

School versus Culture?

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Abstract

Originally a lecture given as part of the examination for a Professorship in School and Culture, this article brings together elements for a reflection about the relationship between School and Culture in view of the identification customarily established between the school institution and the culture. Such identification, *a priori* impossible, is actualized in practice, despite contestation, because, as history registers, it is impinged with great brutality. Initially, the text discusses how Culture (defined as the set of activities that give descriptions of the world through “free expression”) is experienced in the practice of the school institution. Next, the article describes the political formulae that conceal the force relationship behind the process of institutionalization of School. The latter, based on the premise that it is the only efficient means to educate individuals, has been presenting itself as the enduring solution to the dilemma. It is argued that the dilemma of the identification of School and Culture exists because alluring formulae manage to hide the secret of a logic that rests upon the force relationships existing in the work of construction of a National State of which we, just as the school, are products. In this context, the analysis of the School *versus* Culture relationship is made in analogy to that of the State *versus* Nation linkage.

Keywords: School – Culture – State – Nation – Socio-history.

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Originally a lecture given as part of the examination for a Professorship in the discipline of School and Culture, this article seeks to bring together elements for a reflection on the title of the discipline. It centers on the dilemma posed by many programs from Schools of Education throughout the country which in their proposals suggest a coincidence, impossible *a priori*, between culture and the school institution. Now, School and Culture are related but they do not coincide. Nevertheless, such coincidence takes place in practice, albeit often contested.

I shall try to examine this dilemma from two starting points. Firstly, the meaning given by socio-historians¹ to the word culture and the relation between this term and what is experienced in practice at school. I will then try to show the political formulae that hide the force relationship behind the task of constructing the State and the subsequent institutionalization of School which, based on ideas of the efficacy of the school institution as a way to educate people, has been presented as an enduring solution to the dilemma.

Under the term culture socio-historians include all activities that aim at supplying novel descriptions of the world. These can appear under extremely varied forms. The French socio-historian Gérard Noiriel (2006) proposes, in short, to group them in two sets: the first organized around issues of “truth”, including the journalists and researches who have as their function the production of information or of the facts presented as true. The second set includes the world of the arts and the spectacle, that is, of the activities related to creation and entertainment. The link between the individuals that are part of these cultural milieus is the defense of “free expression” as opposed to the laws of the market and to the State. In this case, culture is defined as the set of discourses and practices that try to escape from the two main forms of hindrances (economic and political) to free expression, and that are prevalent in the world today. It is no accident that Pierre Bourdieu made culture into a privileged standpoint from which to observe the workings of symbolic power.

Socio-historians understand the different domains of cultural life as configurations linking the agents (writers, artists etc) that compete for the favors of what they call the “public”. This term was chosen to show that whilst the economic sphere has the enterprise as its center of activity, and the political sphere has it in the political party, culture has in the public its energy center. With that they emphasized the types of relation that characterize the cultural

¹ According to the practice of socio-historians, this lecture call upon elements of reflection borrowed from other disciplines of the social sciences to construe its questionings based on the contemporary world and, therefrom, hark back to the past. Hence the attention given by the text to the genesis of the phenomena it analyzes, and to the amplitude of the obstacles that press upon the action of those working in either field (school or culture) due to the number of interdependencies in which they are immersed. On socio-history see especially Noiriel, 2006; Offerlé, 2001; Déloye, 1997.

groupings. Daniel Roche (1998) and Roger Chartier (1992) studied in such way the relations existing, thanks to the mediation of the written text, between those who write and those who read, in other words, the public. Antoine Hennion (1993) studied the passion for music through the mediation of a series of objects and of operations effected by social agents that make it possible to enjoy music. For him, music lives thanks to people that animate it, and that play the role of intermediaries between music and the public. Marco Aurélio de Lima (2007) in his dissertation on student bands shows exactly this: the web that connects the band leader, the Maecenas, the producer of band contests, the editor of the music score publishing house *Irmãos Vitale*, the owner of *Cesar Sons* that makes the musical instruments, and the managers of student bands, among others, with the purpose of giving public visibility to the band. He also considers the intermediation objects: the instrument, the music score, the album, the sound system, the computer etc.

Now, these forms of interdependency sit uneasily within the boundaries of a School that is usually regarded as the place for the transmission of these world descriptions produced and created in different domains of cultural life. In the words of Bernard Lahire (1993), one of the most well-known sociologists of education of today, the manner of transmission of the culture cannot be separated from the written nature of knowledges. It is then the case of making sure that at School pupils interiorize the knowledges that acquired their coherence in and through writing [...]. A pedagogy of drawing, of music, of physical activity, of literary activity, of dance etc cannot be made without a writing of drawing, a musical writing, a sports writing, a military writing, a writing of dance. These are writings that often presuppose grammars, theories, and practices.

One of the effects of this written transmission can be followed in the master dissertation of Ana Roseli dos Santos (2008) on musical learning, in the doctorate thesis of Lia Braga Vieira (2001) on musical teaching, and in the excellent book titled *Comment la musique vient aux enfants* (Hennion, 1988): everything happens in music classes as if what is coded on paper was the

actual sound of music, making clear the abstraction of the code in favor of the sound, and the autonomy of the rules with respect to the music.

This manner of transmitting the knowledges associated to writing leads us to the findings of British anthropologist Jack Goody (1987; 1963) on this kind of “graphical reason” that inhabits the core of written culture ever since it appeared and disseminated. From his first book, published in the 1960s, he hints with coherence and originality at the fact that the attempt to put a culture in written form is a process of objectivation that allows to the writer to select from within the multifaceted fluxes of human activities the elements that interest him or her. These elements eventually impose themselves as evidences or primary truths, and are thus transported in time and space. This is the aspect to which Gérard Noiriel (2006) calls attention when he brings together the fact that, far from following a pure desire for knowledge, writing develops by practical, often economic and political, reasons. It is, for example, the case of the progress in Cartography during colonial times, which resulted from the efforts of Europeans to mark itineraries, identify places, point out riches, with a view to concentrate military forces that would allow them to subjugate local populations and exploit them. The case of colonial literature trying to justify the European domination is emblematic. It is from this premise that socio-historians pay attention to the several consequences brought about by writing in its attempt to describe the world.

Going back to Jack Goody, in an interview to Peter Burke and Maria Lúcia Pallares-Burke (2004), the author explained how different writings can mean very different things. According to him, in Liberia, for instance, there is an Arabic writing for religious verses, an English writing for the school, and the writing of their native tongue, the Vai, which was invented in 1819.

The following text is an excerpt of the interview mentioned above.

What was particularly interesting was the ease with which the writing in the first tongue (the Vai) was taught. It was taught informally and, as far as I know, it was the only place where it happened that way. Writing

seems to be easily converted into teaching systems, no matter where you are, be it in China, in India, or in an Islamic country. People create systems of schooling, but the Vai did without one. When they reached the age in which they wanted to communicate or to write in Vai, they would go to an uncle, or even anyone, and say “could you show me how to write this?” And everything happened very easily. Mike Cole and I were particularly interested in all this because at the time we were trying to figure out how to deal with the aversion to the learning of reading and writing that we observed in schools of the western world. And we argued that it would be worth trying a system in which people started to write at different ages, that is, where they did not begin to write all at the same age. In that way, we could make the learning of writing a more voluntary act.

As we all know, ever since the institutionalization of school in the western world in the 19th century, that became almost impossible. School replaced learning as a means of education, something that became possible after the 16th century, as clearly demonstrated by Ariès (1981), when the child ceased to be mixed with adults and to learn to live directly from the contact with them. Removed from the world of adults, it began a long process of isolation, to which we give the name of schooling.

Thus, differently from what happens in the world of culture, in the school space the description of the world takes place distinctly from the practices of the social world, in other words, from the space and time and social life, for it has as its objective to allow early identifications with a social group. Learning to read and write, and to store knowledges within the school space happens under a situation that separates the teaching from the operation in which one is investing, in such a way that it serves only the purpose of learning, without any other end. Outside the immediate social game, such mode of teaching contributes to develop an abstract individuality capable of abstraction, and of learning in a way different from practice (Queiroz, 1995). But, on the other hand, it is important to underline the fact that, since the development of the “descriptions of the world” to be introduced at school result from a social historical construction, or still, to employ Bourdieu’s concept of a “cultural arbitrary”, because subjected to moral, political, or economic constraints, it needs a technical work, the didactic transposition, to be accessible,

understandable and absorbable. That is what goes today under the title of school culture, and what historian Dominique Julia (2001) describes as

a set of norms defining knowledges to be taught and conducts to be inculcated, and a set of practices that allow the transmission of these knowledge and incorporation of these behaviors; norms and practices coordinated with ends that can vary according to the time (religious, socio-political, or simply socialization ends). (p. 10)

Culture is, therefore, transmitted by school, but in a manner very different from the manner in which it was produced, and also for very different reasons. All in all, what school accomplishes is an attempt to impart to everyone the idea of culture, of science, of objective knowledge, and chiefly, of a universal reason, seeking to build the individual of the modern societies, whose characteristic is the capacity for abstraction, the capacity to distance oneself: the modern person is reflexive. This is what makes it difficult for pupils from more popular environments, coming out of a practical mode of socialization, with a strong dominance of orality, to adapt to the school text. And it is what leads Bourdieu (2003) to write that

[...] the freedom to liberate oneself from the constraints of schooling is only available to those who have sufficiently assimilated academic culture to interiorize an emancipated attitude towards the academic culture taught by an education system so profoundly steeped in the values of the dominant classes that it appropriates for itself the worldly depreciation of academic practices. The academic opposition between canonical culture, which is stereotyped and, in the words of Max Weber, 'routinized', and authentic culture, which is free of the discourse of school, only has any meaning for a tiny minority of cultivated people, because complete command of academic culture is the condition of being able to pass beyond the culture given by school towards that free culture (that is, free of its academic origins) which the bourgeoisie and their schools hold as the ultimate value. (p. 57)

What I mean to say is that Culture and School are related but certainly do not coincide.

However, similarly to what happens when we think about the relation between State and Nation, this coincidence takes place in daily life, despite the clear

absence of any evidence in favor of it. For example, the establishment of the borders of a State does not translate satisfactorily the existence of a nation and of its right to autonomy: all “principle of nationalities”, as demonstrated by Anne-Marie Thiesse (1999), is a formula of political ethics that hides the relations of military and economic forces in action during the formation of States; and, as history records, this happens at the expense of large amounts of practical and theoretical work, which is reinterpreted in national terms when included in the State borders. Let us recall here the painful resources employed during the period of de-colonization to fixate the borders of several States in Africa, a time when there was an attempt to unsettle traditional equilibriums for reasons imposed by nationalism. Let us also recall the recent displacement of vast populations witnessed in episodes of “ethnic cleansing” in former Yugoslavia. In every case the “nationalization” of the State was carried out by policies that combined, according to the force relations and the time, coercion and inculcation of the feeling of belonging in populations that were very different in linguistic, religious, and historical terms. In this context, as it is well known, the School of the national States plays a key part in imposing one same national language, history, geography, unified teaching system etc, thereby contributing to construct what is denominated national identity through the inculcation of the fundamentals of a true “civic religion” and, more accurately, the fundamental presuppositions of a (national) image of oneself (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 115). There is no negation of diversity here, but its integration conducted in a way that puts it into a hierarchy: everything that is situated within the territory of the State results from the nation, and every local particular is a component of the whole. Diversity here is not opposed to unity: it is its wealth. And it should be translated harmoniously. The subsets that preclude the representation of harmony are hidden (Thiesse, 1999) under the appearance of the universal that fundamentals, also in the Brazilian case, the brutally integrating vision of the republican ideals. Considering the fact that the universalization of the exigencies thus instituted is not followed by the universalization of the access to the means of fulfilling them, it is seen to favor at the same time the monopolization of the universal by some and the privation of all the others of the specificity of their humanity.

In these terms, I think about the effects of the attempt to reconcile the knowledge about the pupil population of the ever growing impoverished peripheries with the cultural viewpoint demanded by the standards of excellence of the school systems of the national States that have as their basis the writing and the abstraction. The psychological brutality necessary to enforce such coincidence in harmonious terms has led many adolescents, as abundantly reported in the headlines, to violent ruptures with the school and social orders, in an effort to salvage their threatened cultural identities. I recall here the drug trafficking, the vandalism against school buildings, the physical aggression against teachers and fellow students (O Estado de São Paulo, 16/11/2008), the Columbine incident in the USA. A beautiful movie directed by João Jardim, *Pro dia nascer feliz* (2006), depicts touchingly this psychological brutality in the anonymous tale of an adolescent who narrates how she stabbed a colleague to death at school: “it still took her ten minutes to die. I’m a minor, three years at Febem go quickly”; in the case of a boy from Duque de Caxias who is moving at the border of criminality, and does not conceal the pride he felt at going armed to a funk party, but who feels equally proud of his performance with the school’s percussion band; in the story of the girl who feels rejected at school; or in the story of the teacher who is, figuratively speaking, raped by the student. The stories in the movie show the behavior of adolescents inside the school, not just towards the teacher but also in relation to their colleagues, and to this moment of intense fear before the present and the lack of perspective in the future, which they try to vent out appearing sometimes violent, sometimes depressed in the claustrophobic atmosphere of the school.

Thus, if there is a dilemma of the coincidence between State/Nation and School/Culture it is because there is in it a solution of lasting efficacy. Considering for example that being within the borders of a State does not indicate a true belonging to the nation, it becomes difficult to think about the word nation – as it was fixed in the late 19th century – outside a tension that opposes simultaneously a subject definition, that is, cultural–political, and an objective definition, that is to say, juridical-administrative. One of my graduate students describes clearly this entanglement of concepts in his master thesis on

Angolan political refugees (Gomes, 2004). The confusion between belonging to the State and belonging to the nation, according to Gérard Noiriel (2001), exists because it is convenient to the efforts of political domination. Similarly we can say that the cultural pattern fixed within the borders of the School exists because it is convenient to the effort of domination by the State elites. In such situation the school remains as the only place regarded as legitimate for accessing culture. School and Culture, State and nation, live therefore inside the same tension that in the 19th century opposed erudite culture to popular culture, the culture of the intellectuals to the culture of manual workers, the culture of the colonizers and the culture of the colonized etc.

Christophe Charle (1987; 1990) in his two well known books about the republican elites and about the birth of the intellectuals investigates this tension as the result of the action of new social categories (liberal professions, economic professions, intellectual professions) with resources different from those of the members of nobility or the Church who, at the moment when the power of the lay State was established, began to demand a new distribution of posts of authority founded on the volume of the school capital. When in power, and in order to guarantee it, these categories strived to take control of the instances of production of the national memory and culture.

In the specific case of Brazil the work of Sérgio Miceli (1979) on the intellectuals, published ten years before that of Charle, retraces these same strategies. The intellectuals struggled to reach positions created in the public and private sectors of the market for posts during the Getúlio Vargas's era, that is, during the process of nationalization of the Brazilian State. The work of construction of the idea of nation in that period, and of its definition in juridical-administrative terms, was grounded on the establishment, among others, of the Ministry for Education and Public Health, Immigration and Colonization Council, Department of the Press and Advertising, and of the organic laws of Teaching, which contributed to redefine the channels of access and influence with the central political power.

The valuation of School, and through it of the school capital, was in both cases the manner found to value social properties of the new emerging social categories in the field of power. In France, where the famous discourse by Jules Ferry was given at the Molière Room in Paris in 1870, the struggle between two modes of production of the elites, meritocratic and traditional, shaped the debate opposing the advocates of lay teaching equal to everyone and the proposers of confessional teaching. For this reason, among others, the School was at the heart of the republican concerns, that is to say, it was one of the most important instruments in legitimizing the dominant position of the new elites of the 19th century in Europe and of the mid 20th century in Brazil. And it is still through it that the governing groups continue to make use of the resources of the State to impose a representation of social order that justifies and maintains a situation of privilege. A situation accomplished at the cost of a gigantic practical and theoretical work in which the formulators of public policies engage in competition for the monopoly of material and symbolic advantages derived from the state camp, adjusting their contradictions in the reforms that seek solution to the crises of the teaching system.

The fact is that the dilemma of the coincidence between School and Culture exists because alluring formulae exist that succeed in concealing the secret of a logic that rests upon the force relations existing in the task of construction of the National State of which we, as the school, are products.

Paraphrasing Bourdieu 1993, one of the main powers of the State is that of producing and imposing, particularly through the School, the thought categories we spontaneously use toward all things in the world and toward the State itself. That is the source of the lure of representations of the State and of the difficulty to think about it. It is what lead him to modify the famous formula by Max Weber “the State is a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical power in a given territory”. For Bourdieu (1993)

the State is a community X (to be determined) that successfully claims the monopoly of the use of physical and symbolic violence in a given territory and upon the whole of its corresponding population. (p. 107)

In this definition is the State is, therefore, the result of a process of concentration of different types of capital, capital of physical power, economic capital, cultural capital, in other words, the capital of information, and symbolic capital. The concentration of different types of capital produced in fact the emergence of specific capital, proper to the state, that allows the State to exert power over the various fields and over the different kinds of capital, especially over the value attributed to them (and at the same time over the power relations among those who have them).

Even if the different dimensions of these processes of concentration (armed forces, laws) are interdependent, I shall here, in respect to the description of the theme, limit myself to the examination of the contribution of the State to the unification of the cultural market through the unification of all the codes – juridical, linguistic, metric – and the homogenization of the forms of communication, especially the bureaucratic (forms and printouts). And it is, above all, through the School, with the generalization of primary education during the 19th century, that the unifying action of the State in the issue of culture, a fundamental element in the construction of the State-nation, is exerted.

The creation of national society goes along with the affirmation of the possibility of universal education: all individuals are equal before the law; the State has the obligation of making them citizens endowed with the cultural means to actively exercise their civil rights. It follows that the State is a field of power, a game space within which the owners of (different kinds of) capital struggle mainly for the state capital that ensures the power over its reproduction, particularly through the institution of school.

It is not surprising, therefore, to observe in Ferry's discourse of 1870 "*De l'égalité d'éducation*" that the republican conception of education was something unknown, mysterious, and received by many as a novelty, and even as nonsense by the luminaries engaged in the famous school wars of the 19th

century. It is almost curious to observe that eleven years later, on the occasion of the promulgation of the law of free education, and in the following year when the compulsoriness and laity of education were established, the idea was already regarded as natural. The two quotes below show the difference between an eloquent discourse made by a journalist, a budding congressman (1870), and the discourse of a minister well advanced in his career in a letter to the teachers in 1883 where the whole text expresses the security of the ongoing public teaching system:

When I was given (Ferry, 1893) the supreme honor of representing a segment of the Parisian population in the House of Representatives I took an oath: among all issues, among all the needs of the time, among all the problems, I chose one to which I shall dedicate my whole intelligence, all my soul, all my heart, all physical and moral power: that is the problem of the education of the people. [...] I myself chose this issue: the equality of education, and I'm certain that among all the people that pay me the compliment of hearing me there is a large number which, in the subject of this rather general, mysterious title ask themselves: what is this utopia? Now, it is my intention to show that equality of education is not a utopia; it is a principle; [...] this apparent utopia lies within the order of possible things. [...] Here are the two greatest conquests of this century; the freedom of labor and the universal suffrage; henceforth, neither the right to work nor the right to vote, that is, to contributing to the formation of the public powers, are tied to birth: they are endowments of every man coming into the world. [...] The existing grievance (about the idea of equality) is that of people who resist, probably without being aware of it, modern civilization, and who avoid takes sides with the democratic era in which we enter. (p. 287)

MEMORANDUM

To the teacher, concerning moral and civic education

The beginning of this academic year corresponds to the second year of the application of the law of 28 March 1882. I do not want to start the year without making some personal recommendations which shall not seem superfluous in the light of the first year of experience with this new regime. From among the several obligations it imposes on you, that which is surely most taken to your heart, that which brings the heaviest accumulation of work and concern, is the mission entrusted to you of offering to your pupils moral education and civic instruction [...].

The law of 28 March is characterized by two dispositions that complete each other without contradiction: on the one hand it removes from the mandatory curriculum all private dogma, and on the other hand it includes moral and civic education. Religious instruction belongs to families and to the Church, moral education belongs to the school.

The legislator did not do a negative work. Undoubtedly, he took as his first objective that of separating school and Church, of ensuring the freedom of conscience of teachers and pupils, of distinguishing two long-confused domains, that of beliefs, which are personal, free and variegated, from that of knowledge that is common and indispensable to everybody. But there is something else in the law of 28 March: it affirms the will to build upon us a national education and to build it upon notions of duty and right that the legislator does not hesitate to inscribe in the name of the first truths that no one can ignore. (p. 262)

Equality, compulsoriness, laity. This equation eventually established itself very rapidly. Like the universal suffrage, it is inscribed in almost every constitution in the world, with the public school being regarded as an essential instrument of social and political progress. From the imposed rule to the accepted rule is but a quick step. And everything becomes natural before the strength of the belief in the meritocratic principal for the access to the public posts, especially for the higher public posts, which today is known as competence.

The evolution of the position of the opponents of the public school with respect to the control of the State is representative of the common use that the dominant groups started to make of the school in Brazil in the 1950s. In the book organized by Roque Spencer Maciel de Barros (1960) about the campaign for public schooling in the 1950s it is possible to visualize the old adversaries who had risen to State posts joining forces to the progressive liberals and socialist around the basic theses of the great renovators of Brazilian education of the period between wars. The social and cultural upheaval of the 1960s brought this long process to a halt. To better understand it I quote Philippe Ariès who talks about the role of the crises that runs through the school at that time.

Original as it may be, the current youth revolution does not surprise when situated in the long history of the ages of life since the Middle Age: the passage from a rural society of age classes and initiation rites to a more urban society in which the child becomes an adult without any transition; next, the passage from this society of very young adults of the Ancien Régime to ours where childhood initially, and then adolescence, were prolonged and maintained for very long in

the school purgatories. We are today passive students at an age in which we exercised active functions in the past.

This already old situation was tolerated as long as it remained restricted to the nobility and to the bourgeoisie. But since the 1930s, when economic development extended to ever more numerous classes the prolonged schooling of bourgeois youngsters, the latter became a massive and heavy group, deprived of family models, and marginalized from global society. The way in which this situation became explosive belongs to another History. Here we observe only that as long as the adolescent revolt was limited to short-lived groups (reference to the cinema, to James Dean etc), it failed to interest anyone and was confused with manifestations of delinquency typical of the post-war period. It disquieted the public opinion when it shook, particularly in France, the school system. It was only logical that the youth would have found its battle field in the place where it had little by little been enclosed since the Latin schools of the late Middle Age began to be attended by laypeople (cited by Prado Jr, 1980).

Against this background, and at the same time of the text by Ariès quoted above, the works of Pierre Bourdieu appear, introducing a different dimension of the problem, simultaneously anthropological and of the daily life, permeating the pleasures, passions, and ideas of existence. The more naïve tastes, the love of classical music for instance, are investigated as strategic means of positioning of one social group against the others. These were works that made much sense as an invitation to position oneself in the contemplation of the objective panorama of cultural practices. With rigorous linguistic and statistical analyses these works questioned the egalitarian discourse in which pedagogy was phrased. The text *A Reprodução* (1982) [Reproduction: in education, society and culture] represents the thesis that school teaching functions as the hallmark of the cultural and linguistic differences already present before schooling.

Thus, until the 1990s the debate about equality of opportunities in school took the general form of a rather artificial opposition between what became known as

“reproduction theory” developed by Bourdieu and Passeron and the “model of rational choices” (the level of instruction is the free result of individual choices – behaviors are rational and each one knows what he or she does –; values and traditions explain behaviors) imported into France by Raymond Boudon (1979) and therefrom exported to Brazil.

This situation is followed by a transformation in the State elites interested in solving the problems created in and by the school institution, and also by transformations in the status of those to which the function of defining the school contents to be followed was entrusted, particularly in the political field towards which turned the “official”, authorized agents acting in capacities signed by the State in charge of public policies, either as jurists, economists or political scientists such as sociologists of education.

The debate of the 1960s-1980s was overlaid in the 1990s with “quantitative democratization”. This expression means prolonging the duration of schooling, and is opposed to “qualitative democratization” that describes, also in a statistical way, the weakening of the link between diplomas and social origins. Seeking to legitimize school policies, and trying to avoid the critical analyses on the cultural and social reproduction performed by the school, the data of “quantitative democratization” showed only the transposition of the social inequalities of youngsters from modest families ascending to higher levels of formation whilst the proportion of youngsters from the more favored social strata remained as significant as before. In their turn, the numbers of qualitative democratization, considered as a critical argument against reproduction theory, and trying to show the success of school, did it as “establishment effect”. That was what mobilized the pedagogical teams to an efficient work at local schools.

In these studies we can see the competition between those that determine the true numbers about the school, linked to economists and political scientists, and some of the sociologists deprived of the command over the production of the numbers. Behind those works that manipulate the measures of school success there are, in fact, the transformations of the idea of equality. The political game

of the indicators of democratization is one of identifying equality of chances to the increase in the number of pupils at school. Such increase, however, opens to popular layers of society the access to certificates of little value in social and professional terms. In this production of data there is no concern with the equality of conditions of entry to schools, to the economic value attributed by the State to the different categories of students, and even less to the conditions of their professional insertion. Actually, the material equivalence inside schools is more declared than achieved. Similarly to what happens in the egalitarian fusion realized inside ballot boxes, the accounting of students inside the schools, disconnected from any social and cultural particulars, and publicly displayed by statistical data, like the votes, mixes students of uneven reach and intensity.

Clearly, these debates also impacted the field of the history of education. Studies in this area were hitherto part of the effort of representing School, which is part of School's own reality. That is, these studies were focused on the formal organization of school institutions in an attempt to explain through their previous history the processes of nationalization of the political life of which they were a part, and its founding moments. Since the 1990s they turned their attention to the internal practices of the school institution, based on the notion of school culture. From the long-term observation of the techniques and contents of teaching, historians of School looked there for the existence of a culture created by pedagogical order, analyzing the historical relations between this order and the society in which it is inscribed (Chervel, 1998; Julia, 2001; Forquin, 2003; Faria Filho, 2004). In such manner, the questions about the purpose of School and of the culture it transmits, whose symptoms had appeared one hundred years after the optimistic discourse by Ferry, returned to its interior, interweaved in the political formulae that gave rise to the institution by ignoring the existence of the formulators of State knowledge that compete in a struggle to update the State devices². Thus, both the analyses of school culture and those of

² Whence the questions in an enlightening article: "To what extent, for example, we are not producing a historiographic knowledge demanded by constant educational reforms of our time? To what extent the *presentism* and the pragmatism of educational policies impact our studies? To what extent are we ready (or readying ourselves) for a fruitful and critical dialogue with our

“qualitative democratization” and “quantitative democratization” presuppose and are based on the assumption that the school system can realize everything that the logic of its working, characterized by the laws of the State and by the universal, tend to contradict.

In short, the norms that dominate school activities, tied as they are to the norms that dominate national culture, are subjected to a collective discipline. In it personal desires, ideas and passions, even the political ones, are determined by control procedures institutionalized by the State in which the struggles for the widening of the group in power lead new owners of a strong school culture to invoke universal justifications for the efficacy of the school as a way to educate people, in other words, to the monopolization of the universal by a few. And in such manner, as in the case of the coincidence of State and Nation, the coincidence of School and Culture takes place in practice because it favors the domination efforts of the State elites, a group of people invested with the mission of the general interest, or at least of constituting their point of view as a legitimate one, that is, a universal one, specially through the resource of a rhetoric of the official. And all critical interrogation about the coincidence, impossible a priori, of School and Culture tends to be perceived as sacrilege, taking into account its realization wrapped under the cover over the universal.

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