freedom and it led to the development of greater responsibility.

According to Bauman (2007), the consumer market, besides generating excess and waste, fosters the development of positive emotions linked to compulsive buying. Moreover, it leads to getting rid of those acquisitions which are no longer attractive to acquire others that are new and more stimulating. The result is a kind of liquid modernity in constant change which affects the way of understanding education and society (Bauman, 2005). This spiral immerses the public in a consumer society and, therefore, in a society of indebtedness. The reason is that individuals spend beyond their monetary resources to be able to participate in this cycle and to be able to access products, goods, and services which they think belong to the social group to which they belong or wish to belong to.

This last consequence of consumption, i.e. the global asymmetry, in turn, causes a series of effects of redistributive, economic, social, and, finally, institutional and political character. Regarding the redistributive effects, consumption is in favor of the richest's capital at the expense of the poorest's work. The reason is that in the vast majority of those countries which are developing, globalized consumption still generates more poverty and autocracy, not prosperity. As for the economic effects, we can say that they originate because the global processes favor the creation of pseudo needs and the commercialization of the consumption of the masses. As a result, workers' working conditions deteriorate. Regarding social effects, it is important to point out that they are

based on the transformation of time and space, as it is reflected almost daily in the displacement of thousands of people from the poorest countries to the richest, to achieve better living conditions. Finally, it should be noted that institutional and political effects weaken the state and promote nationalism (Berlanga, 2010).

Society, not just people as individuals, must control this destructive consumerism. Thus, it is irretrievably necessary to raise peoples' awareness so that they consume critically and responsibly within the globalized world in which they are immersed. A few years ago, Susan George (2003) warned that society was embedded in a system that fails to respond to real needs. This is because it is a process of pseudo-freedom characterized by cross-border capital and goods as well as services transactions, where only the law of supply and demand is complied. Everything is bought and sold. Neoliberalism has established a logic of the market based on capital and the accumulation of goods. In this maelstrom of consumption, neoliberal globalization has influenced educational policies by bringing about a shift towards a knowledge economy, creating a capitalist transformation of knowledge where innovation, the creation, acquisition, and transmission of fast, calculated, efficient, and cost-effective are bought and sold (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Hence, we learn to work, and learning is a charged consumer good, where new forms of slavery are raised. In these new forms of slavery, enthusiasm is confused with a scam, trade with begging. Also, human beings are sacrificed to the market in exchange for a subsistence ration, a promise of the future, where having work and a salary is presented as a blessing. A perfect operation of neoliberalism that previously humiliates the subjects who will then have children willing to any sacrifice. The false promise to work at any price to consume is presented, in a way that increases the debt, and with it the submission to the system. If you learn, resign yourself. If you are fortunate enough to work for twenty years to survive, do not

complain. Triviality and mediocrity make it possible for neo-liberal labor market logic to carry out atrocities of all kinds. And so, the power of consumption is inoculated in society.

There are examples of the power of the capitalist machinery concerning consumer habits, which not only represent an important machine producing consumer goods but also a consumer constructor. The American Disney Company is a good example of consumer construction through modified pedagogical processes in which they teach specific ways of being and buying (Sandlin & Garlen, 2017). What is more, it influences children and adults (Maudlin et al., 2012), making them passive consumers of its political propaganda and its way of understanding culture with values such as family, gender, ethnicity, training, and consumption. Furthermore, it does not remain outside power, ideology, and politics (Giroux & Pollock, 2010) as it presents an ideal of society that reduces the subject to a homogeneous consumer without critical attitude or the necessary tools to question other ways of being and understanding the world and culture.

The consumption of goods has not only become a factor of integration in the society closest to individuals, but it has been consecrated as the key to access the world of the first order, that is, the privileged part of globalization (George, 2003). Therefore, consumption is increasingly internalized in people's life and essence, implying economic, political, social, and moral consequences. It requires a pedagogical approach that calls for critical education regarding consumption. Precisely, the great lie of neoliberalism embodied by consumerism must be fought from the base with a critical pedagogy that dismantles the arguments of the consumerist fallacy and deconstructs the ideological apparatus with which neoliberalism inoculates consumerism in society.

Consumer Education as a Critical Response

The World of capitalism has known several financial crises throughout history. As a cause of the latter, we can point to the excessive growth of the so-called financial bubble, mainly due to the rapid advance of information and communication technologies (Beinstein, 2009). Another cause is the interest of the market and large companies in using technology and technological products within the school. As a result, they generate dependencies between what is sold and bought, the hardware and software certain companies produce and commercialize. The result is they create a technological market of production to which the school is subjugated. Consequently, they implement political logic of technology as they are used to develop organizational structures based on hierarchy and authority (Saltman, 2016) which is founded on the neoliberal thinking of the market and consumption.

Paradoxically, the boom in production, communication, and consumption capacity develops in parallel with the deprivation of human rights and the depletion of the Earth's resources. Every time consumption increases in the developed world, poverty increases in the less privileged. On the global political agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 are on the horizon. The nurturing of this paradox will continue as long as the model does not change in depth, and even if long-term goals and promises continue to be established, they will remain unfulfilled.

This situation of economic decline finds its logic in capitalism itself since, to make capital the engine of economy and its accumulation, the essential part of human development leads to an inevitable imbalance (Berlanga, 2010). This imbalance is not only at the monetary level but also energy, food, and even ecological masked in false promises of sustainable economic growth based on

technophilia, efficiency, and ecology to impose electronic formats controlled by large industries to the detriment of other media such as paper (Saltman, 2016).

We have moved from a society based on values such as austerity, saving, and sacrifice to a complex society. Therefore, the progressive technological, economic and social changes, based on the establishment of consumption, impose the need to restructure a system of values that has become obsolete. Human beings have become consumer products, since they have to be the best with the best curriculum to reach the best price in the labor and social market. Simultaneously or in a correlational way to these economic changes, there have been transformations in the values, which have forced individuals to adapt, to be included, and to be integrated into this new system (Cohen, 2014). The critical response to this market-imposed change of values is linked to the ontology of being and its ethical training. We understand by a critical sense of education the personal growth and maturity which achieves a thought and own criterion, before the dehumanizing practices of the market and capital against intellectualism and morality. As a result, effective consumer education requires a change in attitude towards consumption. This change involves introducing processes of self-knowledge of the context into educational practices. This critical exercise will provide students' real emancipation for an understanding and reconversion of the dynamics of consumption. The objective of these practices is to act as a "Trojan horse" against a consumer pedagogy developed by the system over decades, which alienates and violates critical knowledge of the market.

In this struggle to impose a consumerist pedagogy, neoliberalism has instrumented advertising to make it an educational tool, establishing the so-called *neuromarketing*. This new concept is understood as an instrument based on anticipating the reactions which the advertising campaigns produce on the

viewers' brains. It is a brain research technique that seeks to analyze how an external stimulus generates expectations about a product or service and how such expectations trigger the desire to acquire it (Lindstrom, 2010).

A study carried out by Badaoui et al. (2012), with a sample of 1063 French teenagers, confirmed that there is a significant influence of the media and music on teenagers' identification with certain groups and, in consequence, with the consumption of certain brands. It was observed that the stronger the media and musical influences, the stronger the teenagers' identification with certain products and brands.

Human beings who are in the developed part of the planet, are surrounded by symbols that are in charge of concentrating their emotional needs in objects or services, under a single criterion: obedience. The economic system, under the "magic wand" of advertising, tells consumers what they need to consume to cover their basic needs and, in turn, invites them to yearn and wish for products or services which they have never thought of before. The consumerist pedagogy conditions the decision-making. Consequently, they make subjects learn to wait in a passive way avoiding the responsibility of having to decide autonomously and to exercise freedom. This pedagogy teaches consumerism without measure, sells lies, and reifies the consumer subject. Thus, a harmful educational relationship is produced between a product, a brand, an idol, an application, etc. which establishes influences as an agent on an unprotected learner (the consumer). It is a kind of relational asymmetry that is normally assumed today and that represents the DNA of consumption.

The dilemma is to differentiate what is necessary from what is useless and the freedom of thought from alienation. We can speak of citizens-spectators-people who desire something or *Homo Consumiens*, whose natural state is constant

dissatisfaction (Cohen, 2014). Several forms of television, both public and under subscription, which are accessible from different platforms and viewed in the domestic environment and especially the advertising which moves millions of dollars a year, is not limited to selling products, but it shapes the image, the construction of identities, values, communities, and groups. Hence, it constructs a pedagogical message which seeks to educate to consume constantly (Giroux & Pollock, 2010). It is the perfect creation of the dependent subject of consumer goods. What is more, these subjects are educated from the earliest childhood in the dependence of the market, which tells them what they have to buy and what they have to possess to belong to a certain social group, without an apex of thought or critical attitude before the construction of the collective and individual identity which presents the advertising industry.

Consumption, especially in department stores, has been established as a leisure activity and free time for many children. Furthermore, as noted by Schor (2005), children spend more time in department stores than reading, playing outdoors, or attending children's meetings. Consumerism is not only the dominant ideology instilled in children and adults but it represents the center of life and global culture in the developed world (Spring, 2003).

Waines (1984) carried out a study with 180 Egyptian children and observed that as the age of participants increased, they showed increasingly complex and differentiated levels of conceptualization. According to these results and others similar, Denegri et al. (2006), analyzed the evolutionary sequence through which an optimal level of economic literacy is achieved. They concluded that economic thinking develops in a progressive and growing way through the cognitive tools available at each age. Furthermore, they identified the quality of the economic environment and the type of direct experiences with respect to money management as influential variables in this process. These authors

established that minors construct their perception of the economic world through an evolutionary process that develops in three levels of increasing complexity: level 1 (from 5 to 9 years) or level of primitive economic thought. It is characterized by the presence of concrete and observable conceptions of money. Hence, the family plays a primordial role as an agent of socialization. The next level or level 2 (from the 10 years until adolescence and even, in some cases, until adulthood) is based on the subject shows a very rudimentary economic literacy, since it includes the concept of profit and character fiduciary of money. However, it shows difficulties in inferring economic processes. It is at level 3 or last level (from adolescence to adulthood) in which a systemic conceptualization and an ability to understand social and economic changes are achieved. In this last step, a level of functional literacy is reached (Denegri et al., 2006).

Bearing in mind this theoretical foundation on the different levels of economic development, it is possible to articulate a critical pedagogy that establishes a model of intervention aimed at teaching children and young people through various activities adapted to their age. In addition, such a model applies to their daily lives and it is based on critical learning to enable them to acquire basic concepts of economics, economic reasoning strategies, consumer skills, and proactive attitudes.

With this scenario, more than ever, it is necessary to establish education for consumption from a critical perspective which allows raising consumption in terms of learning and improvement, and not as slaves of the globalized capitalist economy which walks towards work objectives and consumerism. As a result, the perspective that public schools are not places whose existence is based on the accumulation of profits is lost (Saltman, 2016). This is one of the best tricks of capitalism. We are here to live a new model of slavery happily accepted, by

conviction, to spend, consume and earn money in the crazy machinery of capitalism. What is more, it prolongs the debt chain assumed by the pariahs who accept consumption as the heartbeat of history, with submission based on false promises of prosperity in a hegemonic market and capital empire. On the contrary, an emancipatory education bets on learning from the conflicts and crises of capitalism, socialism, and globalization. The effects that these ideological entities leave in their wake should be analyzed within the schools, converting the inoperative and sterile academicism of many subjects into a pragmatism of theoretical and critical support which empowers the students and citizens (Reyes et al., 2019).

In a society where there is a need to consume to live, when there is no education in values of rational consumerism but of a compulsive one, where the levels of consumption become something pathological, it is evident that the craving to consume tries to hide a feeling of emptiness generated by the constant pressure of society to consume (Fromm, 1986). Thus, the need for Consumer Education is justified. Postmodern consumers make their choice in the liquidity and relativity of their diffuse lifestyles. Regarding this issue, as Ricci et al. (2016) point out, there are different ways of interpreting the individual consumer. On the one hand, consumption, as a way of escape, as a way to achieve a lost identity, to find an answer, a feeling that has to do with the immediate and fleeting consumption of a product which quenches the thirst for satisfaction for a created need. On the other hand, there is another vision if we leave aside this radically pessimistic, narcissistic view of consumers: one that does present an ethical component and which undoubtedly justifies the need and power of education for total consumption, the positive side of liquidity (Fabris, 2003), represented as the prolific context for the birth of new consumers who are free of social restrictions and eventually aware of their choice.

The misuse in the postmodern era is so evident that it is not justified. Society is facing a major challenge, which is to strengthen the four basic pillars that make up any wellness society: health, education, employment, and social services. The School cannot remain outside the conditions which postmodern culture imposes on the subjects that are the object of teaching practice. Furthermore, it begins to reflect on its actions. Moreover, the postmodern educational approach considers that the modern educational approach which it tries to replace, and the structure of schools are inadequate (Kahraman, 2015). From this idea, a continuous reflection is established, and it becomes an object of permanent criticism.

The ecological, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts are present in the scope of sustainable consumption (Gombert-Courvoisier et al., 2013). To this, we must add the specific educational context, since the equitable consumption of education can also be examined, not being very reassuring. A threat that we observe in the school regarding consumption is the interference of capital and the market in education, which entails the subordination of the school to the interests of excessive and commodified consumption. Consequently, this generates the commercialization of knowledge and intellectuality, which is called cognitive capitalism (Morgan, 2016). This cognitive capitalism produces and equates consumerism, with its productive and social forms, as well as education. What is more, it has introduced and implemented financial logic in education. As a result, this implies dangers to democracy, equity, and the individual and social construction of the school (Heilbronn, 2016) and it fosters consumer education in schools which seeks to inoculate the individual with the need to buy (Sandlin, 2005).

In conclusion: School, Criticism, and Training for Sustainable Consumption

The need to educate for consumption is evident, as it has been indicated by several international bodies, especially those with a supra-national scope (Aguaded, 2011; 2013) such as UNESCO, UN, or the European Parliament. We can no longer regard consumption as a frivolous activity with no space in school, but teachers and educators should consider it as an urgent need to understand students' world and their social relations (Sandlin, 2005; Usher, 2010) as well as providing tools for value development and responsible decision-making (Castillejo et al., 2011).

We understand that education is an action aimed at deploying people's critical, intellectual, affective, and moral capacity, following the culture and norms of coexistence that contemplates the society to which it belongs. It requires not only an individual action by the recipient of the learning, but it also requires dialogue and coordination among all the existing agents of socialization. Despite the difficulty of proposing a critical pedagogy in the classroom, teachers must present knowledge in a problematic way, in such a way that students seek collective research towards social change (Collinson, 2012; Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2016; Rogers, 2007).

All that has been stated before justifies the need to train students as future active, critical and responsible citizens, with the capacity to adapt to social development. Education for consumption from a critical perspective is a serious issue that needs to be studied and worked on by all members of the educational society. There is no shortage of scholarly efforts and efforts to delineate and reflect on these issues (Sandlin & McLaren, 2010). An accurate and first-level proposal of approach to a critical pedagogy of consumption is to reflect from the different educational agents the current budgets of mercantile and

consumerist influence. From there, a curricular revitalization in tune with a critical perspective of the current curriculum and the teleological field of education in the 21st century must be born. This will allow the construction of an educational practice that brings to the center of the scene, that is to say to the classroom, themes that should be treated with a critical perspective in the framework of consumption and social reality. Food, social networks, electronic devices, basic household energy supplies, the meaning of buying and selling textiles, the power of television and advertising combined with the emerging platforms of film and television, or the coexistence with the large platforms which cover the entire online market. All are living examples with which people coexist, use, and cover or create needs. These concrete examples must be direct content of education for consumption in different degrees of complexity and adapted to the contexts and levels of students' development.

Spring (2013) indicates that most education systems have adopted the objectives of education for economic growth. The critical response to strengthen the public education system is a necessary condition for adequate individual and social development. It is a fundamental element for the definition and dynamics of development models, as well as for establishing levels of equity and social justice. Consequently, it ensures a balanced coexistence and avoids the creation of unfavorable distributive tendencies. Although the research which links education with inequality and social class is unpromising (Lynch, 2015; Marsh, 2011; Rumberger, 2010), we believe in the importance of education as a tool to alleviate social inequalities and to improve the possibilities of economic growth as well as the standard of living. What is more, that standard of living broadens the prospects of the population and helps achieve a healthier, fuller and safer environment. Neoliberalism is dangerous and aggressive from the labor and educational point of view, however, it is not a time for pessimism as Apple (2006) indicates, but to construct and critically defend school and education.

The school must be kept out of the interests of the economic market because its times and spaces are different. The logic of the school is not the logic of capital and profit, but of study, socialization, and participation in human relations as pure means in themselves (Gómez, 2020).

Educating for consumption is not only to prepare students to access goods and products in a more balanced and efficient way but also the need to sensitize them to the implications of their acts of consumerism (Calafell et al., 2019). They must know and be aware that the current overflowing consumption implies the destruction of resources, as well as the formation and maintenance of an economic system which exacerbates, more if possible, the asymmetry that exists both globally among the different countries and in their immediate environment through the formation of the different social classes. They must be aware, within the possibilities afforded by their age and maturity, that the current economic and social system, as it stands, does not guarantee the survival of future generations. Consumerism and globalization, as an extreme form of capitalism, are causing an unprecedented increase in the differences between rich and poor, economic discrimination due to social class, beliefs, race, or sex (Sandlin & Maudlin, 2012) which favor behaviors, attitudes, and unsupportive practices.

Instead of this consumerist pedagogy, we propose civic literacy as a pillar that supports democracy and where the correct practices of consumption can be established from. Media literacy (Flornes, 2016) which empowers students with tools that help them manage the large doses of information that come to life today. What is more, it will complete the cast of supports to achieve a vital citizenship, which is built from schools. A critical pedagogy based on an axiology that is grounded on human freedom and dignity. If that pedagogy is supported by social justice, it will allow subjects to learn to select relevant

information and then use it as a key element of a critical thinking that allows reasonable consumption. To do so, it will be necessary to bring tangible examples into the classroom, to introduce material (products, advertising, software) into educational practices and experience consumer situations that are analyzed and criticized in the safe space of the educational environment.

We are witnessing an accelerated transformation of the economy, affecting people's daily lives and conditioning their future based on decisions made or not made in the present. An example of this is the access to new and diverse financial products or the increasing digitization in business management (Lusardi, 2019). This justifies the importance of a quality financial education. Financial literacy is the training to participate actively in economic life and improve individuals' well-being. We need financial education based on equity, fair trade, social justice, and that avoids segregating distributional trends (Simón et al., 2019). Something we understand is necessary for sustainable consumption. As a remarkable circumstance, we believe that parents' educational level has a positive influence on the financial competence of their children. Logically, not only the general level will influence this variable, but also the correct behavior patterns towards the avoidance of unbridled consumerism, the usefulness of goods, and the coherence in the parents' example-actions or the economic socialization (Webley & Nyhus, 2013). Despite this, we believe it necessary to revise the OECD concept of economic literacy that moves closer to ethical performance rather than to social equity. Consequently, they reproduce the economic thinking and they have been conceived as simple producers disconnected from the political, social, and economic dimensions. The result is premeditated class politics that seek an enriched dominant class and another impoverished supplicating class. However, we agree with Cohen's idea (2006) the academic world and, in this case, the school environment are not alone in the journey to find responsible

consumption. The collaboration of civil society and government through its economic, social, and specifically educational policies is crucial to achieve this.

Consumer Education from a critical perspective should be treated as a pedagogical intervention, which is founded on a framework of cognitive, attitudinal and procedural application. Hence, like the rest of the areas, it must rest on a methodology which favors the cognitive development in students, since it must teach content on consumption; an attitudinal development, as it must suppose the change of attitudes and the formation of new consumer habits; a procedural development because it must equip students with procedures and resources which allow them to make decisions regarding consumption; and finally an application development since it is not enough to give students information and tools to know how to proceed. In addition, it should place subjects so that they act in the contexts surrounding them to apply what they have learned to real life. From the teaching activity, students should be empowered to be critical, reflective, and socially responsible (González Gómez et al., 2014). Critical consumer pedagogy "ignites the imagination, helps learners to envision new ways of being outside the commodity's grip, and encourages learners to become active creators of knowledge rather than passive recipients" (Sandlin et al., 2009: p.120).

Several authors (Georgius, 2003; Schug, 1996) agree that the systematic learning of economic education, which has been incorporated into the curriculum and worked daily, develops positive attitudes in students towards the rational management of resources, as well as a greater capacity to choose more efficient economic behavior options. To introduce an efficient economic education adapted to the demands of a balanced society, it must be borne in mind that this act does not only have direct advantages over the economic knowledge itself, but also an improvement in the understanding of the social

world, attending to a transcendental difference in the way of seeing life. This strengthens individuals' transformation, from being mere observers to becoming aware of their own choices and the results they trigger (Denegri et al., 2006).

The critical pedagogy of consumption wants students to know the environment that surrounds them; discovering, interpreting, and acquiring critical and solidarity consciousness of the symbols they find in the environment. In this sense, the correct education for consumption in one of the most omnipresent habits of children and young people, such as television may also be behind the elimination of pernicious biases, such as those related to the vision young people have of their bodies. Studies such as those of Latner, Rosewall & Simmonds (2007) emphasize this situation by demonstrating that exposure to the mass media, not only television, but also video games and magazines, is significantly associated with stigmatization towards overweight young people. Other previous works explain the relationship between body and consumption from postmodernity, representing a hegemonic cultural ideal of body identity (Thompson & Hirschman 1998). Against the imposition of the media of an ideal of beauty and consumption, the promotion of critical thinking skills for media literacy has demonstrated its efficiency to mitigate the negative impacts of the risk of consumption and advertising concerning the body. As a result, it is an important resource to protect teenagers from harmful exposure to the media (McLean, Paxton, & Wertheim, 2016).

On the other hand, television articulates itself as the dominant classes' theater. There is a hidden relationship between the forms of television reality and the neoliberal work behaviors reproduced in naturalized contexts in playful forms such as television (Couldry, 2008). As pointed out by Aguaded (2005), the implementation of didactic proposals which have to do with teaching to watch television is increasingly necessary. Working for the reduction of the viewing

time in pursuit of other alternatives should not be the only educational route. It is also necessary to equip the individual with the necessary critical component to recognize the message transmitted through television. Individuals' critical competence must be encouraged. As a result, individuals can understand the scope of the messages, contents, and contexts of the information and values transmitted by television. This, if possible, becomes more urgent in current times of COVID-19 where the consumption of various media has increased due to isolation measures. In this increase in consumption, the probability of coming into contact with false news has increased (Casero-Ripollés, 2020), which justifies, once again, a study of the capacity of the citizen to detect them framed in a critical pedagogy of consumption.

It is necessary to highlight another type of education that has to do with the responsibility for the knowledge of the laws of the market. It is necessary to introduce in future teachers' training and therefore, from higher education, knowledge, and social responsibility to know where our money goes when we buy a product, where that product came from, what is the nationality of the labor who produce the product, where it was manufactured. A training that educates teachers to become critical individuals and to be able to transmit that same critical capacity to their students. However, it is difficult to train teachers to transform society in only a few years of initial training (Pittard, 2015).

Learning must be aimed at the development of knowledge and skills aimed at enabling individuals to make informed decisions about consumption. The purpose is to establish training actions from higher education to teachers not only from the development of factual knowledge, that is, from knowing what to do, but also from the procedural development of the same, knowing how to do it (Adombent, et al., 2014). In short, it would try to train consumer citizens with an outstanding ethical component. Individuals who are not limited to the

exercise of the mere acquisition of products, excessive or unconscious consumerism, but with a knowledge which allows them to find and criticize the real origin of the product. Responsible consumers who are aware of the importance of the act of acquiring, taking, or using to meet a need (Dueñas, et al., 2014). This requires training in the design of cross-cutting projects to work with students on content for market analysis and consumer habits. Projects in which the teacher is guided in a constructive learning process mediated by research processes that nourish the students with skills for the knowledge of the market reality that surrounds them and their attitudes and impulses towards it.

Bonilla (2016) postulates that the strategies of media manipulation can only be effective to those who are exposed to all the winds. Consequently, it is essential to promote comprehensive education from public education. The school and the educational system are agents of great influence in minors, who spend much of their lives in the formal spheres of education, facing authority relations, relationships between equals, and individual transformations. Therefore, schools are places which are preferred for the construction of identities with lasting effects on the values and actions of the subjects, on what they are, and what they think they can be (Appel, 2011). Hence, the importance of establishing and promoting consumer education with a critical and constructive perspective, where students can build a new reality against the dictatorship of models made by brands and the market.

We try to advocate an open and reflexive pedagogy, an education for consumption that reduces self-centeredness and consumerism. Additionally, it focuses on self-knowledge, self-criticism, and rectification, the personal maturity which is evolutionary and cultivates our own thinking (Herran, 2014). What is more, it allows the liberation and emancipation of the dictatorship of the market. We understand that consumer education aims to make students

aware of the production and consumption processes to act accordingly. Companies like Coca-Cola, Levis, Nike, Disney, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, Facebook must be analyzed historically, socially, and economically to understand the influence they have on society. If people understand this knowledge in educational contexts, it will allow access to the market with tools that allow them to look at the product with conscience and not at the mercy of its will. In this way, future citizens will configure their own system regarding production and consumption, and from a critical perspective will have the tools to prevent their environment from influencing them. It is important to be aware of the dangers of consumerism.

From all this, it can be deduced that the main function of education should be to provide students with the necessary means to develop a critical capacity and to be able to contextualize the acquired knowledge. Schools cannot be understood as artificial spaces isolated from reality. Higher institutions should be urged not to focus training on technical work but on training people who can understand the political and social circumstances where they live and hence who can control those circumstances and their own (Bauman, 2011).

Society has lived for years in the conflict of two discourses. One that represents the longing for a critical democracy that attributes a great deal of importance to ethical values, social responsibility, and active citizenship; and another based on a market logic focused on individual investment and capital increase. Both discourses are not so separate, they coexist in spaces such as education, sometimes generating conflict and sometimes confusion (Pais & Costa, 2020). From our point of view, Western educational systems are strongly conditioned by the economic dimension at the service of capital and consumerism. Therefore, student-teacher relations are mediated by the integration of pupils into an economic system of consumption, that is a mere preparation for

employment (Kemmis, 1998). The result is an uncritical learning to form consumerist subjects. As a result, it reproduces the capitalist model of production, which reflects the existing inequality (McLaren, 2016). Given this, the critical pedagogy of consumption must create a field of reference both internal and external, where students move for interests of freedom, flexibility, and tolerance which leads to education in values of responsible consumption. Teachers should ensure that students develop positive and critical attitudes. What is more, those attitudes should be operative in their behavior within the social and cultural reality.

The educational model of this pedagogy of consumption consists of basing the educational context on a model of democratic praxis. Moreover, teachers are critical and constructive socializing agents, intellectuals committed to the transformation of society (Giroux, 1988). Also, they are more political and pedagogical approaches in empathy to be able to emancipate themselves and their students. Moreover, they extend their teaching to the establishment of egalitarianism (Damianidou & Phtiaka 2016; Giroux, 2004). Teachers, who are willing to connect education and consumption beyond the transmission of content. To do so, they share ideas and exercise power over the ideological principles which underpin educational practices, capable of building a more human life (Giroux & McLaren, 1989). Teachers' work in this critical pedagogy of consumption is to direct their educational activity towards a horizon of freedom, justice, tolerance, and equality, among others, so that students can build and internalize their own axiological scheme. It is vital to train mentor teachers to pass on good practices concerning consumption from one generation to another. Teaching strategies and ways to provoke a greater consolidation of critical thinking are fundamental to achieve success, a question that is more relevant if we are talking about training future teachers (Gutiérrez, 2017). A dual consideration for students of higher education who must not only acquire

skills for themselves (Stupple, et al., 2017) and that will help them not only to face better the academic and personal situations but also, to train the future teachers so that they are capable of fostering the critical spirit among its students.

Teachers must recognize the dangers of neoliberalism (Sleeter, 2008) since the educational sphere is where the forces of neoliberalism have been increasing. In addition, it presents teachers as lazy and in need of mercantile discipline to be more efficient and effective (Apple, 2006). Opposite consumer pedagogy, which works better the smoother it is presented and not perceived as such (Blacker, 2013), teachers must empower and position themselves critically to understand that the dynamics of power can be changed. To do so, teachers should inhabit the classroom and give instruments to the students for their autonomous and critical learning. They should also foster analytical skills to maintain their own critical and self-critical character.

From a critical perspective, education for consumption is stubborn and rebellious in the face of people's commodification and social relations. Moreover, it does so from a deep conviction of resistance and struggle. What is more, it commits its actors with more involvement and more willingness to change, but from a plurality of approaches, with a new broad epistemology, which understands that education and knowledge are not homogeneous, but influenced by culture and context, because homogenization does not help to observe or explain what is happening (Clemens, 2020), nor is it fair, nor equitable, nor even humanly acceptable. An authentic education for critical consumption requires dialogue, in which all forms of knowledge must be talked about at the same level, accepting that no form of knowledge has more legitimacy than another because of the position of power of the those who use it, but because of the validity of that construction and its capacity to exercise as a liberating education (Kohan, 2019).

A school that assumes education for consumption from a critical perspective has to empower and transform itself, to move away from the ideals of the market and to generate lived and experienced essences. It participates, shares, democratizes, and is capable of sharing knowledge from a human to another one; because otherwise, the school will be responsible for the unjust neoliberal distribution and will move away from a part of the world to its students (Pallarès-Piquer & Muñoz-Escalada, 2017).

Educating for responsible consumption implies commitment, learning theoretical, technical, and practical knowledge, but also wanting to defend the ideals and rights proper to the alienating purpose of the market and consumerism. School, governments, teachers, and students, all together must put all their efforts into this task, because it depends on our sustainability and future.

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