



## Aspects of the historical construction of the identity of youth and adult education in Brazil and Portugal: focus on the political agenda and its discursive practices<sup>1</sup>

Aspectos da construção histórica da identidade da educação de jovens e adultos no Brasil e em Portugal: enfoque na agenda política e suas práticas discursivas

Aspectos de la construcción histórica de la identidad de la educación de adultos en Brasil y Portugal: enfoque en la agenda política y sus prácticas discursivas

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### ABSTRACT

This article results from the reflections about the Education of Young and Adults (EJA) in Brazil and Portugal, produced from the point of view of the history and historiography of education. We identify that the identity of the EJA at the academic level has been problematic, on the one hand, due to the accentuated interdisciplinarity of its theoretical body; and on the other hand, also due to its strong focus on practice and social intervention, which implies a level of performance, participation and interference that does not fit the ideal type of academic performance. It is in this sense that the academic institutionalization of the EJA area did not represent its demarcation de facto as an autonomous discipline, with a specific theoretical identity, resulting from a production of own knowledge, but it constituted, in essence, a branch of disciplinary application in the general scope of educational research. There is, however, a global identity in the area of EJA that results from the interrelation of the three main constituent dimensions in a necessary, contradictory and procedural relationship: the field of educational practices; the field of research practices; and the field of discursive practices. In this article, we focus exclusively on the field of discursive practices inherent in the political agenda, and therefore, on the action of the State from the advent of democracy in Brazil and Portugal.

**Keywords:** Identity of Youth and Adult Education. Public policy. EJA in Portugal and in Brazil democratic period.

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## RESUMO

Esse artigo resulta das reflexões acerca da Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA) no Brasil e em Portugal, produzidas desde o ponto de vista da história e historiografia da educação. Identificamos que a identidade da EJA a nível académico tem sido problemática, por um lado, devido à acentuada interdisciplinaridade do seu corpo teórico; e por outro lado, derivado também ao seu cariz fortemente direccionado para a prática e para a intervenção social, que implica um nível de atuação, participação e ingerência que não se ajusta ao tipo ideal de performance académica. É neste sentido que a institucionalização académica da área da EJA não representou a sua demarcação de facto enquanto disciplina autónoma, com uma identidade teórica específica, resultante de uma produção de conhecimento própria, mas constituiu, na essência, um ramo de aplicação disciplinar no âmbito geral da investigação educacional realizada. No entanto, há, uma identidade global na área da EJA que resulta da inter-relação do conjunto das suas três dimensões constituintes principais em necessária, contraditória e processual relação: o campo de práticas educativas; o campo de práticas de investigação; e o campo de práticas discursivas. Neste artigo focamo-nos, exclusivamente, no campo de práticas discursivas inerente à agenda política, e portanto, à ação do Estado a partir do advento da democracia quer no Brasil quer em Portugal.

**Palavras-chave:** Identidade da Educação de Jovens e Adultos. Políticas Públicas. EJA em Portugal e no Brasil período democrático.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo es el resultado de reflexiones sobre la Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos (EJA) en Brasil y Portugal, producidos desde el punto de vista de la historia y la historiografía de la educación. Identificamos que la identidad de la EJA a nivel académico ha sido problemática, por un lado, debido a la acentuada interdisciplinaridad de su cuerpo teórico; y por otro lado, derivado también a su cariz fuertemente dirigido hacia la práctica y para la intervención social, que implica un nivel de actuación, participación e injerencia que no se ajusta al tipo ideal de desempeño académico. En este sentido, la institucionalización académica del área de la EJA no representó su demarcación de hecho como disciplina autónoma, con una identidad teórica específica, resultante de una producción de conocimiento propia, sino que constituyó, en esencia, una rama de aplicación disciplinaria en el ámbito general de la investigación educativa realizada. Sin embargo, hay, una identidad global en el área de la EJA que resulta de la interrelación del conjunto de sus tres dimensiones constituyentes principales en necesaria, contradictoria y procesal relación: el campo de prácticas educativas; el campo de las prácticas de investigación; y el campo de prácticas discursivas. En este artículo nos centramos exclusivamente en el campo de las prácticas discursivas inherentes a la agenda política, y por lo tanto la acción del estado desde el advenimiento de la democracia, ya sea en Brasil o en Portugal.

**Palabras clave:** Identidad de la Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos; Políticas públicas; EJA en Portugal y Brasil periodo democrático.

## Introduction

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) as a thematic area of western scientific knowledge has gradually gained a status of its own, allowing it to occupy an academic space within university institutions and their research centers, especially within colleges and departments of education. However, the process through which this recognition occurs on a scientific level has not been peaceful or linear, facing various degrees of implementation in the academic sphere, according to the degree of theoretical-conceptual conservatism prevalent in the various institutions, and the greater or lesser theoretical pedagogical tradition existing in the various national contexts. Olesen (2003) points out that at a general level, “until recently academic institutions were not very much involved in adult education, except as a mere specialty of the education/pedagogy departments (...) sometimes relationships between them were even hostile” (2003, p. 30).

Although progressive and somewhat discontinuous in many national contexts, the institutionalization of the EJA has allowed the consolidation of an international reference in the scientific community in the area<sup>2</sup>. It is also noted that the field of EJA has faced growing visibility within the knowledge produced by the academia, embodied either by the usual scientific exchange circles, such as the promotion of conferences and congresses specialized in this field or the creation and greater visibility in scientific associations of the area; either by teaching and research practices at universities, institutes and polytechnics, which include offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses, the publication of numerous prestigious and widely distributed<sup>3</sup> journals, or by the significant production of essays and research.

With the development of modern social sciences throughout history, the nineteenth-century represents the century of institutionalization and professionalization of disciplinary knowledge in the history of scientific thought. Unsurprisingly, and similarly to what has happened in other areas, the EJA would also become professionalized. Ever since it has become a field or a subsystem of education, now known in schools, coordination, and official and professional departments to coexist with more educational contexts, in community-based activities in which volunteer educators and various sponsors of social movements predominate. As a result, we have seen a stronger consolidation of the field at the academic level, as the need to build specialized knowledge to qualify new professionals for the sector has increased, as well as to update and stimulate the knowledge of non-professional youth and adult educators. Nonetheless, the identity of EJA has been problematic at the academic level. On the one hand, due to the interdisciplinarity characteristic of its theoretical body and its essence of a subsidiary area of other disciplines, EJA will never be truly recognized by the academic tradition. On the other hand, due to its strongly oriented nature towards practice and social intervention, which implies a level of performance, participation, and interference that does not fit the ideal type of academic performance, which often contributed to distancing educators of adults from the most academic circuits (OLESEN, 2003). In this sense, the academic institutionalization of the field of EJA did not represent its real demarcation as an autonomous discipline and with a specific theoretical identity resulting from the production of its knowledge. But it was, in essence, a branch of disciplinary application in the general scope of educational research carried out mostly by sociologists or anthropologists of education,

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<sup>2</sup> As in the European case regarding the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA): <https://www.esrea.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> Some examples are: I) Adult Education Quarterly (AEQ); II) European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA); III) Studies in the Education of Adults (SEA); etc.

philosophers, and historians of education, pedagogues and economists, or by other researchers on the subject of social sciences.

However, it seems to us that there is a global identity in the area of EJA that results from the interrelationship of its three main constituent dimensions, which in our view represent three dialectical polarities in necessary, contradictory and procedural relation: the field of educational practices, the field of research practice, and the field of discursive practices. Thus, the identity of EJA is processed in the interconnection, in the movement, and in the dialectics between what is most significant in each of these interdependent fields.

Contrary to what has been defended as specificity and methodological delimitation inherent in most educational practices in the sector, its theoretical corpus has been criticized for not representing its integration of disciplinary contributions, nor presenting itself as a sufficiently consolidated delimitation concerning the subjects that originate it. As Stock points out, “this theory is particularly fragmented or even broken down into various academic disciplines that satisfy the study of adult education” (STOCK, 1996, p. 21). Often their theoretical formulations are embedded in the general framework of the educational sciences, with all the epistemological implications when analyzed at a deeper level of analytical abstraction, drew with theoretical and conceptual boundaries, as a characteristic of a modern way of producing scientific knowledge.

Thus, the theoretical identity of adult education comes mainly from the overlapping of the lead theoretical contributions of different disciplinary knowledge, which give meaning to the conceptual map used in the sector (BRIGHT, 1989). Discursive practices, which in turn derive largely from this epistemological framework, are also profoundly shaped by the public policy agenda that gives it externally meaning, and often persuasive meanings that complicate identity construction in this sector. In this article, we have chosen to focus exclusively on the field of discursive practices inherent in the political agenda, and therefore on the action of the State since the advent of Democracy in Brazil and Portugal. In the Brazilian case, this political practice will be analyzed based on the federal regulation resulting from the post-opening democratic processes with the end of the Civil-Military Dictatorship in 1985, mainly from the Federal Constitution of 1988, the Law of *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (Directives and Bases of National Education Law) No. 9394/96, and the guidelines of the *Conselho Nacional de Educação* (National Education Council) of 2000 and 2010. This path indicates strong trends: on the one hand, the officialization of the offer of EJA as a modality while distancing itself from its characteristics of the political struggle for the transformation of society. On the other hand, it indicates the juvenilization of EJA, because the failure of the school at daytime pushes young people to the classes of EJA. In the case of Portugal, it essentially reflects on the historical and cyclical conditions, and on supranational influences that allowed the emergence of a new politics and identity in the EJA in Portugal, in 1996. To this end, we analyze the milestones of various policies and programs aimed at the sector and the disparate contributions of their discursive practices, since the advent of democracy in 1974 and the presentation and implementation of the *Plano Nacional de Alfabetização e de Educação de Base de Adultos* (PNAEBA - National Plan for Adult Literacy and Education), until the recent *Programa Qualifica* (PQ - Qualifica Program).

### **The identity of EJA in Brazil: the post-democracy political agenda and its discursive practices**

The post-democratic opening period in Brazil after 21 years of the Civil-Military Dictatorship represented a moment of struggle for the officialization of EJA as a State public policy. This is explicit in the legal framework resulted in from the struggles of social movements that defended education as a right of all. As a result of this process, the updated Federal Constitution of 1988 (BRASIL, 1988) states that,

Article. 205. Education, **which is the right of all and duty of the State** and of the family, shall be promoted and fostered with the cooperation of society, with a view to the full development of the person, his preparation for the exercise of citizenship and his qualification for work. [...] Article 208. The duty of the State towards education shall be fulfilled by ensuring the following: [...] I. mandatory basic education, free of charge, for every individual from the age of 4 (four) through the age of 17 (seventeen), **including the assurance of its free offer to all those who did not have access to it at the proper age;** (*According to the Constitutional Amendment no. 59, from 2009*) [...] II. progressive universalization of the free high-school education; (*according to the Constitutional Amendment 14 of 1996*) [...] III. **specialized schooling for the disabled**, preferably in the regular school system; [...] IV. Early childhood education to children of up to 5 (five) years of age in daycare centers and preschools; (*according to the Constitutional Amendment 53 of 2006*) [...] V. access to higher levels of education, research and artistic creation according to individual capacity; VI. provision of **regular night courses** adequate to the conditions of the student; VII. assistance to students in all grades of basic education, by means of supplementary programs providing school materials, transportation, food, and health care. (*According to the Constitutional Amendment 59 of 2009*) [...] ¶ 1. Access to compulsory and free education is a subjective public right. [...] ¶ 2. The competent authority shall be liable for the failure of the Government in providing compulsory education or providing it irregularly. [...]; ¶ 3. The Government has the power to take a census of elementary school students, call them for enrollment and ensure that parents or guardians see to their children's attendance to school. (BRASIL, 1998, emphasis added)

The bold highlights in these two articles from the Federal Constitution of 1988 draw attention to the prescriptions that include the State's responsibility for assisting the young and unschooled adult population. The changes that have been highlighted since 2009, with the approval of Constitutional Amendment No. 59 (EC 59/2009), resulted from mobilizations to expand the right to Primary Education, which was previously restricted to Elementary Education. In addition to the extension of this right, the text provides the attendance of students by supplementary programs.

The closing paragraphs of Article 208 are also the result of the mobilization of the sectors that support EJA because they understand that there are historical constraints that need to be addressed if we want to guarantee the right to education. The government must be held responsible if it does not guarantee the offer as determined by the first and second paragraphs. It is up to this same government to recognize that the demand for students at EJA needs to be mobilized. Therefore, the third paragraph deals with the census and care for the permanence of students in the schooling processes. Such mechanisms express the attempt to implementing the law and the proclaimed democracy, defended in the context of Brazilian education by Teixeira (1936) and Lemme (2004).

Taking as reference the guarantees of rights provided in the Federal Constitution of 1988, which were broken down into other laws, ordinances, decrees, and resolutions, the EJA follows a movement to extend its presence in these apparatuses, mainly from the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* – LDB (National Education Guidelines and Framework Law) (BRAZIL, 1996), when it is now considered a modality of Primary Education. There are different points of view among the researchers concerning this scenario. Some consider this measure to have distanced EJA from its historical matrix of Popular Education, as expressed by Arroyo (2005; 2007) in some of its publications. And some perceive in this process an achievement from formalizing the school supply for young and working adults, as in the view of Haddad (2007).

In a recent publication, Costa and Machado (2017) analyze the main legal initiatives that involved the field of EJA, highlighting their presence in the Federal Constitution of 1988 (pp. 62-63); in the LDB/1996 (pp. 65-69); in the CNE/CEB opinion No. 11/2000, which guides the curricular guidelines for EJA (pp. 55-56; 58-61; 73-74); in the Resolution CNE/CEB No. 01/2000 (p. 70); in draft opinions for the EJA Operational Guidelines, which resulted in the adoption of Resolution CNE/CEB No. 03/2010 (pp. 76-81); in the final documents of the 2010 and 2014 national education conferences, which influenced Law 13.005/2014 of the National Education Plan 2014-2024 (pp. 82-91).

In this article, we will not discuss the reiterations of the presence of EJA regarding the standardization of educational policies. There are analyzes that present these policies as a potential for recognizing the education of young and working adults, but there are also those that reveal the contradiction between what is propagated and what is in fact realized<sup>4</sup>. And yet, among the many possibilities of interpretation of these laws for the benefit of interests that do not fit the guarantee of quality education. Therefore, it should be acknowledged, even keeping the caveat that the legal prescription does not correspond exactly to the enforcement of the law, that it can be perceived a space occupied by EJA in public management, political society, and social organizations, which express the civil society (GRAMSCI, 2007).

The highlight of the performance within the political society is evidenced by the presence of EJA in the administrative structures at the federal, state and municipal levels. Observing the organization charts of the federal public administration, the Ministry of Education (MEC) had, in 1996, an EJA coordination within the Department of Elementary Education. From 2004, with the creation of the Department of Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity - Secad, the Department of EJA is also created, which, in that context, is born with three coordination: pedagogical coordination, literacy coordination, and youth and adult education coordination. In 2019, the Secadi remained in the structure of MEC, because the inclusion policy became part of the duties of this secretariat and the board was renamed to Directorate of Policies for Youth, Literacy, and a Coordination of Education for Youth and Adults, composed of the Literacy, EJA, and Youth Policy<sup>5</sup>.

The presence of EJA in state and municipal education departments has very different configurations during the analyzed period. However, it is noticeable that the induction of federal policies, especially with funding notices, and the approval of legal provisions for the modality, also influenced the establishment of spaces for EJA. Known as directorates, coordinations, managements or other terminologies, what is evident is that, as national legislation incorporates the EJA as a teaching modality and links it to the programs and actions in the Multiannual Plan (PPA), the state systems and Municipal authorities were intended to incorporate EJA into the political and pedagogical structures of the secretariats.

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<sup>4</sup> Beisiegel (2003); Paiva (2005); Di Pierro (2005); Machado (2009); Ireland (2009).

<sup>5</sup> Information from the MEC website: <<http://portal.mec.gov.br/secretaria-de-educacao-continuada-alfabetizacao-diversidade-e-inclusao/quem-e-quem>>. Accessed in 19/10/2018.

The most evident example of this union-inducing relationship and the response of other federative entities are perceived when it involves the transfer of resources defined in the PPAs. The values closest to EJA applications, decentralized by the federal government from 2006 to 2014, are published in a report about the actions and programs implemented by Brazil. This report evaluated the federal government's commitment six years after hosting the 6th International Conference in Adult Education (VI Confinteia)<sup>6</sup> in 2009 (BRASIL, 2016, pp. 52-56)<sup>7</sup>.

As enrollment in the EJA is mainly the responsibility of state and municipal governments, the resources described in the report can only be considered as complementary to the expansion and maintenance of the modality. Still, they scale this movement that has diversified the financial contributions, including resources for food, transportation, pedagogical material, textbook, training, and qualification of education professionals, acquisition of EJA library, scholarships for teachers and coordinators of the Brazil Literate Program, among other actions. The dynamic defined by the MEC's department of EJA was, in that context, the decentralization of resources for states and municipalities to execute and report to the Union. A final aspect still linked to the issue of EJA financing, much discussed in the period from 1988 to 2018, is the presence or absence of this modality in the accounting logic of education financing, in the implementation of fund policies. That is, in 1996, with the Funding for Maintenance and Development of Basic School and Valorization of Teaching (Fundef)<sup>8</sup> and, in 2007 the total lack of consideration of EJA enrollment in Fundef will be replaced by a marginal presence in Fundeb<sup>9</sup>.

All these legal and administrative initiatives of political society acting on the EJA agenda counted on pressure and diversified action of various sectors of civil society for its realization as a right. Historically, adult education, called popular education in the 1950s and 1960s, was a field of contention between antagonistic interests. Churches, businesses, trade unions, non-governmental organizations, rural and social movements are present in youth and adult schooling proposals and initiatives. This is still the reality that reveals different world perspectives. The research and publications that are currently available on the web about EJA can be one of the ways to access these different conceptions.

### **The identity of EJA in Portugal: a post-democracy political agenda and its discursive practices**

In Portugal, the panorama of 48 years of dictatorial regime ceased with the 'End of Regime' operation, carried out by the military movement, starting from 1974. It was a short but intense period of profound ruptures in Portuguese society. It became known as the revolutionary period, which ended in 1976 with the new constitutional regime.

In the meantime, there was a political crisis that expressed contradictions between different ideological segments of the ruling elite. Two main ideological-strategic projects were on dispute: on the one hand, a parliamentary-based socializing democratic model,

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<sup>6</sup> The publication organized by Ireland & Spezia (2012) presents an important retrospective of these coordinated conferences from Unesco, from the first in 1949 to the last in 2009. In addition to placing the contribution of these conferences to the adult education policy among the member countries of the UN, the publication attaches all the statements resulting from the six conferences (several of them first translated into Portuguese).

<sup>7</sup> This report is a historical record of the evaluation of the EJA policy in Brazil, elaborated by an intersectoral committee and with representation of the political and civil society. Besides the diagnosis of the reality, it contains important indications for the review of this policy. The full production can be accessed at: <<http://confinteabrasilmais6.mec.gov.br>>. Accessed on 19/10/2018.

<sup>8</sup> Law No. 9424 of December 24, 1996. Available at: <<http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/1996/lei-9424-24-dezembro-1996-365371-publicacaooriginal-1-pl.html>>. Accessed on 19/10/2018.

<sup>9</sup> Law No. 11.494 of June 20, 2007. Available at: <[http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_Ato2007-2010/2007/Lei/L11494.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2007-2010/2007/Lei/L11494.htm)>. Accessed on 01/02/2019.

inspired by Western European democracies; and on the other, a populist revolutionary-socialist model, inspired by the collectivist reality of eastern Europe and Russia. The impact of this confrontation on the future structure of Portuguese social formation would constitute one of its main specificities, which Sousa Santos (1990) called the dual state. This consists of a complex and contradictory coexistence of a vast traditional state bureaucracy with a range of new institutions. In the field of adult education, the concept of dual state fully explains, in our view, the work of the General Directorate for Permanent Education (DGEP), one of the official bodies that had the greatest relevance in the Portuguese history of the administrative structures of the sector, above all by seeking and operationalizing a new type of relationship between state administration and social initiatives. Of particular note is the initiative to support with means and to statutorily consolidate, through the figure of the 'popular education association', many of the separate associative experiences carried out as a result of the revolutionary period experienced at the time.

During the revolutionary period, there would be a profound yet ephemeral change in the balance of operating forces in social regulation, so that “power shifts from the state to civil society and its actions are at first phase, questioned and replaced by popular action” (LIMA *et al.*, 1988, p. 80). This would mean the emergence of strong contradictions and some blockages, in the socio-political context of the development of adult education. Thus, in the state domain of sector regulation, two phases can be distinguished in the performance of DGEP. In the first phase, between April 1974 and November 1975, the creation of a working group to draw up a *Plano Nacional de Alfabetização* (PNA - National Literacy Plan) in May 1975 stands out. This plan, which in the national scene of the time follows both the *Campanhas de Dinamização Cultural* (CDC - Cultural Promotion Campaigns), led by the *Movimento das Forças Armadas* (MFA - Armed Forces Movement), and the *Ações de Alfabetização* (AA- Literacy Actions), had as its main objective to reduce, in just three years, the illiteracy rate from 23% to 3%, promoting activities that should take place from the center to the periphery and from the city to the countryside, in a general action logic that Stoer (1986) called *A corrente de alfabetização* (the literacy stream), and Barbosa (2004) referred to as a *systemic-institutional tendency*, which represented a project of accelerated production of graduates (LIMA, 2005). After the hot summer of 1975, and the counterattack of 25 November, Alberto Melo took office in December as new Managing Director at DGEP, starting a reorganization and reorientation of adult education policy to promote a new kind of state intervention orientated to “Responding to the demands of the core groups (...) and involving, as a matter of priority, those populations that have traditionally been denied access to the means of expression and the acquisition of knowledge indispensable to full participation in social life” (DGEP, 1978, p. 4). The new political agenda adopted the principles of the continuing education paradigm, following the Report by Faure *et al.* (1972) and the UNESCO Recommendations, with its political action particularly legitimized by the new Constitution of the Republic of 1976<sup>10</sup>, which regarding education and teaching, states:

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<sup>10</sup> The fundamental law passed in 1976 has been cited as a product of the revolutionary period, as it contained a conflicting compromise between the assumptions arising from the different political and doctrinal camps, primarily between social justice and market freedom, but mainly by pointing as mainly objective, together with the consecration of fundamental rights and the defense of multiparty system, the transition to socialism, emphasizing the leading role of the state, to the irreversibility of nationalizations and imposing restrictions on private construction of a classless society without exploitation of man by man (Moreira, 1992; Magalhães, 1996; 1999). In this regard, Daniel Bessa will underline that “beyond all that can be argued about the spirit of the 1976 Constitution, it seems unquestionable that it will be difficult to find a statement of the citizen's material rights and the correlative obligations of the larger state than what is confirmed in it” (Bessa, 1985, p. 336-337).



## ARTICLE 73.

(Education and culture)

2. **The State shall promote the democratization of education and the conditions** so that education, carried out through school and other formative means, contributes to the development of personality and the progress of democratic and socialist society.

## ARTICLE 74.

(Teaching)

1. The State recognizes and guarantees to all citizens, the **right to education and equal opportunity in school education.**

2. The state shall modify education in order to overcome its conservative function of the social division of labor.

3. In carrying out the education policy, the State shall:

- a) Ensure a universal, compulsory, and free primary education;
- b) Create a public preschool education system;
- c) **Ensure continuing education and eliminate illiteracy;**
- d) Ensure access to the highest levels of education, scientific research and artistic creation for all citizens according to their abilities;
- e) Progressively establish the gratuity of all education levels;
- f) Link teaching with productive and social activities;
- g) Encourage the development of scientific and technical staff from the working classes.

## ARTICLE 75.

(Public and private education)

1. **The State will create a network of official facilities** of teaching, fulfilling all the population needs.

2. The State supervises the supplementary private education of public education.

## ARTICLE 76.

(Access to University)

The access to University should take into account the needs of the country in qualified staff and encourage and favor the entry of working-class adults and children.

In this context, DGEP led a significant legislative<sup>11</sup> effort to deconcentrate projects and support primary activities in less-favored regions, constituting what Stoer (1986) called the *popular power stream*, and what Barbosa (2004) called as a *humanist-community tendency*.

In this new phase of DGEP's operation, an approach based on listening to the existing requests was privileged, which made it possible, in an innovative way in the public administration, that the popular associative movement entered the State apparatus, became institutionalized and began to be part of its activities. However, since 1976, with the post-revolutionary political normalization process, there would be an abrupt interruption of the innovative action conducted by DGEP, noting that "Most activities end up, one by one, being suspended (...) giving a feeling of emptiness and an image of semi-paralysis until a new Managing Director takes office at the end of June 1978" (DGEP, 1978, pp. 9-10). From then on, the preparatory work of the *Plano Nacional de Alfabetização e de Educação de Base de Adultos* (PANEABA - National Plan for Adult Literacy and Education), which has become "a

<sup>11</sup> Highlighting in particular the regulations: the Decree Law 384/76 from May 20; the Ordinance No. 419/76 of July 19; and Orders 29/76 and 53/76.

remarkable document and framework for all State-led or state-sponsored initiatives in adult education from the last quarter of 1979" (DGEE, 1991, p. 58). In other words, in the sphere of public policymaking, this is the broadest and most ambitious Plan inscribed in a broader understanding of adult education, which would be elaborated to this day, so it could be transformed, perhaps precisely because it is not a directive plan, but a framework of guidelines, in an unavoidable framework (successively called) for the project (successively postponed) to build a public and holistic adult education system in Portugal.

However, in the context of political normalization, it would soon be clear that "the elaboration of the Plan did not correspond to the planned policy measures and administrative inertia or political resistance (probably both) halted its execution since the beginning, at the level of the State power. (SANTOS SILVA, 1990, p. 28). Therefore, the second phase of implementation<sup>12</sup> conceived in PNAEBA, abandoned in 1985, would not take place, and the fulfillment of the first phase was below the objectives set.

With the entry of Portugal in the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1986, began the Portuguese educational reform based on the *Comissão de Reforma do Sistema Educativo* (CRSE - Commission for Reform of the Education System) and Law No. 46/86, 14 October - *Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo* (LBSE - Fundamental Law of the Educational System). In the articulation of the LBSE, a dispersed approach to the sector is made, in which adult education is only conceptualized in a subaltern view of special education (art. 16), including the *Ensino Recorrente de Adultos* (ERA - Recurrent Adult Education), *Formação Profissional* (FP - Vocational Training) and *Ensino a Distância* (DE - Distance Learning). And in a minimalist view of extra-school education (EEE) (art. 23), which is the object of scattered generalizations that do not live up to its traditionally comprehensive and multifaceted character. Based on this law, the public network would be fixed reflecting the conceptual reductionism that enclosed it in recurrent education, especially in a compensatory schooling system. Therefore, the mid-nineties were marked by a national scenario in which the tripod for supporting public policies for adult education consisted of: first, in the financial abandonment of non-school types and non-vocational or professional matrix; second, in the strong induction by public bodies and European funding of new social interventions that rarely had adult education broadly understood as the main objective; and third, by the progressive de-legitimization and dispersion of the sector in terms of its institutional framework. In this last aspect<sup>13</sup>, it appears that the successive organic laws of the Ministry of

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<sup>12</sup> The Framework Plan was designed for a decade time frame, with two execution stages of five years each in perspective.

<sup>13</sup> From 1974 until the mid-1990s, the administrative structures for Adult Education covered significant changes from the pioneering General Direction for Continuing Education (*Direção-Geral de Educação Permanente - DGEP*). Indeed, after LBSE, the sector undergoes three significant changes at its central administration, and the General Direction for Adult Education (*Direção-Geral da Educação de Adultos - DGEA*), which succeeded DGEP, abolished in 1987 (Decree-Law 3/87 of 3 January) to make way to the General Direction for Educational Support and Extension (*Direção-Geral de Apoio e Extensão Educativa - DGAE*), which, in contrast to the first one, no longer constitutes a specific, unique and autonomous structure for adult education, and which in one year would be reconfigured again (Decree-Law 362/89 of 19 October) as the General Directorate for Educational Extension (*Direção-Geral de Extensão Educativa - DGEE*), which would also be extinct in 1993, increasing the dispersion and demotion process that has begun, as far as the sector becomes, in terms of its administrative status, an appendix to the national education system, which already only corresponds organically (Decree-Law No. 133/93, of 26 April) to a Center of Recurrent Education and Extra-School Education (*Núcleo do Ensino Recorrente e Educação Extra-Escolar*), with its coordination being split between the Department of Basic Education (*Departamento do Ensino Básico - DEB*) and the Department of Secondary Education (*Departamento do Ensino Secundário - DES*). In this scenario, we highlight the integration of Recurrent Adult Education (*Ensino Recorrente de Adultos - ERA*) in the Coordination of Education Area (*Coordenações de Área Educativa - CAE*), created within the Regional Education Directorates (*Direções Regionais de Educação - DRE*), resulting from a reorganization of the Ministry of Education (Decree-Law 361/89, of 18 October).

Education gave “a clear sign of the growing dilution and consequent loss of autonomy and specificity of the adult education subsystem” (SANTOS SILVA; ROTHES, 1998, p. 31).

With the new protagonism of the European Union (EU) in the area of education after the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), we have argued that the sector has become the object of a pluriscaled government in Portugal since 1996, through the implementation of a globally structured agenda, implemented at multiple levels with increasing complexity (BARROS, 2013; BARROS; BELANDO-MONTORO, 2013). During this process, some measures were taken that would lead to a political reconsideration of the sector, highlighting the launch of the S@ber+ Action Program: *Programa para o Desenvolvimento e Expansão da Educação e Formação de Adultos* (Program for the Development and Expansion of Adult Education and Training) in 1999-2006 which aimed, among other objectives, to place the foundations of a new offer and a new conception of the field, which officially shifted from adult education (EA) to adult education and training (EFA). This led to the reconversion of the historical identity of this area and the renewal of its discursive practices, which have since then been underpinned by the new EFA policy at a national level and the paradigm of lifelong learning at the European level (BARROS, 2011a; 2012).

Some activities have emerged that were essentially aimed at meeting the fragile educational situation of the working population by “creating flexible solutions that articulate education and training, through organized pathways, through processes of recognition and validation of acquired knowledge and modular training systems” (ANEFA, 2001, p. 29). Alongside with the primary and secondary *Ensino Recorrente de Adultos* (ERA - Recurrent Adult Education), and *Educação Extraescolar* (EEE - Extra-School Education), the structuring of the new public offering of EFA included, from this period, the following modalities: an offer of *Cursos de Educação e Formação de Adultos* (EFA - Education and Training Courses for Adults); an offering of S@ber+; and an offer of *Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências* (RVCC - Competency Recognition, Validation, and Certification). Thus registering an expansion of the national network related to the sector, and an expansion of supply diversification (BARROS, 2016a).

The impact of supranational regulation of lifelong learning tends to base on the evaluation of (economically) significant outcomes, as noted in the Portuguese EFA through the emergence of new government tools, both in planning, guidance, and social consultation. These new instruments proliferate discourses in accordance with the new managerialism that has been shaping the elaboration of public policies (BARROS, 2019). Pointing out to two main aspects, the first specifies an idea of moralizing the education system, based primarily on promoting equal opportunities by creating new opportunities. The second aspect points to the implicit idea of promoting social control, based on the idea of individual accountability for employability through more education and training, preferably on a life-long basis. Based on this framework, the *Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades - 2006-2012* (INO - New Opportunities Initiative) emerges as a policy instrument of synthesis, representing a paradigmatic element in pluriscaled educational government for the new EFA sector.

Thus, the strategy of INO has taken over and deepened the execution and financing innovations introduced by the program s@ber+ and was based on two fundamental pillars: on the one hand, the idea of giving 'new opportunities' to young people by increasing courses, and on the other hand, in the idea of giving active adults a 'new opportunity' by extending the EFA Courses and the RVCC Process. Both axes set concrete goals to be reached annually in each of the *Centro de Novas Oportunidades* (CNO - New Opportunities Centers) of the national public network. Although with significant ambivalence, INO has translated into a democratization of access to EFA, with the significant enrollment of more than 10% of the Portuguese population, as demonstrated by some evaluation studies (CARNEIRO, 2011; LIZ, MACHADO, BURNAY, 2009). This fact allowed that between 2000 and 2010, 386,463 individuals were certified in the

case of school RVCC, and 68,255 for the EFA Courses (ANQ, 2011). Since the recognition of the experiences acquired by the adult population were not on the agenda (BARROS, 2011b; 2014a; 2016b; BARROS; FERREIRA, 2018), several studies came from the academia that recommended breaking with the palliative logic offered by EFA (CAVACO; LAFONT; PARIAT, 2014; LIMA, 2014; MARQUES, 2014) within the new policy paradigm for statistics, reflected in the sector mainly by the importance of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). Therefore, it is observed that the main Portuguese tendency identified in EFA discursive practices is to present themselves as hybrids, mirroring the intrinsic tensions to government and development, whose humanist essence, promoted by UNESCO, is not compatible with the instrumental formation of human resources encouraged by EU.

In this context, the national agenda of political programs for the current administration of the sector has important contradictions (BARROS, 2014b; 2018). However, the intermittency of the mandates and consequently the typical vulnerability of this sector<sup>14</sup> was radically evident, mainly in the period between 2012-2015, when severe austerity policies leading directly to the extinction of the CNO network were imposed. New centers are now designated as *Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional* (CQEP - Centers for Qualification and Vocational Education), but in much smaller numbers and without any funding, as might be expected from the adoption of neoliberal policies. There was a reconversion of the sector, which is schooled with the devaluation of the usual biographical portfolio and the introduction in RVCC practices of a school-inspired test. This feature, which was new in Portugal in the context of the process of recognition of acquired experiences, was justified in the public discourse as a claim to give more rigor to the process, which suffered some discredit in the phase of accelerated expansionism of the CNO network. However, new and problematic contradictions have been incorporated into the processes. Indeed, during this recent period, an imposing national political action prevailed, legitimized by a supranational alliance, inscribed in a 'backward political economy' (REIS, 2014) through which the EFA in Portugal practically disappeared from the political agenda.

With the government changes at the end of 2015, the current *Centros Qualifica* (CQ - Qualifica Centers) was created. Moreover, contrary to previous measures, there is now a resumption of the sector in the political agenda through the creation of the *Programa Qualifica* (Qualifica Program). Among other things, the government has inherited the legitimacy crisis from the severe neoliberal measures of adjustment of the society and the State, both to supranational demands and to national financial agents, which have been visibly pressing the macrostructure towards the privatization of profits and socialization of the losses. However, as government action was not expected to suspend the austerity policy, there was a subtle recognition in the new public discourse that there are alternatives contrary to the impoverishment of the States and the populations, and that a less orthodox use could be made in the maneuver margin (narrow) that some national sovereignty still allows.

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<sup>14</sup> This aspect has historically been translated into: (1) the changes in the administrative structures, which since the mid-nineties, until today, included: ANEFA - National Agency for Adult Education and Training (Decree-Law No. 387/99 of August 28), DGFV - General Directorate for Vocational Training (Order 21 974/2002 of 25 September and Decree-Law 208/2002 of 17 October), ANQ - National Agency for Qualification (Decree-Law 213/2006, of 27 October) and ANQEP - National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education (Decree-Law 36/2012, of 15 February); and (2) in the alterations of the areas dedicated to the practices of Portuguese Adult Education, which since 2000 would change from a National Network of Recognition, Validation and Certification Centers (Rede Nacional de Centros de Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências - CRVCC), to a National Network of New Opportunities Centers (Rede Nacional de Centros Novas Oportunidades - CNO), for a National Network of Centers for Qualification and Vocational Education (Rede Nacional de Centros para a Qualificação e Ensino Profissional - CQEP), for the most recent Qualifica National Network Centers (Rede Nacional de Centros Qualifica - CQ).

Therefore, in Portugal, the various interrelated governance scales of the new EFA (supranational, national and subnational), which in our view, have gained marked complexity over the past decade, reflect an identity of the sector that has significant ambivalence.

### **The reality of EJA differs and approaches between Brazil and Portugal.**

The understanding of discursive practices inherent to the political agenda of EJA, highlighting the action of the State from the advent of Democracy in Brazil and Portugal, allows us to realize that, although the processes of re-democratization of the two countries have been configured in different contexts, there are some approximations between the design and implementation of educational policies that have been put into practice in different governments, sometimes configuring state policies.

Regarding the differences between the contexts of re-democratization in Brazil and Portugal, it is noteworthy to emphasize that Portugal experienced a revolutionary moment in its political scenario, which did not occur in Brazil. This aspect is relevant when we consider that it was precisely in this revolutionary context in Portugal that the relationship between the state and civil society intensified, being a favorable space for the incorporation of the social policies defended in the context of civil society. It is at this moment that adult education is recognized in its specificity and as a priority for the reconstruction of the country.

The re-democratization of Brazil after twenty-one years of military dictatorship was a negotiation between the interests of national and international elites. Undoubtedly, those who resisted the regime's impositions as exiles inside and outside the country played a major role in democratic reconstruction. However, this reconstruction was not marked as a revolutionary movement, nor did it immediately represent a significant change in the adult education agenda in the country. The observed change in policies for adult education will be made clear by the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, with policies implemented in the governments led by the Workers Party.

This observation about the processes of the re-democratization of these two countries does not prevent us from highlighting, maintaining the proper geographical, cultural, and above all, economic and political specificities between Brazil and Portugal, the approximations between the normative propositions that came to guide the policy of adult education. In both countries, the focus of the legislation is to treat education as a right of all and an obligation of the State, and the content and spirit of the First Constitutions of the new democratic period were of great importance.

The visible occupation of space in the educational agenda by the field of adult education is expressed in the legislation and the programs created to fulfill the task that started in literacy, went through vocational training and higher education, becoming an agenda of continuing education. In the Brazilian case, the agenda of adult education is so implicated in the reality of the non-schooling of the population as a whole, that it embraces youth in its schooling strategies, changing its previous identity and therefore the political guidelines begin to treat it as Youth and Adult Education.

In addition to the normative and directive framework for youth and adult education, official structures at the federal and local levels had to make room for the implementation of plans, projects, and programs. The reality of both countries shows that the agenda required the creation, or the adaptation of physical and administrative structures to cope with the challenge of schooling and continuing education for young people and adults. Besides, the mobilization and preparation of professionals that could cope with the challenges of knowledge mediation with these subjects should also be considered. However, the efforts observed in this direction have not been exempt from the influence and pressure of a certain *modus operandi* that insists on maintaining a reference to a school for children and adolescents and a second chance for

adults. The experiences that sought to understand the demands of civil society, especially those that thought of a perspective of education as a space for the rescue and emancipation of the subjects, were not always considered when making political-administrative decisions, financial investments, and infrastructure for the execution of the activities.

Observing the different strategies implemented in both countries and considering the limits for the consolidation of state policies that exceeded the governmental contexts for each electoral election, it can be seen that the youth and adult education agenda has been oriented to serve more political interests than guaranteeing the right to education, which is understood as unrestricted access and full and successful enjoyment of the knowledge produced and systematized by mankind, summoned in the heritage mobilized by formal and non-formal public education.

This aspect brings us to the conceptions of world and education revealed by these educational initiatives, when changes in proposals occur, for example, by international pressures to meet market interests, as in the experience of Portugal. In the Brazilian case, even recognizing the important actions carried out mainly between 2004 and 2014, the discontinuity has been one of the most relevant brands in the conduction of programs, projects and actions for the EJA, making its consolidation as a public policy difficult. In aspects that do not show discontinuity, the precariousness of the learning process is identified by the lightened and compensatory pedagogical practices that are still very present in the EJA initiatives in the country.

The gaps between discursive practices in the field of policymaking and the guarantee of access to knowledge, not just certification, greatly approximate the youth and adult education experience of Brazil and Portugal. Not disregarding the importance of other aspects of educational practice, we emphasize that the discursive practices inherent to the political agenda of the two countries, except for isolated moments, have been configured in strategies of maintaining subjects in a condition of subordination to the interests of uneven and combined capitalist logic.

## **Final Considerations**

The history of Youth and Adult Education has consolidated itself internationally as a field of the interrelation of three of its main constituent dimensions, which are the necessary, contradictory and procedural relation: the field of educational practices; the field of research practices; and the field of discursive practices. In this article, our goal was to emphasize aspects of the discursive practices inherent to the political agenda and therefore to the action of the state, from the advent of democracy in Brazil and Portugal. We found that in both contexts, EJA reveals multiple aspects, justifying the intensification of its presence in the investigative agendas of the Universities.

This article presented reflections that indicate that although the international heritage of adult education reveals important milestones in the general history of education, built in the light of a social critical paradigm and a society based on the search for greater social justice and enjoyment of rights, these actions undergo interventions of governmental decisions that are modifying them in a conflicting process of advances and civilizing retreats. The approximations and distances we highlight in this text between the Brazilian and Portuguese EJA illuminate some aspects of this historiography that needs to be further developed, clarified and problematized.

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