

MEANINGS OF POPULAR EDUCATION IN BRAZILIAN HISTORY¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper intends to approach the subject of popular education in "long term" perspective, trying to capture the changes in the meaning of the concept throughout Brazilian history. To achieve this goal, we try to articulate the phenomenon to the concept, in order to articulate the mentioned modifications to historical reality in which ideas and practices in popular education were conceived and executed. We aimed to point out that these changes, in general, were connected to transformations in the relation between society and State: in this articulation are located the mutations in the meaning of popular education, which arises with an ideal of public state school and ends up becoming almost synonymous of nonformal education, or education formalized outside the institutions of the State apparatus. Now a days, the concept of popular education is basically restricted to the pedagogical projects carried out by civil society movements. Our goal, therefore, is to analyze the historical process that has generated such transformations and to reflect on the possibilities and limits for the practice of popular education today.

Keywords: Popular education. Popular culture. Youth and adult education. Literacy.

SENTIDOS DE LA EDUCACIÓN POPULAR EN LA HISTORIA BRASILEÑA

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo se propone abordar la temática de la educación popular en perspectiva de "larga duración", buscando captar los cambios de sentido ocurridos en el concepto a lo largo de la historia brasileña. Para tal, procuramos articular o fenômeno ao conceito, de modo a relacionar as modificações mencionadas com a realidade histórica em que as ideias e as práticas em educação popular foram pensadas e executadas. Se trata de señalar que aquellos cambios, en general, estuvieron conectados a las transformaciones manifiestas en la relación entre sociedad y Estado: en esta articulación se

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localizan las mutaciones de sentido en la educación popular, que surge con un ideal de escuela pública estatal y acaba por convertirse casi un sinónimo de educación no formal o formalizada fuera de la institucionalidad del aparato de lo Estado. Contemporáneamente, el concepto de educación popular básicamente se restringe a proyectos pedagógicos realizados por movimientos de la sociedad civil. Nuestro objetivo, así, es tratar del proceso histórico que generó tales transformaciones y reflexionar sobre las posibilidades y límites para la práctica de la educación popular hoy.

Palabras clave: Educación popular; Cultura popular; Educación de jóvenes y adultos; Alfabetización.

SENTIDOS DA EDUCAÇÃO POPULAR NA HISTÓRIA BRASILEIRA

RESUMO

O presente trabalho se propõe abordar a temática da educação popular em perspectiva de “longa duração”, procurando captar as mudanças de sentido ocorridas no conceito ao longo da história brasileira. Para tanto, procuramos articular o fenômeno ao conceito, de modo a relacionar as modificações mencionadas com a realidade histórica em que as ideias e as práticas em educação popular foram pensadas e executadas. Buscamos salientar que aquelas mudanças, via de regra, estiveram conectadas às transformações manifestas na relação entre a sociedade e o Estado: nessa articulação, localizam-se as mutações de sentido na educação popular, que surge com um ideal de escola pública estatal e acaba por se tornar quase um sinônimo de educação não formal ou formalizada fora da institucionalidade do aparelho de Estado. Contemporaneamente, o conceito de educação popular basicamente se restringe a projetos pedagógicos realizados por movimentos da sociedade civil. Assim sendo, nosso objetivo é tratar do processo histórico que gerou tais transformações e refletir sobre as possibilidades e os limites para a prática da educação popular nos dias de hoje.

Palavras-chave: Educação popular. Cultura popular. Educação de jovens e adultos. Alfabetização.

Introduction

The current article is a result of the continuity of a PHD research project entitled “Popular Education and Popular Culture in Brazil: capitalist development, social struggles and ‘expansion’ of the State (1945-1964)”. In this text we intend to focus on the thematic of popular education in a “long-duration” perspective (BRAUDEL, 1965), with the objective of learning about the different meanings,

and consequently, understanding the distinct practices in popular education throughout Brazilian history. With this scenario, we intend to demonstrate that the meanings that the term popular education presents nowadays are a consequence of semantic modifications which occurred in the 1940's, 50's and 60's, above all from proposals set to adult education. For such, we used specialized bibliography in the areas of Education History and Popular Education, as well as analyzed historical documents from the State and from popular education movements, especially those which arose between 1958 and 1964, period that we considered sensitive for the exposure of our argument.

The term "popular education" was and is still gifted of several meanings. In general, it is interpreted as an educational process done joined with popular classes (either "for" or "with"), but the proposals that fit within the term vary along time. In a certain way, the occurrence of directed education to popular classes can already be interpreted since ancient times, but still restricted to the meaning of work formation, while the dominant classes were reserved to instruction in languages, science and arts with the objective of forming the governing elite (MANACORDA, 2010).

Only in the gasps of the medieval period, or in the beginning of European modernity, the teachings of "scholastic" knowledge, mainly reading, was considered as something that should also be transmitted to popular classes, especially in the context of the Protestant Reform movements (XVI century), as a way to spread reading and biblical text interpretation – which followed the translations of writing to vernacular languages (MEJÍA, 2001). Not by chance that the first model of popular education can be considered as "literacy teaching" (FERNÁNDEZ, 2006).

The institutionalization of popular education against the generalization of the school form, is historically, a phenomenon associated to the Industrial Revolution, initially in England in the end of the XVIII and spreading in the following century to other regions in Western Europe. The advent of mass schooling is explained by the need of imposing discipline for the work and literacy of workers and their children, with the objective of making them "capable" for

collective work in the industry and for urban life. The “literacy model” is therefore generalized, with emphasis in the “receptive” functions of learning against the “active”, with a greater importance attributed more to reading than writing and to memorizing instead of “creative” reading of texts. With that, the “literacy model” would occur in the “massification education” process, made possible by the action of the State which provided educational offer (FERNÁNDEZ, 2006, p. 16-17 e 27).

The massification of the form and school institutions, in the milestones of European societies industrialization would have given origin to a kind of school very similar to a factory, “marked by a standardized partition of times, of spaces, of studying grouping forms, of duties (disciplinary logic)” and with a system based on information repetition. The “factory school” would therefore be characterized by a “authoritarian pedagogical relation” in which its “way of working underestimates the acquisitions, interests and the experiences of its students, as well as the sociocultural characteristics of its contexts” (CANÁRIO, 2000, p. 100).

1. Popular Education in the Portuguese America and the Brazilian Empire

In the quality of Portuguese colony, the inhabitants of our territory were subjected to the influences received from Europe. Therefore, in a certain way, it is not possible to clearly separate the history of our popular education from the European proposals. Among us, the term “popular education” began circulating in the scope of constitutional debates in the 1820’s, in other words, in the immediate post-independence, when the recently created Brazilian State was found in its initial moments of structuring. However, we can locate something as a “popular education” proposal since the beginning of the Portuguese colonization, when the Jesuits landed in American lands for, among other measures, to undertake teaching and evangelize the indigenous population and after, the slaved population with African origins.

Since their arrival in 1549, the Jesuits created schools with the objective of teaching reading and writing of the Portuguese language to the native population, mainly aiming for their evangelization, but they also promoted the

teaching of labor techniques such as blacksmithing, weaving and the introduction to the use of agricultural instruments. The main objectives of the Jesuits was obtaining allies amongst the indigenous to defend the villages from rival tribes attacks and “invaders” with European origin such as the French, British and Dutch as well as consolidating Portuguese culture in the colonized lands of the empire (PAIVA, 2000). Regarding the population with African origin, the Jesuit teaching restricted itself basically to evangelizing, especially to combat black religious practices, characterizing itself by a kind of “fear pedagogy” (MAESTRI, 2014).

Throughout two hundred years of labor in colonial Brazil, the Jesuit educators were gradually abandoning the “gentile” education in a way that, when dismissed by the reign of D. Jose I and by Marquis of Pombal, in 1759, had their initiative basically restricted for the elite schools of the colony, the children of the “principals” (PAIVA, 2000; PAIVA, 2003).

With the closing of the Jesuit schools, the Brazilian colonial education, in the period of “clarified despotism”, went through a process of reforms which separated colonial school life, making the elites search for other educational means for their children such as home schooling or education abroad. The “royal classes” system was too precarious and a great part of the systematic education of the past colonial decades was still maintained by the church, mainly from the seminars (SAVIANI, 2013). Education in the imperial period is frequently seen by historiography of the area as a period of intersection among the “disasters” provoked by the Pombal period and the flourishing of public education in the republican period in which the ideas that substantiated the educational proposals were “out of place” regarding what was effectively put into practice. With this, it was normally understood, not without a reason, that the ideas behind popular education in Brazil, which comprehends effectively the imperial period, were resultants of a “transplantation process”, proposed in a moment in which the conditions of the country did not favor its effectiveness (FARIA FILHO, 2000).

In a certain way, despite the liberal ideas having penetrated the country in the independence period, especially affirming in an anti-colonialism form, in the criticism to absolutism, etc., they adjusted themselves to a descending reality of

the colonial period and established agreements with it, especially concerning the maintenance of slavery. The extreme French Enlightenment, when it became “Brazilian”, it accommodated itself. But such fact occurred still due to the characteristics of the Brazilian society: popular education rises with a proposal from the State to the people before it was created in the mass of the population an awareness of the need for education (BEISIEGEL, 2004).

At the initial moments of the imperial period, school education for children and young people was thought in terms of “first words” school. Conceived in the scope of the government speech for the “inferior classes of society”, they searched for a rudimentary generalization of knowing how to “read, write and count”. Therefore, the relation of the “first words” school with the Higher and secondary education was not proposed, for it was unimagined that the popular classes of society would have access to other levels of education, just that it should be guaranteed that they had minimum knowledge for productive and intellectual work.

The generalization of the first words school was expected for “all cities, villages and populous places”, using the mutual teaching method, foreseen by Joseph Lancaster’s (1778-1838), proposal in the first Brazilian law about education, on October 15 of 1827 (BRASIL, 1827). The Brazilian political class believed that it was the State’s task to guarantee this level of education for all, bearing in mind the Constitution of Brazil as a civilized nation-people. This task should be accomplished by the State because it was seen as same condition of its existence, as a way to guarantee the governability of the Brazilian population in its process of affirmation of an independent country, convincing the Brazilian people of the need and reason of the process: the invention of “being” Brazilian, obedience to laws, etc.

The 1834 Additional Act, which grants to the Provincial Assemblies the responsibility to discuss about the Reforms in the Public Instruction (BRASIL, 1834, Art. 10), in a certain way went against that perspective as far as the the issue was decentralized – which suffered from lack of continuity once the presidents of the Provinces were constantly replaced. So, the initiatives in the

public instruction were not only multiple, but very unequal once the provinces in the South-Central arose economically and had more conditions of investing in education than the ones located in other regions (FARIA FILHO, 2000; PAIVA, 2003).

2. Popular education in the first republics: the importance of education for adults

There were many voices in the XIX century defending the centralization of the initiatives for popular education from the Brazilian government but until the First Brazilian Republic (1889-1930), the orientation in the Additional Act of 1834 prevailed. The republican constitution of 1891 maintained the liberty of the States and restricted to the Union the task of disseminating “fine writings” (philosophy, history and poetry), the sciences and the “fine arts”, as well as the creation of “Higher and Secondary Educational institutions” (BRASIL, 1891, Art. 35). The primary institution, the one which effectively got to the popular classes, continued with local responsibility through the State Codes of Instruction. This orientation maintained itself in the spirit of Proclamation of the Republic, which was boosted by the decentralizing desire of the oligarchies regarding the Empire.

The relation between education and politics was maintained due to the conditioning of the right to vote and to literacy. With that, the urban medium layers were included, jealous of the political participation, while the popular classes were excluded without solving the popular education problem. It is formed among us the “prejudice against the illiterate”, which until then, was not seen as an incapable being by the coherent discourse. The entrance of Brazil, in the XX century, as one of the western nations with the highest rates of illiteracy led the Brazilian intellectuality, or part of it, to demand for the centralization of the school system of the country in the hands of the union, anticipating the ideas of the reformers of the 1920’s (PAIVA, 2003).

The administrative centralization phenomenon of the Brazilian State – and the placement of the educational problem as a national issue – only became

reality with the 1930 revolution and the establishment of the Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945) government as a consequence of the decision of the new government in promoting the development of the Brazilian capitalism, investing in the economy industrialization, with a considerable degree of planning and state intervention. With that, not only basic education becomes more demanded, analogously to what occurred in Europe during the Industrial Revolution, but also society itself, especially the new urban medium layers, created by the modernization process, start to demand from the State a higher educational offer (BEISIEGEL, 2004).

The governmental initiatives in education during the Vargas Era were varied and suffered comings and goings according to the distinct conjectures,² but established themselves with the tendency to diversify the actions of the State, which then starts offering and regulating the most varied areas of the sector through decrees that established several “Organic Laws”, creation of the S System, setting of National Plans of Education, etc. (ROMANELLI, 1997).³

Of all the changes that happened from the 1920’s and 30’s, the one that maybe had the biggest relevance for the modifications of meanings in popular education was the placement of the adult education problem. The issue was not new – it already appeared in the law, in some states, since the 1850’s -, but it becomes to be seen as one of the central aspects of educational and economic development of the country, especially from the initiatives of the industrial

² For example, with the liberals’ ideals of the reformers, the “pioneers of the new school”, considering themselves winner in the 1934 Constitution (BRASIL, 1934, Art. 150), which defended the Primary School as free, mandatory and a duty of the state; and that with the conservative ideals present with a greater force in the New State Constitution, that said that the action of the State should be complementary, directed to those who did not have financial conditions for attending private schools, demanding “quota system” for public school by mean of the “less needed” (BRASIL, 1937, Art. 129 e 130).

³ From the management of the Minister Gustavo Capanema, the Organic Laws of Industrial Education (Law-decree 4073/1942), Secondary Education (Law-decree 4244/1942) and Commercial Education (Law-decree 6141/1943) were established, and the creation of the National Service of Industrial Learning – SENAI (Law-decree 4048/1942), continuing with the tendency of the Interim government of José Linhares, which followed Vargas’ destitution, with the Organic Laws of Primary Education (Law-decree 8529/1946), Normal Education (Law Decree 8530/1946) and Agricultural Education (Law-decree 9613/1946), and with the creation of the National Service of Commercial Learning –I SENAC (Law-decree 8621/1946).

business community and its entities such as the National Industry Confederation (CNI) and the Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo – FIESP (Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo), which act strongly in the guidelines of the government for the education and qualification of Brazilian workers, like the creation of SENAI (RODRIGUES, 1998; CIAVATTA, 2009). However, the expansion of the public primary education was also seen as a necessity, gaining a new impulse with the creation of the Fundo Nacional do Ensino Primário (National Fund for Elementary School – Decree 4958/1942)

3. The reconception of popular education post-World War II

After the end of the Second War (1939-1945), a new geopolitical conjuncture is formed, affecting the situation of Brazil in the international scenario in the political and economic spheres, but also in educational matters. A new institutional apparatus is created to guarantee the peaceful coexistence between the nations that fought in the war and to normalize the commercial and financial relations among the countries, where UN, IMF, World Bank, etc. The political speech of the time was articulated, mainly, by the concepts of development and democracy, considered as mutually implicated and, inside this scheme of reality comprehension, Brazil was considered an “underdeveloped” country (MENDONÇA, 2010).

In the field of education, the institutional branch of the UN for the theme, UNESCO (United Nations for Education, Science and Culture), developed a concept of “fundamental education”, which articulated a series of ideas that became influent in the following decades and traced some paths that were followed by the Brazilian popular education, especially in the adult education field.

Understanding development as the objective of any society, especially of the peripheral capitalist societies, or of the “Third World”, UNESCO defended the hypothesis that education would be a fundamental instrument for the consecution of its scope, from three aspects: 1) the “technical education” – with the assistance of UNESCO for the qualification of engineers and other professional of technological areas, aside from the provision of material and intellectual structure

to form technical schools and “adapt” them to the industries; 2) the “elementary education” – the aid, in partnership with developed countries (which had many decades of experience in the dissemination of schooling, therefore knowing the difficulties), the creation of elementary education systems capable of escaping the “sterile formalism” to adapt to the social and economic changes related to development through materials, teaching methods and qualification of capable professionals; and 3) the “fundamental education for adults” – considering that the economic development could not “wait” for the qualification of the new generations, the qualification of adults was necessary, starting with the technical assistance for the accomplishment of massive teaching campaigns (UNESCO, 1949, p. 235-239).

The great innovation brought by the “fundamental education” proposal was the idea that cultural characteristics of the communities which received the educational action should be preserved even if the development caused changes. The biggest fear of the organization was regarding the possible disastrous effects that the economic development could cause in a certain place, in case strong cultural changes were provoked in the “traditional habits”, leading the population to a state of “mental confusion”. There was also the danger that the educational action did not have a meaningful success aside from giving origin to “stray” intellectuals of the community. Against these dangers, the planning of the fundamental education should be preceded by a deep research in the cultural habits of the community, carried out by anthropologists and/or sociologists that, associated to “arts and crafts specialists”, would be able to indicate intervention paths that avoided serious traumas and at the same time would increment the “commercial use” of the articles produced by the industry and/or local crafts (UNESCO, 1949, p. 240-247, *passim*).

Therefore, the basic notion of “fundamental education” conceived a pedagogical process with the teaching of reading and writing associated to a “professional” instruction related to the local, “environmental” conditions of the

pupil. It should be adjusted to the own production forms of the community,⁴ seeking to give the students the knowledge and technical means to increase the productivity of the local economy. At that moment, the “international appeals in articulating illiterate adult educational campaigns and the conceptual framework elaborated in the scope of UNESCO would be easy and rapidly absorbed in Brazil” (BEISIEGEL, 2004, p. 93).

UNESCO’s influence was felt especially in the “national mobilization” character, accomplished through massive campaigns for the young and adult population of the popular classes, which had as objectives mainly the eradication of illiteracy, highlighting the Campanha de Educação de Adolescentes e Adultos - CEAA (Adolescents and Adults Educational Campaign), of 1947 and later the Campanha Nacional de Educação Rural – CNER (Rural Education National Campaign), of 1952, aside from other local and national initiatives in the second half of the 1940’s and throughout the following decade.⁵

Some ideas contained in UNESCO’s proposal, in a certain way, already circulated in the Brazilian educational thought, with the understanding that adult education should come from the concrete conditions of their lives, considering immediate objectives in which the students found practical sense. This education should assume the form of “dialogue” (LOURENÇO FILHO, 2008 [1945]). Such perspectives maintained themselves presents in the Brazilian popular education, even though they gained new outlines throughout time.

However, it is precisely from the critics of UN ESCO’s proposal that the popular education concept that sets a more radical rupture with the traditional notion of the concept emerges, although this split had preserved aspects of the first and occurred in a gradual way, articulating itself to the historical contexts in a fast mutation in the country, especially in the 1960’s and 1970’s. The first

⁴ The notion of “community” and its associated context, the “community development”, were originated from Social Service, especially its American parent company (NETTO, 2011; BEZERRA, 2005), and based the educational interventions by UNESCO’s educational plan at the time.

⁵ The CEAA was instituted by the decree nº 19513/1945, which regulated the National Fund of Primary Education and predicted that 25% of its resources would be for the primary education of adolescents and adults.

documentation of this rupture is found in the contributions of the II Congresso Nacional de Educação de Adultos (II National Congress for Adult Education) in Rio de Janeiro in 1958, mainly with the contribution of the Pernambuco team, which had as a participant Paulo Freire, entitled “Adult education and the marginal populations: the problem of the slum” (RELATÓRIO, 2008 [1958], s. p.).

The ideas contained in this text maintained themselves in the post Freirean core of thought, although with modifications and developments, but it is important to compare them to the “fundamental education” concept. The text maintained the conception of education as a factor of “development”, mainly industrial, and as an instrument of “democracy”. Aside from that, it reaffirmed that adult education should be linked to the reality of the students and it evoked the notion of “base education” – present already in the CNER and later in the Movimento de Educação de Base – MEB (Base Education Movement). The new element of the pernambucana conception – which can be identified even with Paulo Freire because it resembles quite a lot in the content and language of his later works – was the questioning to the inappropriate characteristic of “transplant” that the Brazilian education, until that moment, did in the local communities. According to Freire’s commission, it should “provide to men a specialized technical preparation” so that he could intervene in the “development process”, overcoming the “marginal condition” by the “participant of labor, production and income”. However, this educational work should not “be made about or for men, only the literacy kind or simply hearing penetration, substituting it by the other that obtain itself with men”, counting on “their participation in all the moments of the educational work, preparing or concomitant to the other more estimable, which is the the participation of the life in the region and in the wider spheres of the society that they live”. At last, it should “substitute the discourse by discussion. Use modern techniques for group education, with audio visual resources, active and functional, taking advantage of movies, role plays, radio, press, etc.” (RELATÓRIO, 2008 [1958], s. p.).

The Freirean conception expressed in this pernambucana contribution was representative in the modifications that popular education was suffering,

redefining its meaning in a radical way: from the first conception of “popular education” as an action of the state for the education of “society’s inferior classes”, aiming its adaptation to the political scenario inaugurating with the Independence and with the classic liberalism inspiration for a “horizontal” proposal, worried with the safeguard of the popular classes’ culture and with a dialogue form of teaching. However, as we have seen, these changes were a result of a rupture and continuity processes, with ideas that were incorporated to the Brazilian educational thought, especially from the advent of adult education.

4, Politicized popular education (1958-1964)

One of the notions that emerge from the reconceptualization of popular education is the concept of “popular culture”, which expresses the value that educators attribute to the customary manifestations, religious and musical, more or less “spontaneous” of the popular classes. As we have seen, Brazilian educators as Lourenço Filho, already valued the immediate interests of the pupils, linked to culture, just as the own conception of UNESCO’s “fundamental education” already predicted the advantage of the “communities’” way of life for the achievement teaching tasks for development. The novelty that engenders and redefines popular education on the turn of the 1950’s to the 60’s was the politicization of “popular culture”.

Such reconception was not immediate. It was about a process that was operating from the evolution of the educational practice, in the conjecture of the initial years of the 60’s, of “organic crisis” (MELO, 2013), with the worsening of social struggles and the organized growth of the popular classes – urban and rural union movement, peasant league, student movement, among others. The presence of educators in these spaces, taking a stand in favor of the workers, stopped that reconceptualization, boosting the politicization process of popular culture, making popular culture to be increasingly identified in popular movements, having in mind its structuring, but also its awareness (FREIRE, 1983

[1963]).⁶

This process had its most lively expression in the educational movements and popular culture – many of which entitled themselves only as popular culture movements because they considered themselves as a constituting part of popular education. In this conceptual modification, popular education itself starts to be part of popular culture, with the people (politically) educating themselves.⁷ Each one of the movements had its own trajectory, starting from the Popular Culture Movement – in various senses, including in the chronological sense, the precursor -, but its convergence was expressed in its option by the political-pedagogical work with the popular classes, aiming for the transformation of social and political reality of the country (base reforms, democratic expansion, “authentic” popular-national culture promotion, etc). Such convergence operated also in practice, with the first construction efforts of a national unit from the I Popular Culture and Literacy National Meeting, in September of 1963.⁸

Although there were important specificities, it is relevant to highlight that such movements presented equally presented a series of convergent perspectives, marked by three big “activity groups”: literacy, base education and

⁶ Moacyr de Goés (1995) highlights the influence that the Cuban Revolution (1959) had had in the Brazilian lefts in the 1960’s, regarding its “revolutionary imaginary”, as well as in the popular educators, from the Campanha Nacional de Alfabetização de Cuba. The author suggests that the literacy handbook for Cuban adults, “Venceremos”, had methodological influence in the conception of the book *terá Livro de Leitura para Adultos*, from the Movimento de Cultura Popular do Recife, which fundamented the *Livro de Leitura* of the campaign “De Pé no Chão Também se Aprende a Ler”. In the context of the Cold War, that revolution would have inspired the Brazilian lefts to follow their example, exciting social movements, progressive parties, and the popular educators.

⁷ The most important movements were those that resulted from government projects, such as the Movimento de Cultura Popular (MCP, 1960), from the city of Recife and the Government of the State of Pernambuco, both with Miguel Arraes as leader - movement within which Paulo Freire developed his literacy method - the Movimento de Educação de Base (MEB, 1961), the result of an agreement between the Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (CNBB) and the Federal Government, the De Pé no Chão Também se Aprende a Ler (1961), of the city of Natal, and the Campanha de Educação Popular da Paraíba (CEPLAR, 1962). It is also worth mentioning the Centros de Cultura Popular, which proliferated from the União Nacional dos Estudantes (UNE), since 1962.

⁸ The meeting was called by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), that affirmed taking into consideration the “emergency and unfolding of the several Literacy and Popular Culture movements throughout Brazil” and the “need” of promoting “a national scope meeting” in which it would be possible to share mutual knowledge, discussion, agglutination and incentive to those experienced that had already commenced (BRASIL, 2009 [1963], p. 39).

popular culture. Even though each movement emphasized one activity or another, depending on its nature, the fact is that such activities maintained affinity relations, starting from the point that “they flourished in the same conjectural soil”, which also forced their distinct characteristics regarding the way which popular education was practiced until then. The three activity groups mentioned, in the popular culture movements, unified themselves into a “new pedagogical utopy”, which sought to conciliate the non-directivity of the educational process with the “awareness” perspective (BEZERRA, 1980, p. 30).

It can be affirmed that the acting of the popular educators in the beginning of the 1960’s was done as a transitioning process of the “fundamental education for people”, which would represent the “interests of external political groups retranslated into the language of assistance” into a “education of the people”, in which the cultural values of popular groups” were “retranslated through the education taken to them” (BRANDÃO, 1986, p. 25). Certainly, “people’s education” should be written in quotation marks, once that, despite all the rhetoric concerning popular property of education, the intellectuals that took to previously selected students a set of ideas about what would be “fundamental of education”. However, the image described represents well the change of perspective of “fundamental education” from UNESCO to the perspective of political education of the education and popular culture movements.

It is important to highlight the role that the young progressive Catholics accomplished in this process – and even the importance of this base militancy of the Church for general directions of popular education in the country. Members of Catholic action entities, especially the Juventude Universitária Católica (JUC),⁹ participated in the several educational and popular culture movements. In the end of the 1950’s and during the 60’s, the Catholic Church went through a reforming movement that had as a greater expression the Social Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* and *Mater et Magistra*, of Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) to the construction of a “disparity” free society, either in the work relations, fields, city and the

⁹ Group of catholic college students’ members of the Catholic Action.

development inequalities amongst the countries (SEMERARO, 1994, p. 35).

Orientated by the conceptual apparatus of renowned cristianity, especially from the notion of “Historical Ideal”, the activists of the JUC, bearing in mind a particular interpretation of what would be “the continuity of Christ”, translated to the Brazilian reality the following program, seeking to articulate the religious, economic and political dimensions: 1) extend evangelization in several levels, with the objective of a Catholic action based on the ideal of “heroism”; 2) defense of development and “capitalism overcoming”, through the universalization of the “right to property” and submitting itself to the “personalization” scope of all Brazilians; and 3) acting in the Brazilian party-political life with the aim of favoring democratic extent in several levels, distributive equality and an “anti-capitalist ideology” formation (SIGRIST, 1982).¹⁰

Such ideas, reproduced by the acting of the young Catholics, were present in the educational and popular culture movements of the time. Therefore, the principles and methodologies from the renewed Catholicism left their mark in the new conceptions and practices of popular education also after the coup of 1964 and were kept alive by activists linked to the Church. In the context of repression which had opened, when the popular educators were pursued, imprisoned and exiled, those who remained actively had to adapt their actions to the new situation – as example, MEB, which adopted a political-pedagogical position totally non-directive, manifested in the concept of “cultural animation” (KADT, 2003), while

¹⁰ The concept of Historical Ideal expressed the ideas of the Catholic humanist philosopher Jacques Maritain, who defended the “insertion of men in history” with the objective of putting into practice Christian values while the perspective of “personalization” mentioned in the second point, manifested the influence of the personalist philosophy of Emmanuel Mounier, who led Young Catholics to conclude that the social structures of Brazil should be transformed to opening the path of evangelizing and therefore, have the “humanization” of the Brazilian man that, in those conditions, would be sentenced to individualism, massification and alienation. (SIGRIST, 1982; PAIVA, 1980). After, as the radicalization of the JUC activists generates their pursuit by the church and its rupture, the Young, led by Herbert de Souza, form the Popular Action, which even though they maintained the Catholic influence strong, they deepened even more their critics to capitalism and start to openly defend the need of an anti-capitalist revolution. Driven by the concept of “Historical Consciousness”, a more radical interpretation of “Historical Ideal”, taken rigorously by Father Henrique Vaz, the popular Action acts in diferente fronts such as the União Nacional dos Estudantes, the Movimento de Educação de Base and even in the Ministry of Education and Culture, during the João Goulart government (LIMA; ARANTES, 1984; KADT, 2003).

its prior position to the dictatorship was more defined, clearly in favor of social struggles and base reforms.

Final considerations: from the 60's until today

After the 1964 coup, the concept of popular education begins to go through a process of a stronger rupture with the traditional notion, of the education offered by the state to train citizens. One of the most accentuated marks is precisely the dissociation between popular education and the State: the governments stopped referring to “popular education” while those who called themselves popular educators ceased claiming for state action and even reporting it as authoritarian – considering the context of military dictatorship (PAIVA, 1984a). The dictatorship, however, maintains some of the initiatives from the previous period, such as the literacy campaign MOBREAL (Literacy Brazilian Movement), giving a new meaning to its political content, while the concept of popular education developed in the 60's is still put into practice with important alterations, in the scope of Ecclesiastic Base Communities of the Catholic Church and other institutions. The non-directive political pedagogical perspectives were dominant in the period, radicalizing the tendency of protecting “popular culture”, rethinking its knowledge and transmission and opening a set of debates regarding the means and ends of popular education. On one hand, there is the defense of the public school as a space for popular education, as well as the teaching of accumulated and systemized human knowledge; on the other hand, the defense of education, usually for adults, linked to their struggles and experiences, valuing local and practical knowledge and underestimating the school's capacity (bourgeois), even the public school, to attend to the interests of the popular classes. It was questioned, on one side, if school education could be considered as popular education “per say” and on the other, if it was legitimate the elaboration of teaching and learning programs without the participation of students (PAIVA, 1984b; BEISIEGEL, 1984b; GARCIA, 1980).¹¹

¹¹ The knowledge regarding practical acting would be of another nature, as Frei Betto said: “some

In parallel to those debates, which started happening in the end of the 1970's, new ways of popular classes organizations articulated themselves and converged to a series of entities that will define the labor and popular struggles in the next decades. Highlighted are the strikes and actions of the so called "new trade unionism", which had as main organism the Central Única dos Trabalhadores – CUT (Central Workers' Union Confederation), the reorganization of rural workers that founded the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra – MST (Landless Workers' Movement) and the political expression that materialized itself in the formation of the Partido dos Trabalhadores - PT (Workers's party). In all these fronts, activists linked to the Catholic Church participated in the processes, many times as protagonists, and they put aspects of their conception in the groupings, including in the popular education proposals that originate from them (FRAGA, 2013; REBUÁ, 2016).

Nowadays, possibly due to the fragmenting that social struggles adopted in the "post-modern condition" scope (HARVEY, 2012), in the period commonly understood as "globalization", under the umbrella of "popular education", a myriad of experiences related to labor and union movements happen, but also feminists and black movements, environmental movements, the defense of public health, solidary economy, etc. It seems that, on the contrary of popular education of the 60's and the one from the 80's, articulated around the country's projects, the practices of contemporary popular education were set by local interests, sometimes done consciously to circumscribe to the "micro" – as it can be seen in several contributions to a recent collective volume about the theme (STRECK; ESTEBAN [orgs.], 2013).

It is certain that such movements with specific topics are expressive of our contemporary condition and act upon several problems that the movements with universal topics did not perceive, as forms of "specific oppressions" that

people that had some book knowledge many times away from reality, judged themselves gifted of enough lights to teach and solve life problems. This education that Paulo Freire so well calls banking model education, because we think we can deposit knowledge in the life and head of others, it is a failed education. It gives the educator the feeling that they have all the knowledge and therefore, all the power." (FREI BETTO, 1985, p. 38)

sometimes occurred in its own interior. Not wanting to reduce the importance of the struggle for overcoming these oppression forms, it is important to locate them as part of a “set of social relations” (MARX, 2007, p. 534), which demands a comprehension and confrontation also of a universal character, impelling us to understand that popular education needs a new synthesis, one that incorporates “local” contributions of current movements with the “universal” concerns of former popular educators.

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Received on: 26.08.2019
Accepted on: 01.10.2019