

# Non-formal education: history and criticism of a social form\*

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## Abstract

This article presents a research that considered as a hypothesis a critical interpretation of the history of non-formal education in Brazil. Here we address its emergence linked to a conservative project to mitigate the strength of popular education during the period of the military dictatorship. The investigation started from such indications and from a methodological proposal of political sociology that refers to the study of hegemonic social forms to search for links of such process in the history of non-formal education. The following presentation discusses the results of an investigation based on bibliographic and documental research. On the one hand, this process is specified by the replacement of adult education programs developed in the early 1960s, amid popular culture movements, which had Paulo Freire as a reference, by the institution of Mobral (Brazilian Movement of Literation). On the other hand, the examination of UNESCO's documents, especially from the texts of Philip Coombs, considered the pioneer in the use of the term non-formal education, as a recommendation to overcoming a crisis in education. In both movements, national and international, it is possible to identify the genesis of this social form configured by the association between the State, private entities, and civil society. This form changes the agents and purposes of an education aimed at the popular classes. The prevalence of this social form appears at other key moments in the history of non-formal education, especially in the 1990s, with the growth of the third sector, NGOs and business foundations and institutes.

## Keywords

Non-formal education – Popular education – History – Hegemony – Social form.

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\* English version by Lucas Hanada Viotto.

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<https://doi.org/10.1590/S1678-4634202147222980>

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## Introduction

The initial approach to the term non-formal education can encompass an immeasurable set of educational practices (GHANEM, 2008). Sometimes, in theoretical production, such a great diversity of activities is suggested that its unity and uniqueness only mobilize a diffuse notion of an educational form different from the schooled one, and not a precise concept or definition. Such breadth includes practices that range from political formation in unions and political parties, to the education of children or the youth in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) during non-school hours. Also, experiencing art education, scientific dissemination in museums, popular education, transmission of knowledge that refer to indigenous and *quilombola* resistance, education in social movements, cultural and artistic manifestations of all kinds, etc.

Despite the efforts made to delimit this line of research, distinguishing between formal education (school), non-formal education (intentional and systematic training activities with diverse content), and informal education (unintended learning processes that occur in different social situations), as Gohn (2006), Afonso (2001), Aroeira Garcia (2007) do, a degree of uncertainty remains and presents itself as a difficulty for the theoretical understanding of such object of study. For Marques and Freitas (2017), the term non-formal education is polysemic and its definition is not watertight. This reinforces methodological problems that still arise when considering the purpose of non-formal education proposals. For Trilla (2003), the description and breadth of non-formal education reveal that, in its multiple orientations, there is a tendency to not strongly differentiate itself from hegemonic forms, which can be configured as a transforming practice, but also “so classist, alienating, bureaucratic, ineffective, costly, obsolete, manipulative, stereotyped, unifying, etc. as the formal can be” (TRILLA, 2003, p. 143). Thus, the wide range of the object of study and the specificity of each type of practice, combine with the difficulties related to disputes about the meaning of the use of the term in different contexts. This imprecision imposes the overcoming of methodological problems for the study of non-formal education.

Given this situation, for us, the methodological proposal made by Carlos Alberto Torres (1992) in the early 1990's seems to remain valid as a form of consistent apprehension of non-formal education as an object of study. Based on the foundations of political sociology, the author suggests that one of the main intellectual tasks for delimiting investigative issues in non-formal education should refer to the study of the identification of upward and minority trends of conceptions and ways of organizing the practices. This is because, according to the author, “the threshold between theories and ideologies in this field is not only very tenuous but sometimes does not exist” (TORRES, 1992, p. 220), and the way to undo theoretical abstractions and theoretical ideological productions concerns an analysis of the historical process of a practice and a field of investigation. For the author, “non-formal education must face the challenge of theory” (TORRES, 1992, p. 220), since its configuration as a “subtheorized” field does not mean that it is exempt from political disputes of meaning or marked by the absence of different rationalities that guide the practices. The upward trends within a field, or the construction of a hegemony in a

social way, according to Torres (1992), should be studied based on the identification of the main agents and the concrete relations of political, economic and social domination, its practices, financing and relations with the State. For the author, such elements encompass a guiding rationality of the purposes of non-formal education together.

This article pursues as hypothesis an interpretation that Carlos Rodrigues Brandão (1984) presented about the genesis of non-formal education, in an important seminar that discussed the dilemmas of popular education at the end of the Military Regime<sup>2</sup>. In the author's analysis, non-formal education emerged as a state strategy for converting the political orientation of the education for the popular classes during the Brazilian military dictatorship, eliminating or neutralizing the strength of the political process of popular education linked to popular fights and organizations with agendas of interest to the workers.

To present this research, it was necessary to briefly situate the political meaning of the popular education practice underway before the Military Coup and then to present the non-formal education. This was done by studying the institution of Mobral (The Brazilian Movement of Literation) in the place of the popular education programs linked to Paulo Freire's practices, which took place through the association between the State, private entities linked to the business community and institutions connected to civil society, at that moment represented by associations of residents or entities of organized workers. Although the political orientation and the practices considered as non-formal education have multiplied in a great variety, the research finds at this moment the emergence of a social form that has become the hegemonic form. The study also sought the use of the term in documents and legislation of the period and the most relevant evidence of the guidelines for the diffusion of this then-new social form. Such evidence, which we present in the second part of this text, was found in the recommendations of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in the 1960s, mainly through the work of one of the organization's international spokespersons at the time, Phillip Coombs. In the third part, we analyze the hegemonizing process of this social form in the history of non-formal education with the summary of three models of education for the popular classes, configured by Brandão at the end of the dictatorship, followed by the negotiation of some key moments in the history of non-formal education, specially the moment of growth in the role of NGOs and the third sector in the 1990s, whose importance is evidenced by the position they now occupy in the documents of social policies, education, and bibliography. In this way, one can observe the permanence of structures created in the authoritarian period as well as the production of a hegemonic social formal of non-formal education linked to the control of the education of the popular classes by the dominant classes.

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**2-** The importance of this text is unique because it is the only one that presents non-formal education as a confrontation with popular education of a transformative nature, even if the transformation presents itself in its great nuances of radicalism between revolutionary and reformist projects. The debate took place in 1982 during the Popular Education Seminar promoted by IBRADES / Centro João XXIII in Rio de Janeiro between November 29 and December 2. The base-texts of the seminar were published in Paiva (1984).

## **The education of the popular class in dispute**

There is a confluence in recent interpretations that locate the emergence of non-formal education in Brazil in the 1960s, driven by the growing importance of adult education or popular education outside of school or formal systems. From that same bibliography, the trajectory would follow a development until its expansion to children, youth, and adults education, within a real explosion of civil society initiatives, led mainly by non-governmental organizations, especially from the 1990s, and which would expand to the present days, dramatically expanding the practices associated with non-formal education (GOHN, 1998; 2006; 2009; AROEIRA GARCIA, 2007, 2008, 2015; PARK; FERNANDES; CARNICEL, 2007; SIMSON; PARK; FERNANDES, 2001).

Such historical path, however, cannot be read linearly as a result of the progress of alternative or non-school forms of education, as they refer to different principles, concepts, and practices. The critical reading presented here addresses a turning point in the transition from popular education to non-formal education, which refers to a process of monopolizing education practices aimed at the popular classes by institutions of the ruling classes that, through different mechanisms, succeed at subsuming the form and content of non-school education to their interests.

It is worth saying, at first, that non-formal education in Brazil is aimed at the popular class (AROEIRA GARCIA, 2008) and one of the elements that circumscribe the denomination is related to the links and marks established historically in the trajectory of non-formal educational practices since its inception, but also to the strong relationship it has established more recently with social assistance and job training, as well as a whole range of activities related to the need to foster educational activities aimed at workers, workers, and their children.

Adult education in Brazil gained force through literacy campaigns, which started in Brazil in the 1940s and 1950s. It is, however, only in the 1960s, with the increase of amplitude in education practices, that such field of action was elevated to the condition of holder of a methodology “that started to direct several adult education practices, organized by different actors, with varying degrees of connection with the government apparatus” (DI PIERO; JÓIA; RIBEIRO, 2001, p. 60). In the early years of the 1960s, the successful experiences of literacy of rural workers organized by Paulo Freire, both in Rio Grande do Norte, Pernambuco, or Natal, accomplished what governments and national elites declared impossible: a practice that could be designed as a solution for the enormous rate of illiteracy, which excluded more than fifty percent of the Brazilian working population (FREIRE, 2006). Besides what these data said about social inequality, Paulo Freire highlighted the role of literacy in the democratization of a society in the midst of a changing process, in addition to the possibility, through literacy, of political participation itself by voting in a period of disputes between national projects (FREIRE, 2006).

Besides teaching literacy, popular education criticized, in practice, what was anti-popular in the elitist Brazilian educational system, which, in addition to being restricted in the offer of vacancies, operated in an anti-dialogue and banking-orientated relationship, that is, it was done by a traditional method of a teacher who teaches and students who learn, establishing a constant denial of popular and oral knowledge for the benefit of an

encyclopedic culture of transmission of school content without context and meaning for workers. Therefore, the literacy project proposed by Freire combined, in a same educational action, the criticism of a banking education with a critical interpretation of the Brazilian anti-democratic trajectory, opening up ways for popular political participation.

In his method, the notion that pulses is that “misery and its cement, illiteracy, are not accidents or waste, but part of the political movement for the domination of the capital” (SCHWARZ, 1978, p. 69). In the interpretation of Schwarz (1978), although the practice developed amid a Christian and reformist program of the Miguel Arraes government, in Pernambuco, the atmosphere created by the capillarity and inventiveness of the Popular Culture Movement (MCP) in previous years had effects that surpassed the electoral limits and the containment of the marginality of the masses. In a movement among university students, workers, peasant leagues, and the popular culture movement, the practice of popular education expanded throughout Brazil by the MEB “Movimento de Educação de Base” (Basic Education Movement), linked to UNE - “União Nacional dos Estudantes” (National Students Union). It contained elements that escaped state control due to their decentralization and link with direct fights. “During 12 months, 1,300 rural unions were created”, says Weffort (2006, p. 18), in the early years of the 1960s in the northeast of Brazil. This political force is expressed in the “large strikes of rural workers in Pernambuco in 1963, the first with 85,000 strikers and the second with 230,000” (WEFFORT, 2006, p. 18).

Paulo Freire thought of the rise of popular struggles, which was underway, as a transitivity process for a democratic society; his sympathy for rebellion was, in his words, “added to a deep sense of responsibility” that should pass “from rebellion to insertion,” experimenting the democratic way through the effective participation in the construction of the destinations where it is being inserted: the school, the neighborhood, the church, the union, the company (FREIRE, 2006, p. 100). Rapidly, Paulo Freire was invited to coordinate the National Literacy and Culture Program under the João Goulart government. If the program had been fulfilled, in 1964, “more than twenty thousand Culture Circles would have been functioning throughout the country” (FREIRE, 2006, p. 128). At the time, when the practice was in the process of becoming a national educational policy within the core reform movements, it was severely repressed by the military coup, with the arrest and subsequent exile of its main reference, along with the harsh repression of popular movements throughout Brazil.

In this same period, a process of inflection in education aimed at workers began, which ended only in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was a process of loss of identification of adult education with the political formation associated with activism and the draft of the social form of non-formal education in Brazil. Let’s take a look.

The military government designed, in the late 1960s, and put into practice in 1971, what would be the military response to the hole created by the extinction of the literacy program coordinated by Paulo Freire. Known as Mobral - which interestingly bears the word movement in its name: the Brazilian Literacy Movement - was widely advertised by the military government in lottery tickets, magazines, newspapers, and television. The calls called for the participation of the population<sup>3</sup>: “For the love of God, teach someone

**3-** All the advertisements cited here can be found in a simple internet search of images of Mobral’s. Some of them can be found, for example, here: <http://cultura.culturamix.com/curiosas/Mobral-movimento-brasileiro-para-a-alfabetizacao>. Accessed on: April, 10, 2019.

to read: if you are a mayor, businessman, student, you can help. If you run a union, a religious organization, an association, you can help. So, help”. The call equally addressed to representatives of the State, the business community, the church, the union and students (as if groups representing different and often opposite interests could guide their practices in a common sense) is one of the hallmarks of the institution of substitution, and non-continuity, of popular education through non-formal education in Brazil. The search for a neutral and beneficial image of literacy gradually translates into a policy outlined from above that deliberately seeks to confuse and mix agents of education for the people as a compensatory and no longer contesting practice.

Mobral’s disclosure aimed at a particular class and inserted an assistance sense that individualized the practice that Paulo Freire understood as a collective act: “Teach the first illiterate person you meet: the maid, the gardener, the seamstress’s sister, the seamstress, the manicure. With Mobral’s literacy material, you can teach anyone to read and write in 90 days”. However, the most emblematic of Mobral’s advertisements is perhaps the one that is directly addressed to entrepreneurs and reverses the sign of adult education that had been practiced until that point, clearly placing it at the service of the ruling class. On the back cover of a magazine from the publisher Editora Abril magazine, with a photo of a tycoon smiling resembling *The Godfather*, it reads:

**Figure 1-** back cover of a magazine from the publisher Editora Abril magazine

**Ajude o Mobral com segundas intenções.**

Todo analfabeto é pobre. Consome pouco. Compra pouco. Jamais um analfabeto será um bom cliente da sua empresa. Você, como empresário, já deve ter percebido onde vamos chegar: ajude o Mobral para ajudar a sua empresa. Pelos seus lucros futuros. Ajudar o Mobral traz outras compensações. Pessoalmente, você tem a oportunidade de conviver com os líderes da sua cidade. A começar pelo Prefeito, profissionais liberais, comerciantes, industriais. E isso é importante para você e para o seu negócio. Ajudando o Mobral você reforça a boa imagem da sua empresa de maneira mais prática, direta e simpática do que mil coquetéis ou notinhas de viagem à Europa. No fim das contas, como você depende do progresso do País para crescer, quem sai ganhando é você mesmo.

**Ajude o Mobral da sua cidade com**

**TRABALHO:** ajuda a sua cidade, participa de projetos de desenvolvimento social e econômico.

**MATERIAL:** cadernos, livros, brochuras, apostilas, vídeos, cassetes, fitas de áudio em áudio.

**RECURSOS:** ajuda de qualquer quantidade.

**mobral**  
instituto de cultura

**PROCURE A COMISSÃO MUNICIPAL DA SUA CIDADE**

Help Mobral with second intentions. Every illiterate person is poor, consumes little, buys little. An illiterate person will never be a good customer for your company. You, as a businessman, must have already realized where we want to get to: help Mobral to help your company. For your future profits. Helping Mobral brings other payoffs. Personally, you have the opportunity to live with the leaders of your city. Starting with the mayor, professionals, traders, industrialists. By helping Mobral you reinforce the good image of your company in a more practical, direct and friendly way than a thousand cocktails or notes from trips to Europe. In the end, as you depend on the country’s progress to grow, you are the one who wins. (MOBRAL, promotional material).

Source: Acervo Digital da Revista Veja, em 4 de setembro de 1974, p. 108.

The absence of disguise about the real beneficiaries of the popular literacy program present in the government's propaganda, aimed at economic leaders, would dispense comments had not been for the association with the more organic articulation of the business community with the State during the Military Regime in a phase of hardening, persecution, torture, etc. One cannot lose sight of the fact that the substitution of popular education for non-formal education was taking shape amid violence coming from the State and the business sector, which took place during the period. The "terror of a delinquent state," in the words of Paulo Arantes, has allowed since then, an "era of impunity" to erupt with historical extensions of forms of domination, showing that "this technology of power and government can no longer be "uninvented" (ARANTES, 2014, p. 284). Therefore, it is necessary to observe the elements that have become permanent since the rupture of popular organizations caused by the dictatorship. For our investigation, in addition to the violence of the State's management for various types of subordination and the weakening of social struggles, it is essential to highlight the aspect that refers to the articulation between the State, civil society and the business sector by introducing a notion similar to the idea of social responsibility, which starts to combine, later on - clearly starting in the 1990s, the advertisement of the image of the socially responsible, with the control of social projects aimed at the poorest layers of the population, effected by the transferring of the execution of services and state resources to the private sector.

Notwithstanding, Mobral was a failure in its literacy attempts - and perhaps, for that very reason, due to the emptiness of its significance for the change of social reality through education -, its social form, in contrast, became a valid *modus operandi* for the business community (in collusion with the authoritarian State), inasmuch as it effectively mobilized many people, entities, associations, according to their economic and political interest of social domination, completely changing the image of adult education associated with political formation.

It is also worth noting that, in 1971, the Ministry of Education and Culture sent the "base document for the implementation of MOBRAL" to all municipalities across the country. After a brief introduction and presentation of the program, there is an item entitled "the management of the literacy problem by the current MOBRAL" that begins with the words: "The illiterate does not belong only to the Government; but to the whole community," to which it concludes that "everyone is responsible, especially those who have enjoyed the privileges of the school" (BRASIL, MEC, 1971, n.p). The advertisement, previously mentioned, reproduces the text of the first topic of this document which refers to the "private initiative":

There was a concern on behalf of MEC in the sense that it was up to the private initiative, the Directorate of MOBRAL, at its various levels: National, Regional and Municipal. The private sector should pursue literacy, not only as a patriotic procedure but as an investment. Literacy + semi-qualification = higher income, better salary, better social level, a generator of wealth, a better consumer. We want to convince the Brazilian entrepreneur that the expansion of his domestic market depends on this social standard that is intended to be raised by Functional Literacy. (BRASIL, MEC, 1971, n.p.).

Not only does it become evident the capture of the adult education formation process by the partnership between the public and the private sector, which is the own germ of the third sector of the Corporate Foundations aimed at social work, but also the way of operationalizing the notion of productivity through the reification of each individual formed by non-school education, quite identified with the theory of human capital. The chance that each worker becomes part of a profitable mechanism, as a labor force inserted in production and consumption, also outlines the logic of a social right that functions as an economic investment, a kind of speculation of a profitable future.

From a political perspective, this process goes back to the very genesis of non-formal education in Brazil. For Carlos Rodrigues Brandão (1984), a militant and popular educator in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, it was in the development of forms of education aimed at popular sectors, during the authoritarian period, that Brazil and other countries on the continent created an evident opposition “within the domain of ‘education with popular sectors’, between ‘non-formal education’ and ‘popular education’”. If the latter “puts the educator’s work at the service of political projects for the liberation of the popular classes”, it does the “opposite of what non-formal education plans to accomplish”, since it was “generated by the power of the State or by dominant agencies and destined for the domestication and control of the popular classes” (BRANDÃO, 1984, p. 179, emphasis added). It is necessary to observe this process more closely.

## **Non-formal education in the global education crisis**

It is necessary here to include an international gaze at the influences for the emergence and growth of non-formal education in Brazil. Both the national bibliography (AROEIRA GARCIA, 2008; AROEIRA GARCIA, 2015; SIMSON; PARK; SIEIRO FERNANDES, 2001) and the international (PALHARES, 2007) offer evidence of a relation between the emergence of non-formal education and the action of international organizations.

Such studies mention the articulation of the use of the term non-formal education in a conference on the World Education Crisis, organized by Coombs in 1967 in the state of Virginia, United States, and which brought together educational leaders from different countries. Brazil was represented by Anísio Teixeira. In fact, the synthesis document from the congress does not mention the term and there is only a possibility of linking it to non-formal education when we observe the suggestion that countries review their tax laws “in order to stimulate the flow of private resources for educational purposes” (UNESCO, 1967, p. 06). In any case, in the following year, the author launches a book with the same name as the congress and presents non-formal education as a possible ally to combat the inability to meet the social demands of formal education systems. His schematic analysis of data deserved a more detailed critical interpretation, as well as his adherence to Human Capital Theories in formulations such as: “teaching is a mass-production industry and requires intensive work” or, even, that “teaching is a producer and consumer of high-level labor to serve labor consumers” (COOMBS, 1976, p. 60). For the author, education differs from a department store:



[...] however, in common with all other production enterprises, a set of inputs that are subjected to a process aimed at achieving certain outputs that must lead to the satisfaction of the objectives. (COOMBS, 1976, p. 28, emphasis added).

The analysis of the education crisis, the conference's motto, is made by reading the vertiginous growth of formal education systems in the 1950s, the analysis of expenditures in each country, and the effectiveness and efficiency measured by the standard of labor formation and continuity of academic studies. The mismatches caused by the increase in popular demand for education and the gap in meeting this demand, together with the scarcity of resources and the inertia of school systems and society itself - which according to the author, resists modernizations because they carry "the heavy burden of traditional attitudes" (COOMBS, 1976, p. 21) - places obstacles to the necessary changes in the education systems. To this end, it would be necessary to change teacher formation, as teachers "are at the heart of the educational crisis" (COOMBS, 1976, p. 59). With this, the author enters the analysis of non-school education or permanent education - inaugurating the use of the term non-formal education as a field of action - as it presents greater success in its objectives, associating several communicative segments and not only specialists in education.

Based on the recognition that there is a kind of parallel system of non-formal education, which is difficult to understand because it is outside the planning processes and because it is carried out by "dozens of public and private entities", moreover, it appears and disappears with quite a fluidity (COOMBS, 1976, p. 198), the author notes that there is a distinction between central and developed countries and the poor, underdeveloped and socialist countries. In the United States, for example, there was an extensive network of permanent education, identified by three origins:

[...] one was maintained by private companies, the second by military corporations, and the third comprised a mix of educational activities sponsored by voluntary organizations. (COOMBS, 1976, p. 200).

In the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and other socialist countries, "remarkable results" were obtained precisely because they managed to combine formal and non-formal systems and to relate work and studies in an intimate manner (COOMBS, 1976, p. 201), while whereas, in poor countries, non-formal education would be effective in providing:

[...] to a large number of farmers, workers, small traders, and others who never entered a classroom, a set of knowledge and skills to be used for the benefit of their development and that of their country. (COOMBS, 1976, p. 203).

For him, it was "clear that in future years, non-formal education will need to have as its main objective the training of farmers and rural leaders (innovators and entrepreneurs of various types)" (COOMBS, 1976, p. 204, my emphasis).

During this period, Coombs created the UNESCO Educational Planning Institute, having previously worked at the US Department of Education, under the Kennedy administration, and later at USAID (United States Agency for International Development), which had a lot of influence on Brazilian education during the dictatorial period, in which MEC-USAID partnerships for formal education reforms were established. Furthermore, as we have seen, non-formal education became part of the suggestions for improving educational quality in peripheral countries. Coombs concludes his considerations about the role of non-formal education in overcoming the education crisis by suggesting a research boost in this vitally important field. Therefore, one must know what already exists and include it in educational planning so that, with this, the relationship between formal and non-formal education can be improved, and one can “demolish the wall that separates them, and promote a better division of labor between the two” (COOMBS, 1976, p. 206).

In short, the introduction of the designation of non-formal education in the educational lexicon has its genesis from outside in, coming from outside of school education and national territory. It aims to create a new field of practices investigation with popular sectors to learn how the generation of results happens with scarce resources with the objective of subordinating its development to educational planning for the development of peripheral nations (PALHARES, 2007).

It is worth noting the report by Paulo Freire that he received a visit from Coombs, ten years after the launch of the *World Crisis in Education*, who was surprised by the influence of Freire on the ongoing changes in education in several developing countries, built in his time of exile and visits through countries in Africa and Latin America. In the conversation reported in a book, Freire says he disagrees that there has been a crisis in education, but rather a crisis in the system (FREIRE; GUIMARÃES, 2014).

In an interview for Folha de São Paulo newspaper, on May 29, 1994, Paulo Freire mentions how much he was criticized “by some people from the left, who thought I was perverted by the Alliance for Progress” (FREIRE, 1994) to carry out literacy in Angicos. It is an American program that financed, together with the government of Rio Grande do Norte, literacy in Angicos in 1963 (GERMANO, 1993). Moreover, it is worth mentioning this interview to remember that besides Paulo Freire - who became a symbol of popular education - there were, in that context, many other groups, including those with more radical perspectives in the scope of the relation between the State and financiers, in addition to different objectives with regard to the degrees of intended social change or even what was envisioned as popular participation. In this Folha piece, interviewers Marilene Felinto and Mônica Rodrigues da Costa ask: “Is your method more important because it founded a philosophy of education in Brazil or because of the concrete application it had?”, to which Paulo Freire replies:

All of these things are valid. A curious fact about the concrete application in Brazil is, for example, Mobral being born to deny my method, to silence my speech, but at the same time having brought into its staff young teachers who had worked with the Paulo Freire method. (FREIRE, 1994, n.p.).

Although the term non-formal education is not used in the official Brazilian documents of the dictatorship period, not even to classify Mobral, it seems that the association made by Carlos Rodrigues Brandão (1984) makes this process intelligible, especially if we consider the strong influence of international organizations in the education of Latin American countries under authoritarian governments. For him, between 1960 and 1980, a clear opposition between popular education and non-formal education was produced, since, in the latter, there was a merge of different agents, spaces, financiers, methodologies, and objectives with antagonistic interests to that of popular rebellion, deeply marked by conservatism, repression and stagnation of social struggles by the dictatorship.

Thus, Brandão proposes a study based on the “semantic incursion of the subject” that “could reveal the direction of the trends”. Among the right, there would be the use of the expression *non-formal education*, in the center, the *participative education* expression and, finally, “to the left-field, the idea of ‘*popular education*’ associated with projects of a socialist horizon and popular leadership and, in some cases, the preference for the pure and simple adoption of the ‘*political education*’ formula” (BRANDÃO, 1984, p 198, emphasis added).

## **The production of a hegemonic form of education of the popular classes**

*Do we catch butterflies or delude ourselves with our words?  
There are no schools for the people, brother; there are schools of the people or schools of the oppressor  
There is MOBREAL and there are the local groups of popular struggles,  
Which side are we on, professor?  
There are the employers' training courses of the workforce, there is the Minerva Project,  
the adult education programs of TV Globo,  
Harmless Adult Education Programs  
And the lies of the Development of Communities  
On the other side there are moments of practice, movements,  
Popular spaces and struggle, advances and retreats, search for organization,  
trajectory of work and revisions.  
There are groups, people, popular fronts and agents of struggle and culture.  
On the one hand, prison schools full of flowers and educational resources:  
Traps that transform man into a mass and their body into a machine.  
On the other side, the situations, brother, the structures,  
schools, instruments and educators straight from the classroom.  
Carlos Rodrigues Brandão, 1980.  
(Sixth excerpt from the poem “The culture of the people and popular education”)*

For Brandão (1984), the diversification of models and agents of adult education of the popular classes diluted a clarity of antagonistic projects of the capitalist and working classes as could be observed in the early 1960s. However, in popular education, there were

more or less radical conceptions in their autonomy vis-à-vis the State: first concerning reformism, but also to the vanguardism of movements, then in relation to the position of leftist organizations facing the Military Coup. In practice, the dissolution of the evident dichotomy between non-formal education and popular education took place with the growth of a third way between the two fields in the following decades.

Non-formal education, which can be represented by Mobral at its founding moment, is organized by the State together with companies, volunteers, and civil society organizations, and is aimed at men and women workers as individuals for a “consumerist” and subordinate participation: “Productive at work, subordinate in everyday life, docile in politics” (BRANDÃO, 1984, p. 188). At its extreme opposite, popular education, which was organized by popular groups and collectives and aimed at movements and organizations of workers, pursuing the production of “popular power” and strengthening the class for a revolutionary process of confronting capitalism (BRANDÃO, 1984, p. 188). But in the “middle of the field” one would find what Brandão called “participatory education”, with less defined borders, with the possibility of positioning itself more towards conformity or the needs of social changes according to its practical development, in the interaction between community and educational agents, which are diversified, turning to a social struggle for local community development, “with a view of producing a strengthening of civil society and the conquest of society models that are politically participative and economically developed” (BRANDÃO, 1984, p. 188) within a notion identified by the author as “productive participation”.

If the forms described by Brandão contribute to making models of education aimed at the popular classes intelligible, the dynamism of the social process mixes trends in an even more complex way. As we have seen, Paulo Freire (1994) mentions that Mobral placed into his project educators trained for the cultural circles. Even Brandão (1984) admits that sometimes the link with social struggles, residents’ association or the rural union with whom local businessmen and city halls relate to end up making the experience somewhat more democratic and participatory than the military project projected since the Ministry of Education. The experiences of a revolutionary nature were reduced to small isolated groups and, little by little, the insignia democracy started to predominate over the diverse experiences - even in those employers and businesses, which started to adopt the predominant discourse to propagandize their practices, which appears more clearly with the weakening of state authoritarianism.

The fact is that, during the long military dictatorship period in Brazil, the experiences of popular education that managed to maintain themselves had to develop by going underground, given the difficulty of circulation and interaction between such experiences. Only the process of re-democratization would change this situation when groups start to appear on the agenda, as recorded in the study “*Quando novos personagens entram em cena*”, by Eder Sader (1980). In addition to the new political forms taken by what he calls new unionism, the author observes the forms of organization in peripheral communities in experiences of various types, including educational ones. This is because “movements made up of precarious workers, housewives, slum dwellers, based on the ‘reproduction sphere’, would have to rely on other references” (SADER, 1988, p. 195):

Their movements were supported by community structures founded on group solidarity. Excluded from stable jobs and congregated rights, they constituted their own references. Leaning on the church, they found both a powerful institution in a position to protect their struggles and, above all, a discourse on solidarity and justice in the name of those who fought for it. (SADER, 1988, p. 195).

Amid the rise of new social movements, especially after the great workers' strikes of 1978 and 1979 of the teachers strike movements in the early 1980s, and the appearance of associative forms created during the authoritarian period, a fierce debate emerged among popular educators. One that includes the critical position of Brandão that we are analyzing here, as well as of several other popular educators, education activists or organizations, and social movements. It was a decision to be taken in the face of the moment of re-democratization: betting on the continuity of non-state practices or disputing the political orientations of education practices with the popular classes within the State.

Vanilda Paiva (1984) synthesizes the moment as a challenge to engaged educators that referred to the decision to continue developing the strengthening of isolated practices of popular education that are very contextualized and qualitative, which "are more easily developed with innovations in small movements" (PAIVA, 1984, p. 37), or getting involved in the democratization processes that could broaden and involve quantitatively more people in education held as a universal right.

According to the author, at this point, one can recognize the limitation of educational practices of civil society, at the same time that one can note, in general, that the democratization process would introduce the possibility of transforming the State apparatus into instruments of political struggle, through the growth of participation and social control. With that, the proposal to combine the struggles won, trying to "find possible ways of articulating small institutions and civil society initiatives with the State" (PAIVA, 1984, p. 39).

During the 1980s, many efforts were directed at the struggles concerning human rights, the construction of the first democratic elections, the development of democratic laws and a constitution, moreover, changes in the functioning of public institutions - among which was school-involved in economic struggles by strikes and policies for the democratization of management and access to schooling by the popular strata, which took place within the scope of the more general processes of engagement for the expansion of social rights. The emergence, at that moment, of political parties, national social and union movements guided a good part of the struggles for the occupation of the State and projected this process of accumulation of forces for institutional changes within a democratic-popular field.

In the search for the legalization of their activities in the period of political reopening, many of the groups that were developing community experiences and popular education became institutionalized as associations, institutes, and other types of organizations, which legally fit into private entities of a social character. Sergio Haddad (2014) points to the formation of Brazilian NGOs in the 1970s. Many of them linked to churches and connected to similar entities in Europe, which offered support to continue popular projects surrounded by the dictatorship. Nevertheless, among the total number of NGOs

existing in 2005 in Brazil, only 4% were born in that decade and 22% were still in the 1980s, according to Neves (2005). The most significant growth occurred from the 1990s, a decade in which more than 50% of NGOs were created and, at that time, having a basis on other political projects and more linked to the State and the dominant classes rather than to popular projects (NEVES, 2005). In the 1990s, there was a boom in NGOs (SIEIRO FERNANDES; AROEIRA GARCIA, 2008), and it was not by chance that non-formal education as a research field emerged in Brazil (AROEIRA GARCIA, 2007).

In the early 1990s, NGOs already appear in the laws as “promoters of social rights”, as is the case with the Statute of Children and Adolescents (BRAZIL, 1990), or internationally, as in the World Declaration on Education for All (or Jontiem Declaration, also from 1990). This last document demonstrates an international consensus around the objective of expanding the scope of education to remedy the recurrence of exclusion and failure in learning, through the expansion of social agents considered educational, the strengthening of alliances with various social sectors, as well as through the mobilization of resources and public and private entities, so that NGOs, which carry out non-formal education, are inserted in the “principles of action” of the Declaration:

The realization of joint actions with non-governmental organizations at all levels offers great possibilities. While defending public, independent and critical points of view, these autonomous entities can perform monitoring, research, training, and production of material functions for the benefit of the processes of non-formal education and permanent education. (UNESCO, 1990, n.p.).

In Brazil, if such entities begin to emerge from below, from the organization of civil society, and linked to democratic struggles in the 1970s and 1980s, in the 1990s, it is the opposite, and they start to be created from above, with ample encouragement from the State, which opens public notices for projects for the provision of private services for public purposes. This solidifies the Third Sector - which brings together the form of a private-law entity, with objectives or character that become considered public because they develop social works.

For Montaña (2007), the weakness of the third sector concept lies in the appearance of creating a “new” sector that would provide the answers that, presumably, the state can no longer provide and that the market does not seek to provide” (MONTAÑO, 2007, p. 54-55). What appears as a novelty does nothing more than the management of “transferring public resources to private sectors”, with the serious burden of creating a new notion of political participation made by civil society, “based on a vague concept of social movement,” that succeeded in replacing a good part of the action “of the old militant of the social movement (from the 70s and 80s) with the new militant from the NGO (from the 90s)” (MONTAÑO, 2007, p. 139).

The plan of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's government (2008) mentioned the privatization of services<sup>4</sup>, while the "Plano de Reforma do Aparelho" (Plan for the Reform of the State Apparatus) (1995), which questioned the role of the State as a provider of public services, planned to "transfer to the non-public sector— these services through an "advertisement" program, transforming current public foundations into social organizations" (BRASIL, 1995, p. 26). Thus, the creation of private law entities also started to take place from above, from the State, and not from civil society, taking the form of government programs, as is the case of the "Organização Social Alfabetização Solidária and Comunitas" (Solidary Social Organization and Communitas), created in 1996, analyzed by Neves (2005).

We would enter another chapter in the history of domination of popular classes education by the ruling class if we were to enter here the "mercantile-philanthropic conversion" (SOURCES, 2017) of a democratic militancy organized in private entities, associated with the immense growth of Non-Profit Foundations and Associations (FASFIL). Under the banner of "corporate social responsibility", in a context of growing unemployment and precarious work, the process of transferring the management of social rights to private entities, as planned by the reforms of the 1990s, took place. The mercantile logic of the dispute over resources to provide social services constituted a true "citizenship market" (ARANTES, 2004), consolidating "a new pedagogy of the hegemony" (NEVES, 2005).

Although the reforms of the 1990s played a fundamental role in creating this system of outsourcing social rights, it is essential not to underestimate the establishment of this social form of business organization on educational social services in their structures created since the military period, as warned Virginia Fontes (2017). Not by accident "it was precisely the political capacity to organize those 'ordinary people' that was the primary target of the terrifying plundering that took over the country after 1964" (ARANTES, 2014, p. 294), just as it was not by chance that the state structure assembled after the 1967 administrative reform was maintained with the democratic reopening, being incorporated into the 1988 Constitution and updated by the State Managerial Reform of the 1990s (ARANTES, 2014, p. 298).

## Final considerations

The fissure caused by the 1964 military coup in the development of various educational practices for the popular classes created, at the same time, non-formal education and the close association between the State, companies, and civil society. The rupture produced a permanent social form. Although it changes in degrees of importance in different social contexts, it ended up designing the hegemonic structure of non-formal education in Brazil.

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**4-** "Making the government more effective to run the country and to provide the services that the population requires, also means rationalizing the public machinery and reducing the presence of the State in areas where it is no longer needed. The privatization process will be accelerated, but we will be careful not only to strengthen the government's regulatory and supervisory power, but also to avoid the formation of private monopolies"(CARDOSO, 2008, p. 121).

The critical notion of social form leads us to the links between particular social relations elements with the capital's formal totality. It is impossible to analyze any social-educational relationship based only on the speeches, as the content is also in the form, that is, in the social relations that it establishes with the State, with funding, educators, and students. Almerindo Janela Afonso (2001) had already pointed out that the theoretical production of non-formal education could not adhere to this new form uncritically, mainly because it synthesizes contradictions imposed by neoliberalism, demanding a rigorous apprehension of the meanings of the supposed freedom and autonomy that were being developed within this field.

After studying the goals of popular education as it developed in the early 1960s, it is possible to identify the difference in goals with non-formal education and, from this point of view, it is difficult to see popular education as a practice that occurs within the field of non-formal education. Thus, popular education could only exist as a “the negation of the negation” (BRANDÃO, 1984, p. 37), both in terms of the form and content of non-formal education, as counter-hegemony.

The critical - historical and sociological - apprehension of non-formal education makes a long-standing process intelligible. One that has also transformed business foundations into the great agents of education of the current popular classes, not only presiding over the educational policies of the current reforms, but also effectively controlling a immeasurable amount of practices in the training of children and young people on the outskirts of large cities through their social projects. What lasted, therefore, was the private and entrepreneurial tutelage of popular formation with the development of increasingly complex forms of association and fusion between public law and private law under democratic discourses in defense of social rights.

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*Received on: 27.04.2019*

*Revised on: 24.03.2020*

*Approved on: 28.04.2020*

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