

Situation of the teaching of Marxism-Leninism today. Necessity of its improvement

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the authors address as a problemal issue the need to improve the teaching-learning process of the subjects that make up the Marxism-Leninism discipline. The results arrived at are the product of the application of scientific observation, interviews and surveys to professors and students, as well as of the historical and logical methods and the analysis and synthesis of reports and interventions of important authorities in the matter, with the purpose of identifying the present insufficiencies in this process and its causes to clarify the way to follow for its transformation.

Keywords: Marxism-Leninism; Teaching-Learning; Marti's Thought; Socialism.

Introduction

The Communist Party of Cuba, its main leaders, the José Martí Cultural Society, and others, have deployed an intense work aimed at creating awareness of the need to study Marxism in harmony with Cuban revolutionary thought. It is a Martian mandate from "Our America": to graft the world onto the republic, but the republic must be the trunk. Given the sovietization of the teaching of Marxism in Cuba, except for a brief

experience in the 60's, it is not until the end of the 80's that such a requirement begins to be fulfilled in pre-university. In higher education it began in 2002 with the Plan of Study "C" which was perfected with "D" and, although much more progress could be made, it was deepened in "E" based on the demands of the VI and VII Party Congresses and its First National Conference.

In the latter, the Communist Party of Cuba (2012) proposed, among its work objectives: to continue deepening the teaching and the ethical, humanist and anti-imperialist legacy of José Martí; to strengthen the conviction about the existence of a properly Cuban thought; to develop the Marxist-Leninist theory and to adapt its teaching to the present time. This means the need for its improvement, for which it is essential to characterize the state in which it is today, identify its shortcomings, the causes that determine them, the potential for its transformation and where to look to achieve it.

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the situation of the teaching and learning of Marxism-Leninism and its subjects in Cuban higher education, with a view to opening a space for debate on the causes that determine it.

Development

What are the features that characterize the teaching-learning process of the Marxism-Leninism discipline in Cuba today?

The authors consider that it was an extraordinary success of the Cuban Revolution not to have renounced the study of Marxism-Leninism after the collapse of socialism. It is a prioritized activity, as Delgado Díaz (2016) points out, in which methodologists, the national career commission and professors, have shown capacity for reflection, critical spirit, constancy, dedication and political commitment in the interest of perfecting their teaching-learning process. However, the results do not correspond to the effort made. The causes are many and varied, but the way in which it has been conceived suffers from deficiencies that, undoubtedly, together with other factors, have led to the current situation.

In a workshop on the teaching of Marxism-Leninism, Delgado Díaz (2016) makes an accurate diagnosis of the state it is in. He points out that, despite the prioritized attention

it has received at the university by political bodies and Ministries of Education and the willingness of teachers throughout the country to transform that process, the level of satisfaction of those involved, particularly students, does not always correspond to the effort made. Furthermore, he continues, "it is frequent to find in the student body confusion and rejection of the discipline or any of its subjects" (Delgado Díaz, 2016, p. 240).

In his doctoral thesis, one of the authors of this work points out that in the 1970s and early 1980s, a part of the students of the degree in education, in general, wished to go on to study and teach Marxism-Leninism. At present "not a few of the students preparing in this specialty, refuse to teach Marxist-Leninist theory and only wish to work on History" (Vázquez Labrada, 2017, p. 57).

Se deduce, señala Delgado, que "es muy probable que la contribución de la disciplina a la formación del profesional se esté afectando sensiblemente" (Delgado Díaz, 2016, p. 240). El hecho de que el esfuerzo realizado, dice, no siempre se corone con el éxito debe conducir al cuestionamiento de las causas que así lo determinan.

In explaining the nature of the problem, this author points out that, as the phenomenon is complex and the spectrum of causes that generate it is very varied, it is necessary to face it in the following order: to stop at the theoretical-general questions that concern Marxism as a science, then at Marxism-Leninism as a trend within Marxism and, finally, at its academic character. These are core aspects if it is really to be transformed. Although he relegates the pedagogical and didactic aspects to a third plane, he does not deny their importance, but they can only be solved from the solution of the above-mentioned questions. This is a logical deduction from the dialectic relationship between the scientific and academic character of any discipline.

The ups and downs that Marxist-Leninist science has undergone have depended to a great extent on its academic shocks. However, it should not be forgotten that teaching in Philosophy, Political Economy and Political Theory has been a key factor in the development of science in Cuba and that professors are called to play an essential role in the solution of theoretical problems.

Important idea exposed by Delgado Díaz (2016) is that the existing situation around the teaching of Marxism is a phenomenon of social character in which multiple factors intervene, that is, it should not be attributed only to the performance of teachers and

students, as it considers that they range from the historical-social context, through the historical and theoretical foundations that support it, to pedagogical and didactic aspects that are manifested in the curricular design and that are reflected, specifically, in the development of the teaching-learning process in the basic link.

As can be observed, one of the elements that must be considered in the study of the causes of the problematical object of analysis is the incidence exerted on it by the social-historical context from the 1990s to the present. In this regard, it is essential to take into account several elements: the impact of the collapse of socialism; the assault against Marxism that accompanied it; the demands of the process of updating the Cuban economic and social model; the change in U.S.-Cuba relations; Trump's return to the old policy and its maintenance by Biden. All of which has a negative impact, from the ideological point of view, particularly on the youth; to this is added the intensification of the subversive policy of Yankee imperialism aimed at restoring neoliberalism in Latin America and subverting the Cuban political system.

The disappearance of real socialism and the discredit to which it led the socialist ideal, has significantly affected the credibility of Marxism at the planetary level. After almost three decades, socialism is still not seen as the paradigm of development, nor has Marxism recovered from the crisis affecting it. Linked to this is the aggression with which it has been tried to destroy and make it disappear, whose scope has come to put its existence at stake, "even independently of its ability to self-regenerate" (Monal Rodríguez, 2015, p.171).

The crisis of Marxism is linked to its history, considers Monal (2015), but that onslaught attempts to dismantle it or, at least, to disarm it, without having succeeded. However, the right-wing process that ignores or opposes it has found in reformism, dogmatism, stereotyping, scholasticism and Stalinist vulgarization, as well as in the simplistic and reductionist way in which it has been tried to overcome it, an unconditional ally that has allowed it to damage fundamental theses of Marxism. In turn, the lack of a solid basis for its renewal has led to new dogmas and schemes.

Monal Rodríguez (2015) establishes a differentiation between vulgarization and dogmatism. There is a tendency, he says, to identify, univocally, vulgar Marxism with dogmatization, which is generated by three fundamental errors: the reductionist and simplifying tendency of theory; excessive confidence in knowledge and the enthronement of authorities, even illegitimate ones (which is typical of eclecticism).

Simplism, he continues, seems to be linked also to the lack of systematicity and the facile way in which theoretical solutions to the problems of reality are sought, as well as to intellectual fashion, understood as the tendency to assume concepts and ideas because they are the ones that abound at a given moment.

The possibilities of renovation of Marxism, the same author considers, demand a deep knowledge of its history and the re-reading of the classics in the light of the present moment, including Cuba. Although it was a success of the Revolution to continue teaching Marxism, Monal Rodríguez questions whether the nation will be able to renew it if it continues to renounce it or if it is intended to do so from the voluntarism and empiricism of contemporary sociology. Or what is the same, he points out, if "this is possible by accepting the thesis that historical materialism, and the theory of revolution attached to it, has definitely expired" (Monal Rodríguez, 2015, p.176).

Another important author in this analysis is Yanes Quintero, who, for the 1990s points out something of total actuality. Social studies in Cuba, he says, generally go through a moment of confusion around referents and paradigms. "Skepticism about the legitimacy of Marxist analysis and about how much excellence the professional preparation of our social scientists really possesses, has gained space in different media" (Yanes Quintero, July-Sep. 1995, p. 119).

This author agrees with Limia David that Marxism is undergoing a process of reconstitution in Cuba. Nevertheless, the authors of this work agree with him in that the restoration of social studies in Cuba demands "to rethink about its theoretical referents in an unprejudiced way, discarding entirely the dogmatic remnants" that persist "by the trace of the most immediate past" (Yanes Quintero, Jul-Sep. 1995, p.119). That reflection, he points out, demands the critical rescue and synthesis of the contributions of the most advanced Cuban studies before and after the triumph of January 1, 1959.

Monal (2015) emphasizes that the attempts of the right wing to disarm Marxism respond to its objectives of depriving the left of the ideal instrument to face social transformation. Since the 1990s, the suppression of its categorical system has been subtly enthroned in everyday life. Key concepts such as production relations, class consciousness, mode of production, economic-social formation, are replaced by less ideologizing terms, far from revolutionary praxis, intentionally aseptic and neutral. With this a resounding blow is given, consciously or unconsciously, to the capacity of social critique of Marxism, to the theory of revolution and the construction of socialism.

Social emancipation, which should be the fruit of socialism, is thus replaced by ambiguous expressions such as projects, hope, dreams, etc.

"The current abandonment of the categorical apparatus of Marxism," notes Vega Cantor, "is not only a terminological problem, it is a ruse to depoliticize history and produce an insubstantial discourse, without inner strength, that does not generate passions" (Vega Cantor, 2005, p. 12), with which the theories of the right aim to concretize their deideologizing purposes.

From this, says Monal (2015), results a nicked language that, in the best of cases, is limited to the interpretation of the world and renounces to its transformation. Together with that, and as a result of Cuba's insertion in the world market, ideological production is also assumed, resulting in a process of desocialization of Marxism and Leninism, including the media, which is manifested in the lack of reference to it and in the suppression of its categorical system, a process that, fortunately, as the authors of this work point out, has begun to be reversed.

The same author regrets that in Cuba the urgency to solve the concrete problems of reality leads to the promotion of applied research to the detriment of the development of theory and the role it can and should play in the reflection that, in this regard, is developed at the international level. If this is so in theory, what about teaching? Hence the reason of Delgado Díaz (2016) that it is necessary to first solve these problems to then enter to solve the pedagogical and didactic problems that concern the teaching-learning of Marxism-Leninism.

So it is necessary to perfect this process in a context which, in addition, is characterized by the material limitations of Cuban society, where property relations are diversified with the consequent ideological reflection, reinforced by the fact that the current youth is a product of the special period with all its shortages and needs, and in which there is a return to the old Yankee policy with the objective of taking Cuba back to the past and imposing the return to neoliberalism in the region for which the subversive policy is reinforced.

In this context, often fails, according to Limia David (2009), the awareness of the objectives with which Marxism-Leninism is taught, which is reflected in the fact that the student does not always understand why and for what purpose he receives it with the continued rejection and disinterest in its study. It is necessary to make a situated

Marxism-Leninism, Limia (2009) continues, that does not ignore the historical roots of the Cuban nation, which is characterized by its partisanship, that is, it should not be forgotten that it is taught and learned to exercise it in Cuba and given the characteristics of today's world. "Given this reality, it is essential to go in a systematic and directed way related to the nourishing source of the ideology of José Martí (Limia, 2018, p. 178).

The crisis of the socialist ideal hit hard Marxism as a science, and, therefore, its teaching. The special period, with its material limitations, and the subversive policy of the empire, have also damaged it as much as the fall of socialism.

The rejection of the study of Marxism-Leninism is generalized, but, both yesterday and today, the way it is taught and learned, simplicity, reductionism and fashion have also drastically affected it. It is also accompanied by teaching that is far removed from professional needs. The urgency of teaching a Marxism-Leninism of its own is a problem not yet solved. Teaching suffers, in general, from the reminiscences of Soviet education. There is not always awareness that science itself is not being developed, but an academic discipline whose fundamental function is formative. Young teachers have received a still incomplete training. It is necessary to conceive the teaching of an own Marxism in correspondence with the elective principle of the Cuban Philosophy and the materialist dialectics.

Among the aspects linked to the context, Delgado Díaz (2016) includes the transformations implied by the updating stage in Cuba and, specifically, in higher education, which impose on the teaching and learning of Marxism-Leninism tensions and institutional demands that become important challenges that require its improvement.

In the base document for the elaboration of the "E" curricula, it is emphasized that the integral formation of the university student "must result in graduates with a solid political development from the foundations of the Ideology of the Cuban Revolution" (Ministry of Higher Education, 2017, p. 9). If in the structure of this there are, as clearly established, the thought of José Martí, on the one hand, and Marxism and Leninism, on the other, whose most finished synthesis is the thinking and acting of Fidel Castro, that means that among the tensions and demands imposed on the discipline by its improvement is the incorporation of Martí's thought to its teaching-learning process, with a greater degree of systematicity with respect to Study Plan "D", for which the professors of the discipline were not prepared during their training.

Thus, for example, in the Program of the discipline Marxism-Leninism for the Agronomy career, Study Plan "E", it is weighted, among the general objectives:

1. "To educate the sensitivity and spirituality of the future professional in the ideology of the Cuban Revolution, to train them as defenders of the creative work of the Revolution and of the most just causes of humanity, preparing them to be conscious disseminators of the humanist, revolutionary and identitarian cultural conception, of universal vocation that it contains".
2. "To contribute to the humanist and professional formation through the historical-cultural, interdisciplinary and integrating approach of the theory and practice of Marxist-Leninist science as a result of the articulation of Cuban revolutionary thought and patriotic traditions with Marxism-Leninism".

Correspondingly, among the knowledge systems, "José Martí and Fidel Castro on science, technology and environmental problems" is indicated as the subject of study, and in the methodical indications it is stated that:

1. "The lectures must be panoramic and of orientation for the location and study of the bibliography of the classics of Marxism, of Martí, of Fidel".
2. "The work with Marti's ideology presupposes its study from the different dimensions of culture found in his work, contributing especially to the development of the students' ethical and aesthetic conceptions and the formation of values in this respect".
3. "For the fulfillment of the objectives of this discipline, the systematized work of Fidel Castro's thought is fundamental, as a creative synthesis of the tradition of Cuban, Latin American and universal revolutionary thought and of the tradition of Marxist thought that has managed to elaborate an updated theoretical proposal on the imperialist system in its current phase, the main dangers facing humanity and the paths of the construction of revolutionary, anti-imperialist and social justice subjectivity".

In spite of the leap that these introduced changes mean, in the basic bibliography there is no mention of any work by Martí, or about his thought and work, not even by Fidel. Such demands are, in turn - though not only - a result of the demands made to the entire national education system by the Communist Party of Cuba in its VI (2011) and VII (2016) congresses, as well as in its I National Conference (2012). However, not all

careers include Martí's thought with the required strength. It is possible to mention only a few in which a more thorough improvement work should be carried out: Law, Sociocultural Management, and Tourism.

In recent years, and as a result of the work carried out for several decades in the aforementioned direction, although still little publicized, research products of unquestionable value in this regard have come to light. Some of them can be found in the text *Marxism and Revolution* (2006). In 2010, the Samuel Feijoo publishing house released Leonardo Pérez Leyva's work "Cuban Thought: the relationship between Martí's thought and Marxist-Leninist thought, of great importance for the improvement work required in the teaching and learning of Philosophy. Likewise, the Center for Martí Studies published by the authors María Caridad Pacheco and Rigoberto Pupo (2017) "José Martí, education as human formation" and by Omar Guzman Miranda (2017) the work "José Martí's sociology. A conception of change" that can contribute in the same direction.

The researcher Pérez Leyva points out that it is necessary to adjust "the teaching of Marxist-Leninist philosophy in Cuba to the demands of the ideological development achieved by the Cuban Revolution, precisely, given in the theoretical-methodological development that reaches the relationship between Martí's thought and Marxist-Leninist thought" (Pérez Leyva, 2010, p.9).

But are the teachers of Marxism-Leninism prepared to meet such a requirement, that is, do they master the policy of the Party and the Ministries of Education in this regard? Do they possess the indispensable sensitivity to understand the need and the real possibility of doing so? Does their mastery of the philosophical, economic and political thought of José Martí allow them to do so?

In his doctoral thesis, Vázquez Labrada (2017), reflects the situation in which was - in the Faculty of Pedagogical Sciences in the Isle of Youth - the incorporation of Martí's thought to the teaching-learning process of the discipline Marxism-Leninism. He points out that the systematization of Martí's thought is insufficient in the same, since, the incorporation of this, is limited to the sporadic, spontaneous and a systematic introduction of some of his ideas; the potentialities of his subjects are wasted to demonstrate how an own thought arises, develops and consolidates in Cuba; and the philosophical, economic and political thought of José Martí is not properly incorporated

to the process of instruction, education and development of the students. About its causes he refers:

- The weak knowledge of the demands of the educational policy; of the sources in which they are expressed; of the way in which they are reflected in the program of the discipline, as well as of the reasons that determine it, affects the weak conscience and sensibility of the professors to systematize the martian approach in the teaching-learning process of the subjects that conform the discipline.
- The lack of knowledge about the philosophical, economic and political thought of José Martí, as well as the sources in which they are found, constitute an important barrier that has limited the systematization of the Martian approach in the analytical programs and in the components of the teaching-learning process of the discipline, and, therefore, in the dimensions of the formative process.
- The insufficient knowledge of the characteristics of the evolution of the teaching of Marxism-Leninism in Cuba has hindered the understanding, by teachers, of the limitations of the way in which the teaching-learning process of the subjects Philosophy, Political Economy and Political Theory has been conceived and executed and the need, therefore, for a conception that preserves the positive aspects of the previous ones and eradicates their deficiencies in the current one.

Is the situation different in other parts of the country? In the presence of one of the authors of this work, it has been commented more than once, by prominent professors of the discipline from other universities, that what is needed is to teach Marxism without making so many demands in this regard. This same author has been present at multiple events, meetings of senior professors, department heads and others, where he has been able to confirm that the greatest difficulty lies in the mastery of the philosophical, economic and political thought of José Martí, and of the sources in which they are found, in a not insignificant segment of the faculty of Marxism-Leninism of the nation.

Precisely, in an event on the teaching of Marxism-Leninism and History held at the UCP "Enrique José Varona" in 2008, in some interventions the incomprehension that one is not really dialectical if, among other things, the unity between the singular and the universal in the Cuban Revolution is not rigorously observed.

And it is logical that this is so, since current teachers did not receive a preparation in their training aimed at meeting such requirements, which is reflected, even in the programs of discipline, in which an attempt to meet the demands of educational policy is observed, which has not yet matured sufficiently and, despite how much progress has been made since the 1990s, the systematization of the philosophical, economic and political thought of José Martí, in the teaching and learning of Marxism-Leninism, is still insufficient. It is even a task that is left to the consideration of the universities.

The dialogue between Martí, on the one hand, and Marx, Engels and Lenin, and their disciples -including Latin Americans-, on the other, in the teaching-learning process of the theory of the working class and socialism, has not yet matured sufficiently. Its importance lies, among other things, in that it will allow us to understand how a thought arises, develops and consolidates in Cuba that Cintio Vitier (1992) and Fernandez Retamar (2009) called Martí's Marxism and that the authors of this paper consider that it should be called Marxist Martianism, ideology of the Cuban Revolution or Fidel's thought. In addition, the systematization of the Martí's thought in the teaching-learning process of the Marxism-Leninism discipline is fundamental as a preamble for the analysis and understanding of some of his main theses; as a colophon of others, as a means to reinforce them or to fill the gaps left by his sovietization.

University events constitute true spaces for debate. They are part of the deep and necessary reflection on the contents of each of the subjects of the discipline in order to deepen their systems of categories; in what regularities and laws it is necessary to delve into; what needs to be changed or incorporated; how, from José Martí's thought, the contents can be problematized, contribute to the development of the students' capacity for reflection, promote independence, protagonism and creativity; which of his texts should be incorporated; how, from his work, the formation in values can be reinforced, the confrontation to subversive politics and what should be incorporated to the work and research practice.

The authors suggest that categories such as ideology of the Revolution, Marxism, Leninism, Martí's ideology, Fidel's thought, eclectism, eclecticism, the general and the universal in the process of building socialism, the relationship between Martí's thought, Marxism and Leninism, the relationship between the Martian republic and the socialist society, among others, be submitted for discussion (Vázquez Labrada, 2017).

To the teaching-learning process of the Marxism-Leninism discipline and, therefore, of its subjects, should not be alien to the way Marxism and Leninism penetrated in Cuba and, therefore, how their theses and fundamental principles were assimilated and developed. Its categories are loaded and reloaded, as Torres-Cuevas rightly points out, with new content in accordance with the particularities of Cuba, its history, needs, interests and aspirations, and this is essential in the formation of professionals committed to their homeland, to their Revolution and to socialism.

Finally, the authors of the work consider that the transformation of the teaching and learning of Marxism in the university demands a deep change in the teaching-learning of the subject Political Culture, an ongoing process that will not give the desired results if the teacher is not adequately prepared for it. They also suggest that in the training of the graduate in Education in the specialty Marxism-Leninism and History, the evolution of the teaching of Marxism-Leninism in the Cuban Revolution should be included as a subject of study.

Conclusions

The teaching-learning of Marxism-Leninism suffers from a series of insufficiencies caused by the international context since the disappearance of the world socialist system, the transformations implied by the updating process taking place in the country, the relations between the United States and Cuba, the deepening of the subversive policy and, likewise, there are pedagogical and didactic limitations. All this is reflected in the low interest and motivation of the students for their study with the consequent affectation to the quality of the formative process that, from the foundations of the ideology of the Cuban Revolution, they should receive. Thus, it diminishes the contribution of the discipline to the ideological and political education of the future professional, whose central nerve is the formation in values.

Its metamorphosis, propitiated by the national debate and the improvement of the study plans, demands solutions in the scientific discipline as an essential condition for its improvement as an academic discipline, which, in turn, is fundamental to increase its contribution to the formation of a professional committed to the construction of

socialism in Cuba and to the just causes of humanity, in the achievement of which the incorporation of Marti's thought and work is of vital importance. The events developed by the universities will allow us to travel a path of experimentation that will undoubtedly yield praiseworthy results in the future.