



History and memory of EJA in Brazilian and Portuguese universities – Twentieth and Twenty-first centuries¹

História e memória da EJA nas universidades brasileiras e portuguesas – séculos XX e XXI

Historia y memoria de EJA en universidades de Brasil y de Portugal – siglos XX y XXI

Organization

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Presentation

The history of Youth and Adult Education (EJA) has been consolidated as a field of research that has been gaining ground in the Academy, due to the match with different themes of historiography. This field, therefore, fosters practices and reflections that are not specifically incorporated in the school environment, as they go far beyond. It is a story told from the relations of gender, work, politics, body, among many other perspectives that reveal multiple facets of the same object. However, while we recognize that there has been a steep increase in research on the history of EJA in the last 20 years, there is still slight production compared to, for example, the history of primary education. Thus, this Dossier aims to promote a dialogue among researchers on the history of youth and adult education in Brazilian and Portuguese universities in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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The dossier is composed of six articles; three of them were written by Brazilian and Portuguese researchers, and in this co-authorship, it is analyzed two realities so distant, but so close at the same time. In the other three articles, the authors, Brazilian researchers, specifically address the reality of EJA in Brazil.

This dossier brings similar perspectives about the relationships between the universities and EJA, from the 1970's to the present moment. This is a history of the present time that needs to be told, as updated data indicate that the illiteracy rate of the population aged 15 and over in Brazil fell from 7.2% in 2016 to 7.0% in 2017, but it did not reach the 6.5% stipulated rate, still for 2015, by the National Education Plan (PNE). The Brazilian reality indicates that there are about 11.5 million people aged 15 or older who cannot read and write, and only 118,000 illiterate people attended literacy courses in 2017². From these data, it is sadder to know that most illiterate Brazilians remain out of school and deprived of their rights. It is not included, in this sum, data from the Survey on Functional Literacy Indicator (INAF) in 2018, which would further increase this percentage, since the survey measures the literacy levels³ of the Brazilian population aged over 15⁴.

Given these alarming and, unfortunately, historical data of Brazilian education, this dossier brings to light the debates, the impasses, the places and 'no places' of Youth and Adult Education, especially in studies and research on youth and adult literacy in Brazilian and Portuguese context. At the same time, the studies gathered here show what has been done, produced and researched, for a better understanding of this phenomenon that prevails in Brazil.

The dossier starts with the article by Rocha and Goulart, in which the authors seek to contemplate a little explored area, i.e., EJA in academic research focused specifically on literacy. The study aims to analyze and understand the history of youth and adult literacy in Brazil from the academic discourses produced from 1978 to 2000. The authors conducted a bibliographic survey of theses and dissertations published in the country during the twentieth century, considering how research in Brazilian universities addressed the theme of youth and adult literacy.

Although, in quantitative terms, this production is not so expressive, 65 productions were identified, and within the analysis of the "prioritized themes" category, the highlights were 'Programs, projects, governmental and non-governmental initiatives', followed by 'Experiences in youth and adult literacy' and 'Representations about youth and adult literacy'. This analysis of the authors matches subsequent articles in this dossier.

The second and third articles have in common the dialogue between institutions and extension projects in which the research, teaching, training and specialization of EJA teachers are articulated. Another affinity in the articles by Maciel and Santos and Porcaro is in the dialogues among three universities of Minas Gerais: Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU), Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) and Federal University of Viçosa (UFV). All the authors act as teacher educators and researchers of EJA, highlighting the field of youth and adult literacy. The similarities are in the actions and coordination of extension projects focused on the field of EJA, the confrontation that these projects face within the Academy and the perseverance of the authors to carry on projects considered of long term, when the terminality after two or four years is more common. Perseverance as a political option to

² Cf. Calçade, 2018.

³ INAF's definition for literacy: "is the ability to understand and use written information and to reflect on it, a continuous act that ranges from simple recognition of written language elements and numbers to more complex cognitive operations involving the integration of information from texts, knowledge and worldviews". (AÇÃO EDUCATIVA; INSTITUTO PAULO MONTENEGRO, 2018, p. 4).

⁴ Cf. Ação Educativa; Instituto Paulo Montenegro, 2018.

believe that youth and adult literacy is a right, and thus continue to uphold Freire's principles of providing meaningful learning in people's lives.

It is important to emphasize that these three articles seek to highlight the articulation between the extension, the research and the specificity of the teacher training on EJA at the university. This articulation, problematized in the authors' texts, has been one of the objectives pursued by the researchers in their academic trajectories and, in part, with a successful feedback over three decades. The training of EJA literacy teacher and the specificity necessary for this training, still little valued also in academic research, as pointed by the paper by Rocha and Goulart, have been a defense for the continuity of these extension projects.

In this dossier, the public policies, life histories and identity of EJA are also discussed from the point of view of researchers from two countries: Brazil and Portugal. In the first one, Oliveira and Amaral start with Portuguese and Brazilian legislation to analyze the history of Adult Education democratization policies in both countries, which is analyzed from the point of view of the insertion of this audience in higher education. Nowadays, according to studies and investigations in the field of EJA, it is essential to insert the segment of EJA in Higher Education, not only because the student is a worker, but also because of their stories marked by disruptions and discontinuities in the schooling process. Oliveira and Amaral also recall the life stories of these students and bring common ground between the two countries. The geographical distance between Brazil and Portugal becomes meaningless before the similarities between EJA students from both sides of the Atlantic.

The authors Vieira, Moio and Lima also bring their reflections on the late entry of EJA students in higher education. Under the title *Stories of the entry of young people over 23 in higher education in Portugal*, the authors present the history of adult education in Portugal, from the 16th century to youth and adult education during and after the 1974 Revolution. Then, the authors reflect on the insertion of adults in higher education, a topic that has already been discussed in the Portuguese academic community. Unlike to what happens among Brazilians, this is a subject that is still little explored, or if it is more appropriate to say, not faced by us, researchers and academics.

There are many questions that need answers and research. These students from EJA, who are they? What courses do they choose? Or are the students chosen by the courses? These are themes that still need to be investigated. Has the democratic access to the university guaranteed these students the desire to study whatever they really want? These papers urge us to join this path.

In the last paper, written by Machado and Barros, whose title is *Aspects of the historical construction of the identity of EJA in Brazil and Portugal: focus on the political agenda and its discursive practices* the authors address the three fields of EJA: the field of educational practices, research practices and discursive practices, prioritizing the analysis of the latter. It is presented the history of EJA in Portugal and Brazil, from the analysis of the legislation, focusing on the discursive practices inherent to the political agenda. From the legal discourses, it is analyzed the process of democratization of EJA in both countries, pointing out the similarities and differences.

It is worth mentioning that these papers were produced in a Brazilian context different from what we have been experiencing currently, after the inauguration of President Jair Bolsonaro. They were produced before the extinction of Secadi (Secretary for Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion), the secretariat responsible for EJA's actions. On April 11, 2019, a 56-page document was launched: the "National Literacy Policy (PNA)" instituted by Decree number 9,765. In this document, the section that specifically addresses youth and adult literacy is restricted to six paragraphs.

Therefore, the papers in this dossier reflect an analysis pointing out the challenges, along with the advances, of the long term of extension projects, the articulation among teaching, research and extension and, more than that, the hope that leads us to believe that the

history of Youth and Adult Education cannot go backwards, as experienced in 1964 and, subsequently, with the failure of Mobral.

To the readers, this dossier is an invitation to think and analyze the history of Youth and Adult Education interfacing the history of the University – teaching, extension and research -, and also to know where we can make a difference in the upcoming years. Let us remain firm with Paulo Freire, believing that we need to hope. Let this verb be our motto for EJA.

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