



An invented tradition: the story of the private school in Brazil, under the interpretation of the Catholic intellectual Kuno Paulo Rhoden in 1985¹

Uma tradição inventada: a história da escola particular no Brasil, sob a interpretação do intelectual católico Kuno Paulo Rhoden em 1985

Una tradición inventada: la historia de la escuela particular en Brasil, sobre la interpretación del intelectual católico Kuno Paulo Rhoden en 1985

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Abstract

This article intends to discuss from the historical analysis of the national conferences of private educational establishments (CONEPEs) The conception of society of the subjects present in these events giving prominence to the issue of freedom of education in Brazil. The CONEPEs start in the year 1944 being organised initially by associations of educational establishments and subsequently by the Federation of Educational Establishments (FENEN). We focus specifically on the historical retrospective conference of the private school, handed down by the Jesuit priest Kuno Paul Rhoden in the XX CONEPE, held in the city of Florianópolis, in the state of Santa Catarina, between 14 and 18 July 1985 having As a central theme "Democracy and freedom of education". The leaders of private educational establishments, considered here as intellectuals, organized themselves and sought to act in a joint manner in order to make themselves hegemonic in national education.

Keywords: National conferences of private educational establishments (CONEPEs). Brazilian civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985). Kuno Paulo Rhoden. Freedom of education.

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Resumo

Este artigo pretende debater a partir da análise histórica dos Congressos Nacionais de Estabelecimentos Particulares de Ensino (CONEPEs) a concepção de sociedade dos sujeitos presentes nesses eventos dando destaque para a questão da liberdade de ensino no Brasil. Os CONEPEs se iniciam no ano de 1944 sendo organizados inicialmente por associações de estabelecimentos de ensino e, posteriormente, pela Federação dos Estabelecimentos de Ensino (FENEN). Focalizaremos especificamente a conferência *Retrospectiva histórica da escola particular*, proferida pelo padre jesuíta Kuno Paulo Rhoden no XX CONEPE, realizado na cidade de Florianópolis, no estado de Santa Catarina, entre os dias 14 e 18 de julho de 1985 tendo como temática central “Democracia e Liberdade de Ensino”. Os dirigentes de estabelecimentos particulares de ensino, considerados aqui como intelectuais, se organizavam e buscavam atuar de maneira conjunta, a fim de se fazerem hegemônicos na educação nacional.

Palavras-chave: Congressos Nacionais de Estabelecimentos Particulares de Ensino (CONEPEs). Ditadura civil-militar brasileira (1964-1985). Kuno Paulo Rhoden. Liberdade de ensino.

Resumen

Este artículo pretende debatir a partir del análisis histórico de los Congresos Nacionales de Establecimientos Particulares de Enseñanza (CONEPEs) la concepción de sociedad de los sujetos presentes en esos eventos dando destaque para la cuestión de la libertad de enseñanza en Brasil. Los CONEPEs se inician en el año de 1944 siendo organizados, por la Federación de los Establecimientos de Enseñanza (FENEN). Nos focalizamos específicamente en la conferencia Retrospectiva histórica de la escuela particular, proferida por el padre jesuita Kuno Paulo Rhoden en el XX CONEPE, realizado en la ciudad de Florianópolis, en el estado de Santa Catarina, entre los días 14 y 18 de julio de 1985 teniendo como temática central “Democracia y Libertad de Enseñanza”. Los dirigentes de establecimientos particulares de enseñanza, considerados aquí como intelectuales se organizaban y buscaban actuar de manera conjunta, con la intención de hacerse hegemónicos en la educación nacional.

Palabras-clave: Congresos Nacionales de Establecimientos Particulares de Enseñanza (CONEPEs). Dictadura civil-militar brasilera (1964-1985). Kuno Paulo Rhoden. Libertad de enseñanza.

In July 1985 in Florianópolis, capital of the State of Santa Catarina, was held the XX CONEPE – *Congresso Nacional dos Estabelecimentos de Ensino* (CONEPE - National Congress of Private Teaching). The event counted with the participation of representatives of the segments linked to private schools of varied orientation and interest. CONEPES, such genesis dated from 1940 decade, aimed at debating educational issues and the role of private teaching in the country. The annals of aforementioned event, main source of research, reported, besides other subject, the conference *Restrospectiva Histórica da Escola Particular* (Historical Retrospective of Private Schools), spoken by Jesuit priest Kuno Paulo Rhoden, in that time, president of Union of Private Educational Establishments of Paraná.

Based on two reference books, *Educação e Dependência* (Education and Dependence) of, Manfredo Berger and dissertation in the Master's Degree, *A Escola Particular e a Democratização do Ensino* (Private School and Teaching Democratization), conducted by his brother João Claudio Rhoden, who was the main speaker, it exposed the founder role of jesuitic paradigm and the chronological method as a tool for understanding the sense assigned to private school in the national education. Kuno P. Rhoden played several roles during his career. He was director of High Schools in the South of Brazil in the cities of Salvador do Sul (RS), Curitiba (PR) and Florianópolis (SC). He participated as an effective member of State Council for Educational in Paraná and he taught at Federal University in this State. His active action in favor of private and confessional teaching had enabled Rodhen to a political ascension in the educational environment, which resulted to him to be President of Union of Private Teaching Establishments of Paraná and also his participation in the *Federação Nacional dos Estabelecimentos de Ensino* (FENEN – National Federation of Teaching Stablishments).

In 1985, this leader turned to a historical retrospective of private school which was the first topic presented at XX CONEPE with the objective of doing a quality retrospect. Kuno Rhoden² was responsible for presenting this historical and initiated recalling from jesuitic priest school of Vicente Rijo³ in 1549 or Primary Alphabetization School. Considered by him as the beginning of the whole Brazilian Education, lasting this form of teaching for the first four centuries. In order to demonstrate all periodization of private school history, the author makes use of Manfredo Berger's book, *Educação e Dependência* (Education and Dependence) separating periods in the following way:

- 1- Jesuitic Monopoly – from 1549 to 1759.
- 2- Secularization Essays – from 1759 to 1808.
- 3- Reconstruction and Academization process – from 1808 to 1834.
- 4- Public Neglect and Golden Phase of Private Initiative – from 1834 to 1889.
- 5- Consecutive and Disconnected Reforms – from 1889 to 1930.
- 6- Democratization Essay and Adaptation to Brazilian Conditions – from 1930 to 1961.
- 7- Expansion of the Educational System Alienated of Reality – from 1961 to 1971.
- 8- Approach to the Global Society Needs – 1971 [...]. (XX CONEPE - *Congresso Nacional dos Estabelecimentos de Ensino*, ANNALS, 1985, p. 87)

² He was Director of *Colégio Catarinense* (Catarinense School) in Florianópolis being member of *Conselho Nacional de Educação* (State Council of Education).

³ Brother and after Jesuit Priest. He joined in *Companhia de Jesus*, in Coimbra in November 16th., 1545 to assist Lay and Brother Auxiliary Bishop. He came to Brazil with priest Manoel da Nóbrega in 1549 in the delegation of General Governor, Tomé de Souza, ordained Priest just after his arrival in Bahia. Fifteen days after landing, he had already opened a Primary Alphabetization School for teaching *mamelucos* (children of Portuguese with indigenous Brazilians). Available at: <http://www.al.sp.gov.br/noticia/?id=263489>

He claimed that the periodization offered some advantages, because it took in consideration the administrative and constitutional framework and the dominant type of school. Rhoden made, almost entirely, use of chapter 3^o of Master's Degree dissertation of João Claudio Rhoden to elaborate Brazilian educational historical. This dissertation was published and offered for sale at XX CONEPE.

Rhoden initiated the jesuitic monopoly with the arrival of six (6) jesuits in 1549 under the orientation of Manoel da Nobrega for implementing the conversion of indigenous Brazilians to catholic faith through catechesis and education. Brazil-Colony school organization was strictly linked to Portuguese colonizing policy and the arrival of these jesuits would bring the first formal education in Brazil. The objective of *Companhia de Jesus* was not restricted to primary basic school, arising Primary Alphabetization and Secondary Schools. Primary Alphabetization Schools were strictly oriented to alphabetization, and catholic schools directed towards Moral, Philosophy and Languages. Theology, Medicine and Law School studies conducted at Jesuitic University of Coimbra, being restricted to the most influential families.

In order to finance their own schools and secondary ones, jesuits organized activities related to commerce, farms and mills for generating earnings to support their maintenance. This concern was caused, according to Rhoden, by the lack of public metropolis resources allocated to colony. These resources, if any, would be destined, almost exclusively, to jesuit schools.

According to the author, with the expulsion of jesuits in 1759 by Marquês de Pombal due to the influence of Illuminism, educational system turned to a chaos. Jesuits had already established seventeen (17) secondary schools, ten (10) jesuit schools, twenty five (25) homes and thirty six (36) missions throughout Brasil and all of them were closed without any replacement. Until the arrival of Portuguese Court in 1808, was opened a space in colonial teaching with only some schools being founded and State-oriented classes, considered by author, not enough in number, quality and results.

In Brazil with Portuguese Court already established, Dom João VI created the first public library and Universities, stimulating primary and secondary teaching. This policy was followed by Dom Pedro I and Regencies. However, many laws related to Education were just kept on paper due to the lack of technical and financial means. Rodhen considered that measures taken by Portuguese Government, favored academization process of Brazilian Educational System with the creation of an elite minded Law School.

With Constitutional act of 1834 the task of managing primary and secondary school and Universities with central power were transferred to provinces. This measure intensified the mistreatment of primary and secondary education, once provinces were not prepared to organize the teaching. In the words of the author:

The result could not have been better than a complete discontinuation of primary and secondary teaching. The consequence was inevitable since province with no minimal conditions could not organize, let alone, develop a teaching educational system. With no technical and financial conditions and common orientation, the teaching vegetated according to the specific situation of each province. (XX CONEPE -Congresso Nacional dos Estabelecimentos de Ensino, ANNALS, 1985, p. 95)

Indeed, in spite of discontinuation, some secondary schools came up and in 1837. It was created a model school for the secondary teaching with the name of Pedro II. Some Teaching Professional and other secondary schools also initiated its activities, but without success due to the lack of financial resources, installations and human resources.

In contrast to dropout of public secondary school, private initiatives reached its height, according to Rhoden from 1860 to 1890. Jesuits came back in 1842 when other religious orders had founded schools. The foundation of these religious non-catholic schools (Methodist and Presbyterian) initiated the spreading of pedagogical ideas throughout Brazilian Society. Public Instruction Reform in 1854 would have done the necessary condition to private initiative, leaving government in charge of its supervision and control. In 1858 was created the first female school, *Nossa Senhora do Patrocínio*, founded by french nuns of *Congregação de São José de Chambéry* (Congregation of São José de Chambéry) in the city of Itu, State of São Paulo, showing, according to Rhoden, and advancement related to the discrimination issues against woman.

With the proclamation of republic in 1889, teaching would enter in a period of consecutive reforms, being each one with divergent tendencies. For the author it demonstrated the bewilderment with educational system and exemplified, affirming that first Constitution of 1891 would have adopted the way to manage the Empire's teaching. Supervision and control of Universities and secondary schools were under the responsibility of the Union. Primary, Commerce, Technical and Professional Schools were under the responsibility of States and Municipal. Private Primary Schools under the responsibility of States and Union and States were in charge of Secondary ones.

This first Constitution did not assign resources to schools in quantity nor in quality. It consolidated the separation between elite formation system and popular education, States and Municipal did not have the necessary condition to keep Primary, Commerce and Professional Schools, repeating what had happened in the Empire.

This double function of the systems widened States organism, however without creating any connection between them or there was no articulation. In Rhoden's words: "The State Systems, for the most obvious reasons, do not articulate properly with Federal System, widening continuously the distance between popular and elite instruction system" (XX CONEPE – *Congresso Nacional dos Estabelecimentos de Ensino*, ANNALS, 1985, p. 98).

This situation of educational system opened previous versions for the various reforms that took place in this period. The Ministry of Public Instruction was created in 1890 and extinguished in 1891 and just returned in 1930 with the new name of Ministry of Education and Public Health. All these years the Education kept without its own body, showing the lack of interest by Education, being considered a non-relevant problem.

In 1930, it happened a changing in the educational scenario due to the transformation of Brazilian Society with the industrialization, populism and urbanization. This new scenario, according to Rhoden, opened spaces for the beginning of the democratization process. The New Constitution of 1934 established the need for creating an Educational National Plan with approaches for funding the official education, creating competences for teaching levels, mandatory primary teaching and turning optional the religious education. The Constitution of 1937 absorbed all these items and included the professional teaching, compelling this way Industries and Union to create schools for their employee's children.

In this way, these new changings in the Society and transformation of the educational system focused on State Control, Rodhen, defined it as “an official instrument for manipulating the less favored class”. Now it was incorporated in the new model, consequently resulted from the creation of the technical and professional schools. The Community of these schools was not the dominant class.

In 1945, with democratization and new Constitution of 1946, of liberal and democratic spirit, teaching was not modified immediately but kept centralized in the Ministry of Education. This de-centralization would happen just in 1961 with the approval of *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases* (LDB – Law of Directives and Bases)

With the increase of medium class and teaching demand there was a decrease in the education quality. The scarce resources did not allow to accompanying the higher demand. In this occasion, in 1948, where it was initiated the Project of LDB, in which the debate between the defenders of public and private teaching lasted for 13 years and was approved only in 1961. In spite of achievement of unanimity, some issues kept without solution with the democratization and lack of intellectualization in the educational system. Even though all these changings Rodhen believed that world of work was still not associated with teaching or the teaching was still far from practices.

However, with the military coup in 1964 the author confirmed that some teaching issues were not still solved with duality in the education, and in spite of mitigated, still existed. For that reason, in 1971 there was the new reform in the basic teaching, increasing First Grade Primary Education to eight (8) years and three (3) years to the Secondary Grade aiming at professional formation. Considered by Rodhen as a “good reform”, however the demand of high elevated resources did not permit its implementation.

These reforms in a general way did not reach its objectives, explained by the author, that country still continued with 12 million children out of the school, in other words, the reality of Brazilian Education remained conflictive without an effective democratization in the teaching.

After this brief and general history report of education, Rodhen inaugurated the second part of the work related to the characteristics of educational action of the private school. Regarding to the pioneering of private school, the author emphasized that it was a moment marked by persecution of private schools, not recognizing its values, nor the contribution given to the development of the Brazilian Society. This argument will take us to realize the intention of pressuring public power and create the cohesion between leaders that participated in the XX CONEPE.

Referring to Jesuits, Rodhen reminded that all education in the colony and all support to the teaching were exclusively private, although church was linked to the State. After this period, he confirmed that behind the relevant education movements were in the majority, leaders of private initiative. Education renewal renovation also occurred firstly in the private schools. And spite all of these benefits to the Society, the persecution of private schools will be back in his words:

Prevented, despised, controlled or simply ignored and not less submitted to requirements, if not ridiculous, at least useless and disorientating, private schools characterized, during the centuries, as continuing presence. It was, always fighting and searching for its place. Like in the times of Marques de Pombal, in the early days of Republic, with the systematic persecution of positivism aiming at combating the church. And with terrible fights in the times of Dom Vital with his big

center of Christian leaders, from 1920 until finding the most uniqueness presence of Leonel França, SJ in the decades of thirties, it seems that even more fought, more flowered and enhanced, getting precisely in this troubled times of Brazilian Education. It reached its golden age, in which until nowadays has been bringing benefits, in spite of living time of anxieties of an almost extinction, but desired by some sectors, either by government or society, flaring up the struggled debate of one public and free school against private ones paid by parents that already paid their taxes for supporting public school. It seems that shame is coming back! (*XX CONEPE Congresso Nacional dos Estabelecimentos de Ensino*, ANNALS, 1985, p.116)

A tight quarrel has been traced for space in the Brazilian Education, due to the beginning of movement through New Constitution. Leaders of private schools were forced to highlight their values towards Society radicalizing their speech for creating greater unity in the sector for prevailing at this moment.

The need for representativeness, the following subject spoken by Rhoden who affirmed that in few moments the private school had an effective and expressive participation in the national decisions. When participation happened, it was not effective. Internally, in the community environment, confessional schools had a lot of representation, however confessional schools were losing space for the corporate-oriented private schools. And this changing in the administrative characteristics and ideology would have deepened the lack of representativeness.

Rhoden's argument showed us an internal competition within private initiative education sector. Some heads of confessional schools did not agree with a corporate school, in the case of author for example that disagreed with a school more oriented to earnings and professional skills education. Corporate-oriented school had its representativeness however it was not the same that Rhoden would like, due to the principles linked to jesuitism, considered by him a negative element in the representativeness.

Due to this lack, considered by author, private schools should invest in the formation of political leadership to be distinguished by its goals. Rhoden considered that schools should be addressed to the Society and not to earnings, as many corporate schools did. He affirmed that the private school's Project in Brazil was not clear, addressing mostly to the privileged groups. And finishing his work, Rhoden affirmed that the historic of Brazilian Education Historic should not discourage congressmen, but instead, should take practical and optimistic proposals for actuation. Finally for closing his talk, Rodhen remembered a speech of W.E. Forster, in 1870, prime minister of England that affirmed:

The first problem is how to grant good schools to the whole country! By trying to solve, the honored members of Parliament, of both Parties, will recognize that we shall obey to certain rules and guidelines. We can not forget the duty of the parents, nor our duties to our electorate and to taxpayers... When building, we have to take care for not destructing what was already built. For achieving the desired result, we shall spend the minimum possible of public resources and have the maximum engagement for not causing damage to the existing good schools... Our objective is to complete current voluntary system, filling the gaps, do not apply public resources where it is not necessary and search for, as much as possible,

parent's help, receiving cooperation of people of good will who want to help others.... I must also therefore say that everything possible shall be done, rapidly, from the immediate offer of elementary education, depends our industrial prosperity. It is useless try to offer technical education to our employees, with no elementary education, workers with no education and many of them are, terribly with no skills, and if you leave them in this condition, besides their energy and determination, they will be outpaced by International competition. The speed of these measures will depend also, I strongly believe, on the good and safe functioning of electoral system. I am the one who would not wait to educate the people before giving political power, if you have waited for so long, we would have waited a long time for education. But now, that we gave them political power we can not leaving them without education. There are questions that require answers, problems to solve and non-educated voters who are not able for that. National strength depends on this rapid provision. Civilized Communities worldwide are meeting and being evaluated by their strength; if we intend to keep our position between men of our race and nations in the world, we should counterbalance our small number increasing intellectual strength of each person. (*XX CONEPE – Congresso nacional dos Estabelecimentos de Ensino*, ANNALS, 1985, p. 124)

Education should be oriented to Society and private school was the milestone for that. Collaborating with the development not only intellectual of people but also with national prosperity. In this regard, the author considered that the history of private schools should be studied and remembered for strengthening teaching sector.

The conclusion is that Rhoden, articulated in a network of interests and challenges thrown at by private and confessional teaching groups, in a scenario of political decay of dictatorship civil-military, elaborated this fresh-reading of catholic's role and actions in teaching field, based on the invention and maintenance of tradition as practices regulated an accepted to instill values and rules. Regarding invented tradition it is good to highlight from what Hobbsbawn (2012) said:

An invented tradition means a set of practices, normally regulated by unwritten rules or openly accepted, such practices, of ritual and symbolic nature, aiming at instilling certain values and behavior rules through repetition, which implies automatically, a continuity in relation to the past.

A built and invented tradition by these heads highlighted the historic of private teaching as an active subject in the Brazilian educational development, always collaborating for its growth. The conception of Society enmeshed in this historical makes us think about social relation of the current existing groups and the influence that these groups would like to have in this new moment of society's construction with the end of civil-military dictatorship.

Kuno P. Rhoden being a jesuit priest, was part of a network relations that imposed certain individuals to think by the way they were proposing for the new democracy. In spite of the critics to Corporate- orientated Schools, which composed CONEPE, the defense of interest for private education, whatever confessional or not, in a general perspective is present, because moment was for constructing the new democracy with internal disputes between private

teaching groups (confessional and laymen) and external to the group contrary to the benefits given to private school.

In spite of these internal differences, the existent private group in the educational sector managed to reach consensus, using one of its tactics, CONEPES, as a way to meet, debate, and make more representative and unified towards society and its changings.

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