
The Cuban *pañoleta* and standardization in educational institutions
La *pañoleta* cubana y la normalización en las instituciones educativas
A *pañoleta* cubana e a normalização nos estabelecimentos de ensino

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Abstract

The objective of the research is to analyze how the normalization of the individuals in Cuba is expressed through the meanings and rituals associated with the *pañoleta*, considered as a fetish, within the context of the Cuban primary educational institutionalism. The research seeks to understand how fetishes, as well as the rituals and myths surrounding them, contribute to the formation of political subjectivity, construction and normalization of individuals within the educational system, focusing specifically on primary education where the process of disciplining begins. Through a qualitative and interpretative methodology, the relationship between the concepts of normalization and control according to Foucault's perspective and the Cuban educational reality will be examined by means of a bibliographic review and interviews to teachers and elementary school principals. The final objective is to obtain a deeper understanding of how rituals and symbols, such as the *pañoleta*, influence the shaping of identity and adherence to norms within the Cuban educational context, which could provide relevant information for the analysis of the ideological discourse present in Cuban primary schools. In addition to the bibliographical review on the subject, qualified informants are interviewed to correlate the theoretical and historical aspects to the particular realities of teachers and principals of educational institutions in exercise for the last 20 years.

Keywords: Cuban *pañoleta*, standardization, disciplining, educational rituals, Foucault.

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Resumen

El objetivo de la investigación es analizar cómo se expresa la normalización de los sujetos en Cuba a través de los significados y ritos asociados con la *pañoleta*, considerada como un fetiche, dentro del contexto de la institucionalidad educativa primaria cubana. El estudio busca comprender cómo los fetiches, así como los rituales y mitos alrededor de los mismos, contribuyen a la formación de la subjetividad política, construcción y normalización de los individuos dentro del sistema educativo, centrándose específicamente en la enseñanza primaria donde se inicia el proceso de disciplinamiento. A través de una metodología cualitativa e interpretativa, se examinará la relación entre los conceptos normalización y control según la perspectiva de Foucault y la realidad educativa cubana, mediante la revisión bibliográfica y entrevistas a maestros y directores de escuelas primarias. El objetivo final es obtener una comprensión más profunda de cómo los rituales y símbolos, como la *pañoleta*, influyen en la conformación de la identidad y la adhesión a las normas dentro del contexto educativo cubano, lo que podría proporcionar información relevante para el análisis del discurso ideológico presente en las escuelas primarias de Cuba. Además de la revisión bibliográfica sobre el tema se entrevistaron informantes calificados para correlacionar lo teórico e histórico a las realidades particulares de maestros y directores de instituciones educativas en ejercicio por los últimos 20 años.

Palabras clave: *pañoleta* azul cubana, normalización, disciplinamiento, rituales educativos, Foucault.

Resumo

O objetivo da investigação é analisar como a normalização dos sujeitos em Cuba se expressa através dos significados e rituais associados à *pañoleta*, considerada como um fetiche, no contexto das instituições de ensino primário cubanas. O estudo procura compreender como os fetiches, bem como os rituais e mitos que os envolvem, contribuem para a formação da subjetividade política, construção e normalização dos indivíduos no sistema educativo, centrando-se especificamente no ensino primário, onde se inicia o processo de disciplinarização. Através de uma metodologia qualitativa e interpretativa, será analisada a relação entre os conceitos de normalização e controle, segundo a perspectiva de Foucault, e a realidade educativa cubana, através de uma revisão da literatura e de entrevistas com professores e directores de escolas primárias. O objetivo final é obter uma compreensão mais profunda da forma como os rituais e símbolos, como a *pañoleta*, influenciam a formação da identidade e a adesão às normas no contexto educativo cubano, o que poderá fornecer informações relevantes para a análise do discurso ideológico presente nas escolas primárias cubanas. Além da revisão bibliográfica sobre o tema, foram entrevistados informantes qualificados, a fim de correlacionar os aspectos teóricos e históricos com as realidades particulares de professores e diretores de instituições educacionais em exercício nos últimos 20 anos.

Palavras-chave: Lenço azul cubano, normalização, disciplinamento, rituais educativos, Foucault.

Introduction

The Cuban child knows he must be good to get his *pañoleta*. This triangle of blue cloth is the beginning of the assimilation of the Cuban educational institutionalism. This child is not aware of this discourse and neither are his parents, who also wore a *pañoleta*. Every child receives a *pañoleta*, but, in some way, each child feels that he or she has earned it.

The *pañoleta* (Cabrera, 2015), like the bust and the flag, are protagonists in the Cuban educational narrative. They are fetishes, if it is understood that a fetish is an object of worship (Malinowski, 1995) that is granted magical qualities that are not proper to the physical condition of the object (Bueno, 1989), (Poullion, 1970), (Eliade, 1973). Fetishes, whether religious, sexual or cultural, cannot be understood outside their relationship with rites and myths. Rites are practices, paralogues (Gómez, 2002), around the object of worship and myths are discourses that naturalize this practice and its symbolic power. Fetish, myth and rite form a triad that shapes reality, in this case educational reality, and being discourse, they have no other objective than to naturalize a certain system of ideals and confirm the norm.

Lévi-Strauss (1979) argued that myths and rituals were not simply chaotic expressions of the imagination, but ordered structures. These social constructs are the concrete expression and product of cultures, which at the same time are expressed from within the concrete framework of social institutions. Culture is produced in human interaction within institutions, because the whole of society is institutionalized. This implies that social constructs, which are common to all societies, must consequently be common to all social institutions.

The naturalization achieved by discourse through its structures coincides with normalization as a process within and from the institutions that discourse. For example, the institutions called by Foucault (1989), institutions of abduction (school, factory, mental hospital, prison), have clear discourses (myths) around the concrete ritual practices that take place around cult objects (fetishes). The existence of these concretizes the normalization of the individuals within societies. This only happens in the concrete framework that has given rise to the fetish, so they do not function universally for all cultures and individuals, although they share characteristics.

The above raises a possible question: is control, described as a process in Foucault's work, expressed in the existence of certain rites, myths and fetishes in the educational context?

It is interesting to limit the analysis presented here to primary education, where disciplining and the construction of political subjectivity begins. The *pañoleta* is chosen as a concrete construct, as a fetish common to the whole Cuban educational institutionalism and the rites around this object, since it is the entrance ticket to the educational institutionalism in Cuba.

The question that guides the present research is: How is the normalization of the individuals expressed through the myths and rites around the *pañoleta* as a fetish, within the Cuban primary educational institutionalism? To answer it, the objective is to analyze the expression of the normalization of the individuals in Cuba, through the myths and rites around the *pañoleta*, as a fetish within the Cuban educational institutionalism.

Methodology

The present research has a qualitative approach, accompanied by an interpretative paradigm. A bibliographic review is carried out on the concepts involved in the question guiding the research and what is found is correlated with the opinions of the qualified informants. The text presented here is a reflective text, so it is also crossed by the life experience of the researcher and by the interest of finding out if the concepts of standardization and control (Foucault, 1989) are applicable to the Cuban school context and if this application includes as a clear vehicle the blue *pañoleta* fetish. The resulting analysis can open the door to analyze other symbols, artifacts and the myths and rites that surround them, in favor of carrying out an analysis of the Cuban ideological discourse spilled in primary schools through their processes and artifacts.

Throughout the analysis we go from Foucault's theory (1989) to the Cuban context and the opinions collected in the interviews to qualified informants, trying to understand the possible relationships or contradictions.

The qualified informants are individuals who participate in the Cuban educational process in primary education: teachers and principals. Five teachers and five principals of elementary schools were chosen on the basis of opportunity. All of them have been working for the last 20 years. The professors are from the areas of social sciences or humanities, specifically the civics subject, which is the one that has the objective of teaching Cuban students to be citizens.

The interview is conducted online, where the interviewees have the questions in advance and are assured that ethical requirements are met to respect all private information, vulnerabilities and security of these informants. The coding for qualified informants is numerical, so they are identified as follows: IM when it is a teacher informant, ID, when it is a school principal. After the letters, their position is indicated, IM (1,2,3,4,5) and ID (1,2,3,4,5).

Results

Standardization, the Cuban case

In *Surveiller et punir* (1975), Foucault analyzes the institutionalization of punishment and the emergence and development of what he calls the Disciplinary Society, which ultimately becomes the precursor to what Deleuze (1992) later terms the Society of Control. The disciplinary society is a consequence of the need to institute control in a horizontal and imperceptible manner. This occurs through the normalization and homogenization of individuals into a standard set by those in power.

Power is distributed in different ways throughout history within institutions and is closely related to the exercise of punishment and control over the bodies of those outside the norm.

In Foucault's theory (1975), control is exercised through normalization. He addresses previous stages: the exercise of control through torture and death, referred to as the Society of Torture and Punishment; and the emergence of institutions of punishment and restriction of freedom, such as the Stage of Discipline and Surveillance, focused on retaining bodies, reforming them, and reintegrating them into society.

In the disciplinary society, the institutions of enclosure, for example, the school, must control the body by normalizing it. A body within the norm does not commit a crime. In the Cuban case, a normalized body does not betray the system. That is why a person outside the system is a traitor, a deserter, a worm, unworthy of everything, even his family. One way to normalize is to standardize, that is why the institutions of confinement or sequestration use uniforms, because they are regularizing the body within the context of the particular institution. Uniforms for doctors, sick, prisoners and students, this is the norm that makes everyone equal before the exercise of the rule and institutional morality.

Being outside the norm does not necessarily imply an active and explicit positioning against the system. That is, it is not opposing, it is simply not belonging. This, which could be common and normal, i.e. within the norm, in many countries where both sides of the discourse and dialogue are included as normal, in the Cuban case is close to opposition and is understood as the famous "he who is not with us is against us" (IM3). Cuban institutional discourse is full of this type of premises that can be found in the speeches of Cuban leaders in which the limit of what is normal is determined by belonging to a certain ideological group. Now, in the case of institutions, how is this normalization exercised?

Normalization is not limited simply to establishing norms or rules of behavior, but implies a deeper process of social control and disciplinary power. This process is manifested through various social institutions, such as the family, the school, the justice system, among others.

Within the educational context, standardization is carried out through a series of disciplinary and control practices that mold the behavior of individuals to conform to the standards established by the dominant society or group. This dominant ideology is not necessarily the ideology of the state or government, although in the Cuban case it is (Ministry of Justice, 2019). In other societies who gestate and sustain the hegemonic ideology may be the market or certain elite groups. Even the ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 2008), with their diverse power relations, may be determining the type of content and discourse within school ecosystems. In educational institutions these practices include constant surveillance, evaluation and classification of students, as well as the imposition of norms of behavior and thought.

A clear example of normalization in educational institutions is the grading system. Through the assessment and grading of students based on their academic

performance, a hierarchy is established that rewards certain types of knowledge and skills while marginalizing others. This reinforces a homogeneous learning model that doesn't necessarily reflect individual capabilities or different ways of understanding the world.

Moreover, educational institutions also exert control through surveillance and discipline. The constant monitoring of students by teachers and the imposition of rules and sanctions for behaviors considered deviant or inappropriate contribute to normalizing certain patterns of behavior, where there is an exercise of determining the norm and rewarding it.

From Foucault's (1989) perspective, educational institutions are standardization devices that exercise power and control over individuals, molding their behaviors and thoughts to conform to established social norms. This raises important questions about individual freedom and the role of education in the reproduction of power and domination structures in society. Standardization is concretized, in Foucault's work, in elements of enclosure, distribution of space, control of activity, hierarchical surveillance and standardizing sanction.

Therefore, institutionality, be it educational, penitentiary, cultural, political, in its normalization of the individual, has the function of creating a docile, submissive body, which can be transformed and perfected. Obviously, this is not a process that always takes place calmly, nor does it have the same level of influence on all individuals, which is why, even when all individuals go through similar normalization processes in institutions, the result is different if these individuals have elements of context that exert a certain influence and support the understanding of their own processes. When contexts put the normalization process under stress, the tendency is for the individuals to question it, often without really understanding the power, mechanisms or relationships behind it. Sometimes it is assumed that the exercise of political power and the transmission of ideology happens in explicit and abrupt ways, in politically dense discourses. The reality is that ideology is transmitted in a hidden way in texts that do not appear to be ideological or that are part of the framework of the ideological apparatus of the state (Althusser, 2008). In this power game, the discourse constructs fetishes and concrete rites to transmit the norm and apply it without the regulated being aware of this.

In the educational context, a fetish is an object of worship or adoration, which doesn't have to be physical and tangible; it can be a concept. This is elevated through certain discourses and rites that grant them symbolic power. These are expressed more clearly in the "empirical culture of the school" (Escolano, 2020, p. 12). For example, standardized tests or school uniforms could be considered fetishes within school contexts, as they are objects charged with meanings beyond their practical function, and around which rituals and discourses are constructed to reinforce their importance in the educational system.

Associated rites are ceremonial acts or practices around these fetishes. Some examples could be self-study, exam preparation, graduation ceremonies, or even the way certain subjects are taught in educational institutions. In the Cuban context,

political events within educational institutions are abundant. Regarding uniforms and accessories, rites accompany everything from the purchasing process, the first wear, to their care, etc. These rites not only reinforce the importance of fetishes in the educational context but also contribute to their normalization by establishing them as accepted and desirable practices within the educational system.

On the other hand, myths related to educational fetishes are discourses that justify their existence and give them a meaning beyond their apparent function. For example, the myth that standardized exams are an objective measure of knowledge or the myth that school uniforms promote equality among students. These myths contribute to naturalizing educational fetishes by presenting them as integral parts of the educational system and as something that must be accepted and respected by all participants in the educational process. In the Cuban case, the discourses accompanying fetishes are always political in nature: one must be a good student because a good student serves the revolution.

Taken together, fetishes, myths and rites in the educational context form a system that contributes to the normalization of certain practices and concepts within the educational system. By presenting these fetishes as objects of worship and endowing them with magical qualities through rituals and discourses, their symbolic power is reinforced and their existence within the educational system is justified, thus contributing to the reproduction of the dominant norm and ideology in society.

The socialist state dominates all channels, institutions, resources and relationships, therefore, the narrative and discourse on the use of space, the limits of freedom and the body. The normalizing discourse was very effective on an island, with no access to the internet and no possibilities of travel until the 2000s.

The Cuban state knew how to create, early on, a panoptic society, where everyone observes everyone and no one knows who is the denouncer. Neighborhood organizations, called *Comités De Defensa De La Revolución* (Committees for the Defense of the Revolution), are created with the purpose that neighbors watch and denounce everything out of the norm. This is rewarded with gifts and power, producing an underworld of anonymous denunciations, penalties, confinement and sanctions. This is also reproduced in the educational institutions, with specific organizations such as the Pioneers Organization, Student Federations, Student Brigades, etc.

The Constitution of the Republic (National Assembly of People's Power, 1997) states that organizations like these incorporate students into "the tasks of building, consolidating, and defending the socialist society" (1997, p. 7), meaning their function is to normalize subjects within the socialist ecosystem. The physical expression of belonging to pioneer organizations is the blue scarf (*pañoleta*).

The Cuban educational structure controls the time of institutionalized subjects. Within each level, time is distributed so that the subject has the whole day occupied with classes or standardized activities. Primary school runs from 6 to 12 years old, from 8 am to 4:20 pm. Within this timeframe, they receive instruction (Spanish, mathematics, biology, geography, history); indoctrination (civics, military preparation); and body control (physical education, labor education, plastic education).

Time control is accompanied by space and subjectivity control. The Cuban school is structured around a courtyard, with its bell or buzzer indicating when an activity begins or ends, with solemn acts such as standing up when a teacher enters the classroom (IM4), raising hands to ask questions (ID4, ID2, IM5), maintaining silence, having adult accompaniment (IM3, IM1), or an older student to go to the courtyard, have lunch, or leave and enter the school.

Added to this are the hierarchical structures that decide what is normal. The principals interviewed for this research raise as an aspect that unifies the issue of hierarchical structures the fact that some children have specific responsibilities, such as detachment leaders (ID1, ID3). Calling the classroom structure a detachment leads to the meaning of military structure and of children as soldiers.

The body-object articulation, also in Foucault's theory, can be understood as a body-fetish relation. This is clear and regulated, sometimes by regulated issues, published in murals, so that no one forgets the offenders and the normal. The murals, says IM5, "highlight the good ones", the normal ones, and remind the norm through the presentation of patriotic anniversaries, articles of regulation, etc.

To be part of this system, the entrance ticket is the neckerchief, so it would not be possible to access this game of control, power and normalization without it.

The power to name the norm and the subject.

Cuban children receive the symbolic burden, upon starting primary school, through concepts anchored in history and politics. According to the interviewed informants, concepts related to the scarf include commitment, patriotism, honesty, integrity, pioneers, new pines, succession, continuators, *Moncadistas*, anti-imperialist, etc. The concept, name, or title is accompanied by belonging and vice versa. The construction of subjectivity (who they are), according to Foucault (1989), is linked to educational normalization.

The expression "new pines" relates to a discourse by Martí (1891), urging political alignment to achieve Cuban independence, when he said "..., I saw ... arise, around the black trunks of fallen pines, the joyful clusters of new pines: That's us: new pines!" (p. 2). In this call, the physical body of the subject, in this case the child, transforms, ceasing to be to become.

Being *Moncadistas* is another symbolic value that comes with receiving the *pañoleta*. The Moncada (Cubadebate, 2023) was a military barracks attacked in the 1950s and led to the final offensive in 1959. It is called the "small engine that started the big engine". *Moncadistas* are admirable because they achieved victory against the common enemy. Being a *Moncadista* is a source of pride, so obtaining the *pañoleta* (relation of the body with the object) is also a source of pride.

The symbolic load of names, titles and slogans is vital for the Cuban system, where the individual spends his whole life within political organizations. The political organizations pass on to the individual, and each one puts a bit of norm in him.

The political burden as normalization

Not having the scarf seems to not be an option. "There are few cases, mainly children from Jehovah's Witness families, who do not receive it by their own decision" (ID2). Not receiving the scarf means not being a pioneer (the symbolic burden of being one is limited), not being able to enter the Pioneers Palace (access to the space is restricted), or participate in contests (access to prizes is limited).

Immediately this child is an outcast, not liked by his peers, not invited to groups, birthdays, does not receive recognition. He is isolated (IM1), because he is outside the norm, at least that part of the norm, because he is still part of the school structure, distribution and hierarchies. A child without a *pañoleta* is a suspicious child, the son of a traitor, the son of a worm (an epithet given to Cubans who were outside the system, against the system or in dissidence).

Non-participation in the scarf imposition ceremony and the non-use of the attribute (that is, not joining the pioneer organization) entailed, among other consequences, the daily burden of a stigma that can only be explained by the existence of a social convention - a majority (con)viction - that "the right thing", "the natural thing", "the desirable thing" for any Cuban school-age child was to be, live, and feel like a pioneer. (Cabrera, 2020, p. 186)

The entire discourse surrounding the acquisition of the scarf is marked by political considerations. Ché (Guevara, 1965) said: "The fundamental clay of our work is youth, in it we deposit our hope and prepare it to take the flag from our hands" (p. 12). It's clay, meaning it's moldable, so the system can make the vase it wants, the sculpture it prefers.

The scarf is received as a decoration, it is the testimony that you will already belong to the organization. This organization aims to develop interest in study and a sense of social responsibility... work habits, knowledge, and pride in relevant events in Cuban history and admiration for heroes and martyrs (Cruz, 2009). In addition to "promoting moral qualities such as a sense of honor, modesty, courage, and solidarity. (National Assembly of People's Power, 1997)"

The scarf is blue for first grade, red for fourth grade (IM5). It is tied around the student's neck and must be worn whenever in school with the uniform. Without the scarf, you cannot enter the school. The official Cuban press (Cubadebate, 2019) agrees that putting on the scarf is the most important act of primary school. The scarf ties you to the school and identifies you as part of a whole, with certain characteristics and responsibilities.

The rite of initiation and the rite of passage

The act of receiving the scarf takes place in October, during an event known as the Camilo-Che Day (Cubadebate, 2019), honoring two heroes of the Cuban Revolution (IM1, IM2, IM4, IM5). It is a public ceremony and a rite of initiation for first-grade students and a rite of passage for fourth-grade students. Older children pass the baton to the new students (ID4). Political leaders, party officials, public figures, family members, and teachers participate. This ceremony is commonly held in squares

with revolutionary monuments, arranged in such a way that the statue of a hero oversees the entire square in a panoptic surveillance. During this event, older children emphasize the joy of having and respecting the *pañoleta*, wearing it clean and correctly tied. Cabrera (2020) describes this ceremony very clearly:

The rite of passage for new pioneers is celebrated around October 8th, coinciding with the commemoration of each anniversary of Ernesto Guevara's death. Lined up in the schoolyard or sports area, first-grade children receive the scarf from a family member - usually their mother - and recite in unison: "On Martí's path. Guided by Fidel. For the homeland and socialism. Moncadistas. Always ready!" After this collective oath, each new pioneer also receives a gift from their parents. Next, the group pays tribute to the "martyrs of the Revolution" by placing flowers at a nearby bust or monument. In fourth grade, during the "attribute change" ceremony, the pioneer exchanges their blue scarf for a red one, renewing their commitment aloud: "I, pioneer José Martí, commit before my comrades and my country to be faithful to the revolution, fulfill my duties, study, work, and fight inspired by the example of the heroes of the homeland, to be worthy successors of the glorious Union of Young Communists and thus prepare ourselves to be the youngest quarry of our glorious Communist Party." (p. 42)

The use of older children, leaders, bearers of the importance of the fetish, alludes to the use of hierarchies as a form of discipline and normalization. There, in that discourse, from another child also wearing a scarf, the idea that if the symbol is respected they can soon access the red scarf, with which they finish primary school and become older (ID2), stands out. They only receive the red scarf when they are ready, and at that point, they can pass the blue one to other children (IM3). The symbol passes from one hand to another, with all the significance that this implies. Receiving the red scarf, which has the same color as the triangle on the national flag, the greatest symbol of the country's sovereignty, is a rite of passage.

Rites of passage are ceremonies that mark an individual's transition from one status to another within a society. These rituals, which include stages of separation, liminality, and reintegration, aim to consolidate the individual's identity, maintain social cohesion, and regulate behavior within the community. Through these rituals, significant changes in a person's life are celebrated and recognized, providing a sense of belonging and support during transitional periods. As Escolano (2020) suggests, "Rituals press for maintaining organic or formal solidarity among individuals who share their lives and interests in the institutions in which they coexist or interact" (p. 14).

In these acts of putting on the blue scarf (*pañoleta*), the national anthem is sung, which is a war anthem, and the national symbols are saluted. It is rehearsed for months beforehand, and children are taught several times how to stand (distribution of the body in space (Foucault, 1989), how to salute, with a military salute (respect for hierarchies (Foucault, 1989).

They are commonly arranged in an M shape, indicating the name of José Martí or the *Moncadistas*. The act is perfectly timed (microphysics of power (Foucault, 1972); it begins with the anthem, followed by political speeches, formations, testimonies, some patriotic artistic performance, and then the scarf is put on. After each child has the fetish on, they must recite a slogan, which they have been practicing

at home and at school: "Pioneers for communism, we will be like Ché." This is said in unison, and since it has been rehearsed so much, it is like a single voice, a roar that resonates the commitment of 7-year-old Cuban children to be like a hero of the revolution.

The phrase "We will be like Che" is used in various school contexts, not only in these extraordinary events in the lives of pioneers but also in morning assemblies, when visitors are received, because it is a declaration of commitment to the concept and the norm. "Every morning, Cuban pioneers re-enact the commitment of fidelity to a project they belong to, without any critical activity intervening or being able to be avoided" (Landrove, 2023, p. 320). Now, where does the discourse that is later anchored in the fetish and the ceremony, that is, the ritual, come from?

Many times it is difficult to trace the origin, but in the specific case of "We will be like Ché," it can be found in a speech by Fidel Castro:

If we want to express how we aspire our revolutionary combatants, our militants, our men to be, we must say without any hesitation whatsoever: Let them be like Ché! If we want to express how we want the men of future generations to be, we must say: Let them be like Ché! If we want to say how we want our children to be educated, we must say without hesitation: We want them to be educated in the spirit of Ché! If we want a model of a man, a model of a man who does not belong to this time, a model of a man who belongs to the future, I say from the bottom of my heart that this model, without a single stain on his conduct, without a single stain on his attitude, without a single stain on his actions, that model is Ché! If we want to express how we want our children to be, we must say with all the fervor of passionate revolutionaries: We want them to be like Ché! (Castro, 1967)

The slogan is clear and explicit; what is expected of these children, these pioneers, is that they are "made to fit the discourse" (Cabrera, 2020, p. 192), that they are communists, and the scarf around their neck is the commitment to be so. It is there where the fetish acquires, with more clarity, the power that has been conferred upon it in the discourse and also in the myth surrounding it. Wearing that scarf is an honor, it is what ties to the history of the country, and what is expected of whoever wears it is loyalty to the system.

Discussion

The constitution of the *pañoleta*, as a fetish, object of worship, materializes in the significance, use, and discourse surrounding it. Each exercise, word, act, concerning this fetish, conspires in the normalization of Cuban children within the system. Foucault's theory applies perfectly to the understanding of the relationships: ideology-discourse, body-object, fetish-rite in the Cuban case.

Responding to the initial question: How is the normalization of subjects expressed through the meanings and rituals around the *pañoleta* as a fetish within the Cuban primary educational institution? The answer is: The normalization of subjects is exercised, using the *pañoleta*, the meanings, and rituals around it, granting political symbolic significance, a sense of belonging to a common history, with a common enemy, constructing a popular imaginary of the symbol's naturalness and its meaning

from the community and family, structuring an epic narrative around the attribute, generating isolation for those who do not wish to participate, controlling access to the educational building, exemplifying and sanctioning those who do not want to participate in this dynamic.

The *pañoleta* as a pioneer attribute, part of the discourse on political norm and revolutionary morality, in the Cuban case, exerts its power in the regulation of the child's body and is a consolidated fetish in the Cuban school ecosystem. Understanding this, looking at it from this perspective, allows us to understand that the big question: what is education for and why, in the Cuban case, is closely linked to the normalization of subjects in the communist style, ideology, and pragmatics. Education in Cuba is to create subjects useful to the Revolution.

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