

The configuration of social subjectivity in an innovative educational institution in Brazil

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to present a case study of an innovative school and illustrate how social aspects, in their subjective dimension, participate in educational innovation. According to the theoretical propositions from González Rey's cultural-historical theory of subjectivity, social aspects in the life of groups, institutions, communities, and social spheres in general, are expressed as subjective production, constituting what is called social subjectivity. We will focus on this category for our study of educational innovation, which is understood as the implementations of changes in the school setting. We carry out research in an innovative Brazilian school using Qualitative Epistemology for the study of subjectivity, and research tools such as documents, conversational dynamics, and questionnaires with directors, teachers, parents, and students as well as observations and informal chats by the researcher in the school's daily life. The creation of indicators and hypotheses allowed us to demonstrate a set of representations, values, beliefs, and emotions which are subjectified in different ways by individuals and groups, and which permeate their actions and interactive exchanges and contribute to understanding the innovation process that characterises the school.

Keywords

Cultural-historical theory; social aspects; subjectivity; school, educational innovation

The central topic of this article is the social dimension in cultural-historical psychology using González Rey's cultural-historical theory of subjectivity. Since subjectivity has been a concept ill-defined in psychology, we hope to: 1) discuss a case study in a school, and 2) exemplify the heuristic value of the concept of social subjectivity proposed in González Rey's cultural-historical theory of subjectivity to understand the processes involved in innovation.

The recognition that both history and culture participate in the constitutive processes of human beings became a theoretical issue in Soviet psychology at the beginning of the 20th century, particularly in the works of Vygotsky, Rubinstein, Luria, and Leontiev. From this perspective, the cultural history of the constitution of humans is explained by the fact that humans are immersed in cultural systems; their development is qualitatively different from other animals, breaking with the idea that psychic development was exclusively subordinated to our biological condition (Vigotsky, 2000).

From this standpoint, the Cuban psychologist, Fernando González Rey has developed epistemological and theoretical concepts that integrate a new quality exclusive to human processes, in which the symbolic processes integrate with the emotional processes, thus forming units of a new order: subjectivity. This conception alters the idea that the human psyche is a reflex of the environment. Here, the human psyche is understood as a system that generates realities in which it develops and shapes itself. As González Rey (2012) emphasises, the symbolic and emotional nature of individual and social processes in cultural conditions means a new moment in the functioning of the human psyche.

A cultural-historical theoretical perspective of the theory of subjectivity by González Rey (1997, 1999a, 1999b, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015) attempts to generate intelligibility about the multiple life expressions of humans by focusing on subjective production, legitimising the differences and the singularity among individuals and social scenarios. It is worth mentioning that González Rey has acknowledged that the term subjectivity has already appeared in the field of psychology with other theoretical representations associated principally with a mentalist and individualistic conception. For González Rey, the topic of subjectivity aroused suspicion of idealism, which impeded furthering the legacy of Vygotsky and Rubinstein (González Rey, 2013). González Rey (2015) affirms:

Vygotsky and Rubinstein, in their more creative moments, advanced the definition of a new type of psychological concept understood not as intra-psychic entities or energies but as systems in process with the continuous interweaving between consciousness and human action (p. 7).

In the historical movement, innovations of modernity and modern science in the 20th century brought about an epistemological reflection that recognised science as a human production. This highlighted, among other important topics, subjectivity as a topic for the social sciences. Such advances on the topic have implied epistemological reflections on the principles that guided its understanding and research.

As González Rey (2015) suggests, “from my point of view, this proposal cannot work without developing new concepts that allow for the advancement of the dialectical relationship between social and the individual subjects” (p. 8). In the science of psychology, social aspects, understood as the environment in which the individual develops, were not differentiated from their

constitutive dimension. Furthermore, cultural symbolic processes have not been studied in human processes, converting them into objects for other sciences. These ideas led to theoretical representations that based themselves on the applicability of descriptive forms for dealing with culture without coherently expressing the relations, processes, and mutual involvement of social and individual categories.

Subjectivity, social subjectivity and subjective configurations

From a theoretical point of view, subjectivity is a macroconcept of the cultural-historical theory of subjectivity, revealing itself in an ontological space of exclusively human phenomena. It is the central category that defines the theory and its conceptual divisions. Subjectivity, as defined by González Rey is totally different to the subjectivity that reflects an essentialist quality, of the private nature of the individual. In this theory, subjectivity is the symbolic and emotional production of a lived experience which characterises both individual and social human processes (González Rey, 2013). Subjectivity is at the same time production and organisation. It is defined by the complex ways in which the psychological processes organise themselves and work in individuals who are culturally and historically constituted, and in the social spaces of their practices and ways of life (González Rey, 2005b).

Subjectivity is a system that is configured by a chain of senses and meanings related to the individual and the social field, reciprocally constituting social subjectivity and individual subjectivity. It represents a new type of ontological definition of the human psyche, as a complex system that goes beyond the psyche functions as a system of individual adaptation. From an epistemological perspective, subjectivity does not claim to be a complete representation of human reality. It does, however, produce intelligibility in terms of individual and social reality. The concept of subjectivity therefore explains why subjectivity is not a copy of the reality but appears to be a system in which experiences are organised.

Considering the concepts of the theory, social subjectivity can be understood as emotional and symbolic production that constitutes a new systemic condition of social organisation in which all human practices are organised. Individual subjectivity then becomes a production that is configured at the personal level as the expression of the individual singular experience (González Rey, 2007).

In turn, subjective sense is a central category of González Rey's theoretical work that is inspired by Vygotsky's category of sense. This category moves away from the immediate sense-word relationship proposed by Vygotsky and emphasises the relationship between symbolic and emotional processes. It is defined by the inseparable unity of symbolic and emotional processes in the course of the experience where the emergence of these processes evokes the other without becoming its cause. As the subjective sense takes many forms, and it is an inseparable relationship between subjective sense and subjectivity as a system, the configuration results from the process that integrates complex emotional wholes related to social and cultural life (González Rey, 1999b, 2011).

The integration of both individual and social subjectivity allows us to understand that the social and historical experience of individuals and groups is expressed in the psychic organisation of a person. This makes it possible to explain how the actions of individuals have a concrete impact and promote new processes of transformation in their ways of life and social organisation. In this

way, it is possible to understand the inseparable character of individual and social subjectivity, demonstrating that individual subjectivity acts as an essential element of social subjectivity, just as individual subjectivity is at the same time made up of different social and historical processes of subjectification.

As a system in process, subjectivity has a generative character: it develops, reveals changes, and involves singular experiences of individuals, groups, institutions, and societies. We conceive social subjectivity and individual subjectivity as systems that include contradictions, ambiguities, and reciprocal tension.

The recognition that subjectivity is expressed both socially and individually is what allows us to see the relationship between social and individual subjectivity in a new light. As González Rey suggests (2005b), social processes are no longer seen as external to individuals or as mere factors of influence. They have become part of a complex system, “social subjectivity of which the individual is constituted by it but is also a constituent” (p. 202).

In these terms, understanding social subjectivity allows us to go further than a generic and vague definition of society, which does not limit itself only to context (González Rey, 2012). Therefore, social aspects are not supra-individual, existing outside individuals (González Rey, 2008): it becomes linked to other symbolic systems and realities that are shaped by different processes of institutionalisation and actions of the subjects.

The principle of social subjectivity is that this is the way that the subjective senses and subjective configurations from different social spaces are integrated, forming a real system that can characterise the different social spaces, for instance, institutions, social organisations, and groups, among which we can highlight educational institutions, the family, the church, and companies.

The social subjective dimension characterises the systems of social relationships and is expressed by the subjective senses and configurations that make up the relationships of people who act and share a social and cultural space. Hence,

social subjectivity is the network of social subjective configurations within which the different social practices, activities, and institutional rules acquire subjective senses for those involved in the processes within social institutions and informal social organizations. Social relationships are, in turn, simultaneously organized within these subjective social configurations through different and often contradictory subjective senses (González Rey, 2015, p. 12).

Social subjectivity permeates all social spaces and scenarios and is configured subjectively in a unique and singular way in every social moment, as happens with individuals. These singular subjective configurations integrate the current and historical moment of the context in a unique, unrepeatable, and temporary subjective production (González Rey, 2013). The school scenario is considered one of the most important social scenarios in which we can understand social subjectivity, and analyse its role in education and human processes. This social space can be investigated by considering a school’s social climate, its beliefs, values, and representations of the society of which it is a part. Thus, the school setting is no longer seen as a universal and standard space, but a scenario where the relationships between people and groups, and the processes related to creativity and innovation can be studied.

The school as a scenario of research on social subjectivity and a space for creation and innovation

According to scientific literature, many theories have criticised the institution of schools, particularly the Sociology of Education, which focused mostly on the reproduction dimension of schooling. Scholars such as Illich (1973), Baudelot and Establet (1987), and Bourdieu and Passeron (2008) highlighted the reproduction function of the formal schooling process, demonstrating the interdependence of the educational processes on symbolic elements and on the socioeconomic order. However, the institution of school is not the direct reflection of social and cultural elements such as ideologies, values, behaviour patterns, and rituals. Schools are concrete spaces of subjective relationships and a creation of both individuals and groups. They reveal conflicts, tensions, breakdowns, and contradictions. By being a particular reality, their institutional norms and actions make them extremely complex social spaces (Boto, 2003; Lima, 2003). In the social subjectivity of an institution (González Rey, 2005b) aspects of social subjectivity of the largest social spaces emerge and are expressed in different ways, as well as the singular subjective processes generated by individuals who participate in this social space.

Currently, schools are being asked to transform, to generate alternatives and provide new experiences and pedagogical practices due to the accelerated production of knowledge and new technologies (Campolina & Mitjans Martínez, 2011). However, schools still appear to be a social field that does not favour creativity or innovation (Mitjans Martínez, 1999, 2002).

Nevertheless, it is necessary to acknowledge that there are experiences of educational innovation in schools. Important researchers in the field of innovation, such as Carbonell (2002), La Torre (1998), Rivas Navarro (2000), and Thurler (2001) define educational innovations as a process that involves intervention, decisions, and actions with a certain degree of intention and systematisation oriented towards a change in attitudes, ideas, culture, models, and pedagogical practices. These authors also acknowledge that innovative transformations are not limited to technical features and emphasise that the promoted changes are demonstrated as a process that involves and distinguishes the social actors in their school practices.

Taking into account that educational innovation involves school actors, the multiple ways of expressing social life, and contemplating important aspects such as the cultural and ideological conditions of the social system in which innovative actions emerge, we believe that the contributions of González Rey's cultural-historical theory of subjectivity allows us to understand the process of innovation by studying the production of subjectivities in the school.

Hence, the empirical study presented here studies the connection of different aspects, some of which already appear in the literature. Even so, these aspects have been studied little in terms of their diverse and multiple connections, which to us, seem essential to understand innovation from a complex perspective (Campolina & Mitjans Martínez, 2011). Thus, we hope to go beyond a fragmented perspective of innovation processes to understand how they are generated and how the subjective configuration of the school scenario is expressed in these processes.

Innovation is characterised as a process that is established within in the daily life of institutions and is produced by social and individual cases. On this understanding, in the process of innovation, representations, values, beliefs, and emotion are subjectified in different ways and they permeate the actions and interactions of the school actors. They involve dialogical processes and relations

that are configured in subjective processes of individuals and institutional groups that participate in innovative actions.

Method

Qualitative Epistemology and an empirical research case study

Qualitative Epistemology (González Rey, 1997, 1999a, 2005a) represents epistemological production and systematisation with important methodological considerations that allows us to research subjectivity in its ontological nature. It can be understood as an alternative epistemology, different to the hegemonic perspective oriented in great part towards empiricism and the epistemological principles of the natural sciences. In the field of the human sciences, for psychology and education, Qualitative Epistemology emerges to fulfil the needs of qualitative research that studies subjectivity.

As a first principle, it defends the constructive-interpretive nature of knowledge. This is seen as a form of production in which the theory and method coexist and recursively interact. (González Rey, 2005a). Empirical research represents the confrontation of the theory, which looks to generate new ideas and theoretical representations instead of attempting to corroborate *a priori* ideas. Hence, the theoretical model (González Rey, 2014) is built on the linking of empirical research, which means a production that seeks an intelligible understanding of a research problem.

The second principle is the dialogical nature of the research for the production of knowledge. The relationship between the researcher and participants are essential for the expression of subjectivity that is studied. The recognition of this dialogical nature rejects the idea of research as solely an instrumental act of the implementation of tools and reinforces the idea that research is not an isolated action of the researcher. Thus, this principle includes the dialogical character of interactions and the relationship between researcher and participants, which actively builds an expression and communication field that allow and encourage participants to express themselves in a singular way in the process, encouraging conversations and reflections. Moreover, the researcher monitors the process with initiative and creativity, mobilises resources that facilitate the expression of participants, and produces ideas and theoretical representations that result in the theoretical model of the research (González Rey, 2005a).

Singularity as a way to theoretical production is the third epistemological principle, which is one of the most innovative aspects of the theory and in opposition to the belief that empirical generalisations are more valid forms of knowledge of concrete reality. The production of theoretical models using singularity—related to individuals, groups or institution—has a special significance to generate zones of intelligibility on what is studied, which is an essential factor in the legitimisation of the knowledge that is produced.

In this article, we will demonstrate the principles of Qualitative Epistemology in the case study of an innovative educational institution in Brazil (Campolina, 2012). In general, what makes this case ideal for studying subjectivity and innovation is that innovative schools are not very common in Brazil or in many other countries, for that matter. Moreover, by taking into account the relevance of singularity as an essential part of the development of theoretical models on how social factors partake in innovation, our research is not oriented towards the corroboration of patterns or regularities. Rather it seeks to understand the multiple and singular configurations in diverse

interactive scenarios as a principal source for the constructive-interpretive process of developing a theoretical model for a research problem (González Rey, 2014). Thus, knowledge of the social subjectivity of the institution is of particular relevance for understanding the different processes that organise the social and individual life of people and groups that belong to it, especially in understanding the origin and existence of innovative processes in the institution.

The Brazilian school in this study was selected based on three criteria and on some preliminary information: 1) a higher Basic Education Development Index¹ than a majority of local schools; 2) the presence of various types of innovations in the school's Pedagogical Policies Project (PPP)²; and 3) indicators of the intention of implementing changes and the growth of the Innovation Project (lasting 11 years, from 2004-2015). This last criterion is an indicator of the Innovation Project's duration, which is related to the concept of innovation adopted in the research as a longitudinal, systematic process of change in schools.

This school is a state primary school and as such, is governed by the regulations of the Brazilian education system, which consists of nine years of basic education beginning from the years of early literacy (around age five). In 2011, there were 47 teachers and a school team comprised of the principal, 2 assistant directors, 10 assistants, and 663 students. Schoolteachers, other educational professionals, student teachers, and volunteers were linked to NGO projects.

The innovation at the school is characterised by: 1) the new pedagogical practices, for example, co-teaching among teachers, dividing students in two cycles of learning, which provided a flexible system of groups for different activities like career counselling and tutoring³; 2) the creation of routes of learning, systematised by objectives based on the content of didactic books and the adoption of new ways of evaluating learning; 3) the several ways in which the school actors participate in the management of the school (student and family assemblies, school council meetings, parent conversation groups); and 4) the physical changes in school spaces to cater for new pedagogical practices such as classrooms that were integrated into one big study classroom. This set of elements that characterise innovation in the school is what we call the Innovation Project.

Research tools

According to the principles of Qualitative Epistemology, the tools refer to all situations or resources that allow others to express themselves in the context of the relations that characterise the research (González Rey, 2005a). The tools allow us to produce indicators and create hypotheses about the social subjectivity of school in the Innovation Project. The tools included both spoken and written individual and collective expressions, as well as conversational dynamics (González Rey, 2005a), daily observations in school spaces and activities (e.g., classes, school meetings, student assemblies, pedagogical council), informal chats, open and written questionnaires, the analysis school documents (e.g., posters, newsletters), and the PPP.

Participants

As proposed in the Qualitative Epistemology approach, in this research there was a dialogical relationship between the researcher and participants that allowed their involvement in the tools used. Questionnaires were used with the teachers of the school ($n = 24$), a subset with the students' families ($n = 20$), and with students ($n = 21$) who participated freely in the research.

Informal conversations were held with different school actors during the 11 months in which the researcher (the first author) was at the school. Conversational dynamics took place with the following people: the school principal, the coordinator, teachers ($n = 4$), external collaborators of the Innovation Project ($n = 3$), and family members ($n = 3$).

Also, in the Qualitative Epistemology approach, the construction of a social scenario of research is emphasised, which is defined by the actions of the researcher with the aim of having the participants feel involved in the research. This favours the expression of subjectivity and therefore, the construction of indicators and hypotheses on the subjective processes of individuals and the social environment (González Rey, 2010).

In our research, the construction of a social scenario includes previous contact with the principal of the school, initial visits to the school, and immersion in the field. The progressive creation of an active and participative attitude was emphasised and contributed to an emotionally stimulating and communicative space, which led to the commitment of participants to the research project. Moreover, daily participation in the school during the fieldwork made it possible to get to know the school actors and their actions and experiences related to the Innovation Project.

Results and Discussion

The configuration of social subjectivity in an innovative educational institution

By understanding subjectivity as a production and expression defined by practices and discourse, committed inseparably to shared emotionality (González Rey, 2005b, 2007, 2010), we can understand the social subjectivity of the innovative school. We defined the configuration of social subjectivity by constructing indicators on our interpretation of the empirical material of our study, and in this way, built on and connected the hypotheses using the constructive-interpretive process that characterises the Qualitative Epistemology approach.

The organisation of the indicators for the construction of the hypothesis on social subjectivity in the school allowed us to create the following processes: 1) representations of the groups and school actors; 2) positive beliefs that transcend the school environment; 3) diverse communicative processes that emerge and organise the social life of the school; 4) guidance for actions of the school actors; and finally, 5) personal and individual positions of the school actors in the social subjectivity scenario. All five of these topics are integrated in the theoretical model we developed in the research regarding the constitution of social subjectivity as part of the innovative project. So the understanding of the subjective configuration of the school appears in the following constructions.

Representations of groups and school actors

In the Innovation Project, there were a set of representations of the school space as one open to incorporating new features, ideas, and practices. By studying the history of the school group members, we were able to establish that, before the implementation of the innovation, teachers and school employees were resistant to, and perceived the school community as, uncomfortable. The director and coordinator, based on the vision that the school is a public service in the community, insisted on the importance of the presence of the community in the school as fundamental for the support for innovation, debating extensively on this topic with teachers and

school employees. With the innovations implemented by the directors of the school and with the support of parents and teachers, new spaces for participation emerged.

Considering the constructive-interpretive process as a set of information, it was possible to produce indicators for the relationship between the community and the school. The new spaces that emerged were the school's council and frequent school parent meetings. These represented a subjective field of creative and collaborative discussion and decision-making since they marked the mobilisation of the community, together with the school team, to find solutions to problems that the school was experiencing. For example, the serious problems of absenteeism of teachers and conflict among students in the school. The information extracted from the conversation dynamics with the principal draws on this experience:

When I went to the school for the meetings that were every 45 days, it was a community, in some way, that was prepared to discuss, to think... That only happened because the community listened and began to attend. It was a small percentage of the school population but they all participated. (School principal, 2011)

In the subjective configuration, this representation of the openness of the school to incorporate new features, ideas, and practices, was linked to a positive emotionality, and in many situations, was related to the recent participation of the community. In understanding that social subjectivity is configured through the function of practices, values, beliefs, and emotionality shared by groups, it is important to point out that on the several occasions that the school organised meetings with members of the community, the emotional climate perceived was one of enthusiasm and satisfaction. This emotional climate could be identified by the researcher who participated in school events, in informal moments when people behaved in a caring way towards each other, with active participation in activities and verbal expressions of good moods and happiness. After the meetings and commemorative events, the participation of people, and the events that distinguished them, were always commented on and were the topic of conversation among students and teachers and the directors. This can be noted in a few comments that help us to illustrate the emotionality we refer to, such as, "Have you seen how many parents came?" (school principal, in a joyous and an enthusiastic tone because many parents showed up), or "not many parents came today..." (school employee, in a disappointed tone). This representation seemed to be sustained by an emotional base that was meant and felt as a desire for change in the school.

The information extracted from the conversational dynamics with the principal about the beginning of the implementation of the Innovation Project and the school council points to this dimension:

There were some people who were there (the school council) but they weren't political representatives of the school. But they were people who participated, who wanted to participate. They were, in a way, the ones who helped the school without knowing it. I think I wanted to participate in this community. (School principal, 2011)

Regarding the representations of the actors and group, it was also possible to construct indicators for another dominant representation in the area of the social subjectivity of the school. This is the dynamics of the daily school life and its way of functioning. Since the new format, the experiences of people were marked by constant movement in terms of the educational activities carried out by teachers, students, and management team members. Diverse information about daily situations allowed us to create indicators and hypotheses about the representation of the school as a dynamic

space that involved the flow of activities and experiences, characterising the relationships and interactions among school actors. For instance, students and teachers interacted in a flexible way and the different group modalities introduced by the Innovation Project, for instance, the study groups and tutorials, involved a variety of situations of coexistence, communication, and activities.

The complementary projects developed by the school also contributed to these experiences, since everyone carried out many different activities in the school. Teachers' pedagogical meetings were also part of that dynamic as they discussed the work objectives of the projects. In these meetings, the emotional climate again was positive as they defined the participation and responsibilities of the teachers in complementary activities and field trips with students.

As González Rey (2005b, 2007, 2010, 2012) states, it is necessary to understand the elements of social subjectivity through interaction with concrete people who live and share the social context. The construction of the indicators and hypotheses allow us to argue that the positive representation of this dynamism produces a singular subjective scenario in the framework of the Innovation Project, which marks, with a sense that is also singular, the subjective processes of the school actors.

Positive beliefs that transcend the school space

We have also created indicators and hypotheses on social subjectivity related to the fact that members of the school community shared a positive belief about the educational work of the school, Emphasising the value of innovations that were implemented. These beliefs are related to the emotionality of the groups that are part of the initial implementation phase of innovation. We demonstrated that, by linking innovation strongly to the history of the teachers and families' participation, the dimension of feelings and the role of emotions becomes an important part of the innovation process.

We understand that this is an element that is configured subjectively, and which expands to other social areas, for example, the university and the professional community. It is worth mentioning that some teachers and university student teachers who came to work at the school wanted to work on the Innovation Project. In several school council meetings, parent assemblies, and parent conversation groups, it was possible to identify actions and discourse that allowed us to create indicators for the value of the school, for example, the commendation of some of its characteristics.

We legitimise our understanding of subjective senses constructed in the school scenario, whose emphasis is on the aspects related to emotionality and its impact on the subjects' field of action. In an illustrative episode with a group of 20 students, the students in the midst of enthusiasm and indignation because a group of students hadn't done their homework, argued strongly that everyone should value the people involved in the Innovation Project, using expressions like "people who shed their blood for this school".

As subjective senses appear in multiple forms (González Rey, 2005b, 2007, 2010), another source for the construction of indicators and hypotheses are the visual and written productions of individuals and groups. It is important to highlight the large number of photos that were shared in the monthly newspaper produced by a group of parents of the school. These photos showed, for example, school students during the breaks, voluntary work by parents, and school celebrations.

These productions have helped us create important indicators for these subjective senses of social subjectivity.

It is important to note that many school actors acknowledged the Innovation Project as an experience that generated pride. It was possible to be in situations in which students commented on the innovations at the school with enthusiasm. In conversations with the researcher, a group of students asked about her presence at the school. After clarifying the objective was to study the innovations at the school, the students claimed that their school was unique and could not be replicated anywhere, a comment that was echoed by other students. For our construction of the role of emotion in the subjective configuration, there seemed to be a feeling of belonging among many of the school actors.

Diverse communicative processes that emerge and organise the social life of the school

In the complex system that shapes social subjectivity, communication appears as an essential part of its configuration. Communication practices that stand out in this social scenario seem to be a symbolic-emotional field that transcend the relationship of teachers with the families of the students. They too are linked with a positive value to this practice.

On the topic of communicative expressions, we can highlight diverse communicative strategies that were used among the different groups in the institution. In team meetings (the conversation groups with teachers, students and families, and the assemblies and councils), as well as the production and distribution of the monthly newsletters, communicative practices expressed a flexible, communicative production among school actors. From a set of information used in the constructive-interpretive process, especially daily observations in school spaces and activities, it was possible to produce indicators about the communicative practices. To illustrate this, we can mention as an example the situation observed in the classrooms in which teachers spoke to each other and planned creative and dynamic student activities together. It was possible to see they were negotiating and organising activities together, helping each other when there were conflicts among students.

Another element of communicative production that led to the creation of indicators and hypotheses on social subjectivity was the positive emotional climate in the teacher's classrooms. The atmosphere was informal and often cheerful; teachers exchanged information and were in constant discussion. Our hypothesis was that an interactive space was created, in which emotion was expressed by satisfaction and commitment to school activities. Dialogue and discussion were the main communicative practices used. This was encouraged and each group demonstrated it had developed its own expressions of the different viewpoints of the school actors. To illustrate this aspect, we have used the school's monthly newsletter:

On 22/02 we had the last of a series of meetings on the topic of violence and conflict in the school and the community. These meetings have helped families have the opportunity to exchange their ideas and feelings on the topic openly and fairly, as well as to broaden their perceptions on the reality of our community. The majority agree that more participation and interaction from parents are the most effective ways of preventing and minimising possible conflicts and violent situations (school's newsletter, 2011, p. 3).

In this way, different resources were used by the school actors as a way to communicate management resolutions, information about activities, and opinions from teachers, students, and

parents on varied topics. We organised this piece of information from the teachers' questionnaires (written tools) as part of our constructive-interpretive process, which refers to the emotional and symbolic importance attributed to communication, qualifying it as a valuable component for the diverse school actors. This information is from one of the teachers who participated in the Innovation Project since its beginning in 2004:

The Innovation Project makes the need to share experiences and knowledge evident. It is impossible to think of learning without this change, when I think about how I used to work before joining the Project, I think about the loneliness and the habit of hiding in a class, just me and the students. Our Project is innovating because it makes our questioning and changes part of our daily routine. It is the right to have a space and a voice. (Teacher, 2011)

Finally, our hypothesis is that in the subjective dimension, communicative practices are a principal component and have an important role in the configuration of social subjectivity in the Innovation Project, as well as simultaneously creating the individual subjectivities of the actors.

Guidance for action of school actors

The willingness to cooperate with educational innovation emerges as a guide for the subjectified action in the social field and is expressed through the participation in the Innovation Project. Pedagogical practices in the curriculum, and which characterise the school, seemed to require teachers with unwavering dedication. The different school situations which deal with the participation of distinct school actors point towards this dimension, which indicates that this component encompasses diverse social spaces that make up the educational innovation that is being researched.

In the interactive dynamics, we highlight teachers' intentional actions in the search for cooperation and mutual support in carrying out and participating in diverse school activities and events. In the pedagogical meetings, emotionality stood out, combined with the willingness to participate, marked by a mixture of enthusiasm and pride, emphasising even more the sense of positivity, which is a characteristic of subjectivity in this school. From this point of view, the intentional search of new possibilities and solutions is central for the implementation of the Innovation Project. In the scientific literature, processes involved in innovation include an intellectual dimension and an emotional dimension (Farias, 2006). In that sense, for La Torre (1998), it represents a process of internalization of the principles that inspire innovations.

In our case study, the history and participation of the groups involved in the innovation process started to commit the actors to become involved in the actions of cooperation that emerged from the different initiatives from students, teachers, and families. It is important to highlight that innovation emerged from the participative actions of school actors and their conscious intention to contribute to the Innovation Project. To demonstrate these aspects, which were part of our constructive-interpretive process on the configuration of social subjectivity, we have used information about values from the school's PPP: "the objective of the project is a collective commitment with the aim of all agents becoming more involved in the cultural and personal improvement of all" (school PPP, 2005, p. 2).

We have analysed that, in the network of symbolic and emotional processes that make up the subjective senses, conscious, unconscious, and intentional aspects are all interrelated (González

Rey, 2005b, 2010). In an integral way, subjective senses that are produced have been created by the participative nature, which in turn have been created in the history of the groups, producing in this way part of the social subjectivity of the school.

Taking into account that subjective elements are not seen directly in specific behaviour, but are expressed in the way people think and feel, we decided to use information which helps us develop indicators on the subjective production that is expressed in the willingness to act and to cooperate. Situations are experienced subjectively and they produce very diverse subjective senses in the school actors. These are only some samples of the information extracted from the parent and teacher questionnaires, which contributed to our constructions of the different subjective expressions related to the element of configuration of social subjectivity of the school that we are analysing:

I think I actively participate and I am committed to the decisions adopted by the collective and management. I think it is an enriching experience. It isn't easy, every day is a new challenge, but it is worth it, both on a professional and personal level. (A teacher's answer to the questionnaire)

I am an admirer, collaborator and teammate. Due to my personal commitments, I cannot make systematic commitments, but I am committed and accompany some projects. (A student's mother's answer to the questionnaire).

Another guidance for action that configures subjectivity is the process of continuous learning, which gave sense to the daily actions of the school actors, particularly to teachers. This way of learning is characterised by the personalised construction of knowledge, as Mourão and Mitjans Martínez (2006) point out, involving meaning-making processes and the creation of new knowledge, in which emotion plays a generative role in learning. Here is an example that illustrates one of the indicators we created about learning by the school actors. This information is by the father of an ex-student who was the president of the school council when the Innovation Project began:

When we began to apply the Project, we learned so much, when we put it into practice we realised that the changes that had to be made, in a year people had assimilated the changes, we had implemented so much, we made the necessary adjustments. (conversation with a father, 2011)

Hence, we sustain that teachers, members of management and coordination, and students, learned to act in the Innovation Project, guiding the actions to learn how the new characteristics that were implemented functioned. Moreover, we consider that learning is produced in a complex way. It involves contradictions and conflicts because the intention does not guarantee that the educator will passively accept and feel good about a new situation or pedagogical tool. It is interesting to point out that some of the teachers who have been at the school since its implementation and those who arrived later, mentioned the dynamic of the actions that combined learning about the activities and pedagogical devices, and at the same time, the emotional processes of confrontation with the practices of traditional teaching.

For the indicators created, we hypothesised that the emergence of a process of awareness was necessary, traversed by a process of creation of subjective sense that involves social and individual subjectivity.

Personal and singular positioning of school actors in the social subjectivity sphere

In the history of the Innovation Project and its implementation, we saw the creation of alternatives that arose through the positioning of the principal and some teachers as active and reflective teachers (González Rey, 2005b). We also observed that in the interactions of teachers in collective moments, critical positions regarding pedagogical bases coexisted as they were not shared and subjectified by everyone in the same way.

Using a set of indicators, it was possible to construct a hypothesis about the subjective production that revealed teachers' contradictory feelings about innovation in the school. In the functioning of social subjectivity, we constructed a hypothesis about the presence of subjective senses that express antagonistic positions. The perception of members of management, coordination, and some teachers of the diverse positions on the Innovation Project generated doubts and questions about what motivated some teachers to continue to stay at the school without participating fully in the activities for innovation. For example, this piece of information from a school employee who participated in the implementation of the Innovation Project from the beginning helped us create an indicator expressing diverse positions on the participation in the Project and the emotionality implied in it:

The project provides opportunities for professional experience all the time, it gives us the freedom to choose and you can decide whether you take advantage of it or not, just as you can decide not to like it.

Another indicator for the construction of this subjective production that is expressed in the ambiguous feelings and perceptions of the motivations of professors was the information resulting from debates in the pedagogical council. In these spaces for the exchange of ideas on the functioning of the Innovation Project, there were discussions with some teachers, parents, directors, and collaborators, and when a teacher did not agree with some aspects of innovation they had to present alternative proposals to the school council to discuss them collectively.

Hence, we can say that, in the configuration of social subjectivity, subjective production in the concrete life of the school cannot be characterised by a hegemonic collective participation, in which all actors participated with the same degree of intensity and acceptance. That is why our construction indicates that there are different levels of participation in the Innovation Project that seem to be connected to the degree of identification with the innovation proposal.

In the literature on educational innovation (Farias, 2006; La Torre, 1998; Thurler, 2001), the group of school actors are considered essentially as a collective, which indicates the tendency to treat the condition of the collective group in a standardised way. Our research allowed us to understand how apparently contradictory subjective elements can coexist in the configuration of subjective group systems, once these reveal an intense processing, and also how the contradictory processes are expressed in the Innovation Project.

Final Remarks

The objective of this article was to present a case study of innovative in a school and illustrate how social aspects, in their subjective dimension, participate in educational innovation. Here we synthesise the theoretical model of the social subjectivity of the school. The aspects we mentioned above lead us to reflect on the set of these organised processes that configure the social

subjectivity of the school in connection with the Innovation Project. This means arguing that the paths derived from the innovation involved the configuration of a singular subjective system of the social field that is expressed in terms of practices, beliefs, representations, and individual and group life experiences of the school actors.

We would like to highlight that the category of social subjectivity has helped us understand that educational innovation is configured in a unique way in the social and individual subjective dimension. It has also been possible to identify individuals in the social dimension according to their specific conditions and personal history. In this sense, we understood how some school actors, for example, the principal and some teachers, with their singularity as individuals, occupied a special place in the implementation of innovation and in the social subjectivity that has allowed the Innovation Project to continue. The interconnectedness of individual subjectivities and social subjectivity is revealed. In the words of González Rey (2012):

An important aspect of the concept of social and individual subjective configuration is that through this concept we explain the unit of symbolic diversity of human life that is organised by societies singularly cultural, in its subjective configuration of people, as well as the social scenarios in which their practices and relationship systems take place, and that represent spaces in which they shape their identities (p. 182; our translation from Portuguese).

We advance in the understanding of the interpenetration and mutual dependency of the innovative processes and the configuration of subjectivity in the school scenario that integrates the social with the individual. We believe that the study of the configuration of social subjectivity in the school gives visibility to a complex process of mutual creation and constant development of subjectivity in its condition of configuration in process. Thus, we emphasise the importance of González Rey's cultural-historical theory of subjectivity, particularly the concept of social subjectivity, which has allowed us to generate intelligibility about the complexity of educational innovation as an object of study of psychology and education.

Finally, we consider it is fundamental to highlight that the understanding of the place of social subjectivity in education leads us to question the naturalisation of the processes related to school, and it provides us with the opportunity to understand the different moments of the educational process, taking into account the processes of meaning and sense generated at other levels of the social fabric.

In this theoretical perspective, the institution of school, in terms of its created social subjectivity, no longer appears as an isolated moment. Its subjectivity is produced in confrontation with elements of the social subjectivity of the most complex social systems in which the school institution participates (González Rey, 2005b, 2005b, 2010, 2013).

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¹ The Basic Education Development Index (*Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica* [IDEB]) is the quality indicator of education in the country, which establishes goals for the education system. The indicator is calculated on the data of

the school flow, the pass rate of students in school, and the academic performance in grand scale evaluations carried out in the federal units (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira, 2012).

² In Brazil, the PPP is a document that details the objectives, instructions and actions of the educational process that is to be developed in the school. It includes the legal requirements of the educational system and the needs, intentions and expectations of the school community. (Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2004).

³ Tutoring takes place with one teacher and a group of 20 students. The tutor's task is to supervise the period of students' development during their school years and provide individual accompaniment to each student. The groups meet on a weekly basis, on a specific day to work on activities guided by the tutor.

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