



**Adaptation of the school system to new socioeconomic realities.
The reform(s) of lyceum secondary education (1945-1968)¹**

A adequação do sistema de escolar às novas realidades socioeconómicas.
A(s) reforma(s) do ensino liceal (1945-1968)

La adecuación del sistema escolar a las nuevas realidades socioeconómicas.
La(s) reforma(s) en liceus (1945-1968)

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Abstract

The geostrategic repositioning of Portugal in the post-war world period and the transformations in Portuguese social formation led to changes in educational policy, recognizing education as playing a key role in economic growth, based on the theory of human capital. Concerns were focused on the training of qualified human resources, on valuing school capital, and on promoting educational planning. The evolution of the objectives and curricular structure of lyceum secondary schools is analyzed, including the creation of the preparatory cycle for secondary education, calling for written sources submitted to document analysis using the critical method and to analysis of content. The purposes to be attributed to lyceum secondary education are the central issue in regard to lyceum secondary schools in promoting the schooling of a wider range of Portuguese people. It is a process that is carried out based on inequality of access to education.

Keywords: History of Education. Lyceum Secondary School. Post-War. Portuguese. Educational System.

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Resumo

O reposicionamento geoestratégico de Portugal no mundo do pós-guerra e as transformações na formação social portuguesa conduziram a alterações na política educativa, reconhecendo à educação um papel fulcral no crescimento económico, sustentado na teoria do capital humano. As preocupações centraram-se na formação de recursos humanos qualificados, na valorização do capital escolar e na promoção da planificação educativa. Analisa-se a evolução dos objetivos e da estrutura curricular dos liceus, incluindo a criação do Ciclo Preparatório do Ensino Secundário, convocando fontes escritas submetidas a análise documental, com recurso ao *método crítico*, e de conteúdo. As finalidades a atribuir ao ensino liceal revelam-se a questão central no sentido de os liceus promoverem a escolarização de um leque mais alargado de portugueses. Um processo que se concretiza com base na desigualdade de acesso à educação.

Palavras-chaves: História da Educação. Ensino Liceal. Pós-guerra. Sistema de Ensino Português.

Resumen

El reposicionamiento geoestratégico de Portugal en el mundo de la posguerra y los cambios en la formación social portuguesa llevaron a cambios en la política educativa, reconociendo la educación como un papel clave en el crecimiento económico, apoyado en la teoría del capital humano. Las preocupaciones se centraron en la formación de recursos humanos calificados, la valorización del capital escolar y en la promoción de la planificación educativa. Se analiza la evolución de los objetivos y la estructura curricular de los liceos, incluyendo la creación del Ciclo Preparatorio para la Educación Secundaria, recurriendo a fuentes escritas sometidas a análisis documental, utilizando el método crítico, y de contenidos. Los fines que se atribuyen a la educación secundaria son el tema central en términos de los liceos que promueven la escolarización de una gama más amplia de portugueses. Un proceso que se materializa a partir de la desigualdad de acceso a la educación.

Palabras clave: Historia de la Educación. Educación Secundaria. De la posguerra. Sistema Educativo Portugués.

The economic reconstruction of western Europe in the post-war period took place under the aegis of the United States of America, based on a logic of liberal capitalism, guided by values of competitiveness and development, providing a key role to education for economic growth, where it expounded the theory of human capital that framed the educational systems of the 1960s and 1970s.

The geostrategic repositioning of Portugal in the post-war world and the transformations in Portuguese social formation led to changes in educational policy. The contribution of education comes to be predominantly economic, with an underlying concern regarding training of qualified human resources for purposes of economic growth, placing value on school capital and the promotion of educational planning, with a view toward insertion of Portugal in western economic dynamics.

In this context, the presence of Portugal in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) will lead to its participation in the Mediterranean Regional Project, a study that produced a quantitative description of the Portuguese school structure in the 1950s and projected its evolution up to 1975, revealing the shortcomings of the Portuguese educational system (PROJETO REGIONAL DO MEDITERRÂNEO, 1963; PROJETO REGIONAL DO MEDITERRÂNEO, 1964). On a purely national level, a movement toward planning is welcomed, for example, by including, for the first time, education and investigation in the Interim Development Plan (1965-1968) or by creating the Study and Planning Office for Educational Action (PORTUGAL, 1965).

It is within this framework and incorporating the euphoria around the school and its role in social construction (FERNANDES, 1999) that the reforms of lyceum secondary education and technical education were carried out, that compulsory schooling was successively extended, and, in a certain way after that, that the Preparatory Cycle for Secondary Education (Ciclo Preparatório do Ensino Secundário - CPES) (1967) and the Preparatory Cycle for Telescola (1968) were created.

The scenario lends a certain normality to the evidence of political will, at least of a certain political class, to reform secondary education, which was literally expressed through the appointment of a Commission for the Reform of Secondary Education in 1944 (ADÃO; REMÉDIOS, 2008). Likewise, the public positions of different MPs in the National Assembly go in the same direction, through statements in the debates that are situated between the discussion of the problems of management and administration of secondary school education – e.g., school network, job insecurity, salary regulations (PORTUGAL, 1945, p. 250) (PORTUGAL, 1946, p. 960-961) – and a more systemic perspective. This evokes, expressly or otherwise, the need to reform secondary school education, which may be combined with other interventions that offer a more comprehensive and congruent view of National Education – e.g., Couceiro da Costa (PORTUGAL, 1947d, p. 382-384), Afonso Ribeiro Cazaes, Maria Van Zeller, or Marques de Carvalho (PORTUGAL, 1947e).

The fact is that in 1947, the reform of secondary education would be enacted (PORTUGAL, 1947a) and, at the same time, a new statute for that level of education would be published (PORTUGAL, 1947b). The legislative authority evoked the urgency of the decision, excusing itself from any discussion in the National Assembly and from the opinion of the Corporate Chamber (Portuguese legislative structure), in view of the significant number of criticisms regarding the curricular structure in force at that time. It recognized the basis of the reform and the need for alignment with what was called technical education, which had been reformed by law in the previous quarter (PORTUGAL, 1947c), but whose regulation would only take place practically a year after implementation of the reform of secondary education (PORTUGAL, 1947c). 1948).

To design the contours of the reform, the government stated the purpose(s) and indicated the way, identifying the study suited to its purposes. Observation of the diversity of solutions adopted in the “World” led the legislative authority to conclude that there were no principles, of consensus or not, that would support norms for a reform of secondary education. Recalling that a level of education for the Portuguese was at issue, the legislative authority considered that what would come to be established should be the “most consistent with our nature, our traditions, and our own life” and therefore, instead of studying and knowing what was done and was being done abroad, the best method would be to proceed with the “examination and observation of the results of experiences” in Portugal, which, necessarily, could only be accessed through the history of secondary education (PORTUGAL, 1947a, p. 879). From analysis of the educational historical process and from the study of secondary school teaching experiences in Portugal, two conclusions would be drawn: the first held that students, invariably, leave secondary schools without the minimum preparation necessary to enter a university higher education course, and the second, admitted that the students’ profile upon exiting, in terms of intellectual training and general culture, was inadequate for entering a profession. These considerations gave the government the necessary room for maneuvering for action, without failing to say what was to come:

It will be appropriate to review the old concept of the humanities in view of the realities of the modern social man. For the complete education of the spirits that should constitute an elite, the classical humanities cannot be neglected. These, however, should not be compulsory study for the great mass of the population, to whom must be offered the most fitting culture so that they can dedicate themselves to the work they have in order to live. Needs of a different order came after the needs of man in other times, and the culture needed to satisfy those needs is what constitutes the humanism of today (PORTUGAL, 1947a, p. 881).

The passage is, in all respects, paradigmatic (and significant) regarding the purpose of education and the role of secondary education as of the mid-twentieth century in Portugal. At least in the official narrative and in an explicit manner, the educational offer of secondary schools became less exclusivist, that is, its recipients now include not only the elite, but also the other children of Portuguese parents, at least of some, as we must not lose sight of the fact that compulsory schooling was still restricted to primary education and that there was, at the same time, the path of technical education. The opening of secondary schools to new sectors of Portuguese society, as if announcing massification – “the great mass of the population”, emerged in the context of an attempt to combine the training offered in secondary school education with the needs of the labor market – “the most fitting culture so that they can dedicate themselves to the work they have in order to live”. Apparently, the place and role that one would occupy in the productive sector, which was not unrelated to one’s position in the social hierarchy, served as a criterion, or was at least under consideration, for the options to be adopted in the study plan (school subjects, contents). In fact, the purpose and objectives that were attributed to the general and complementary courses of secondary education, in line with the recipients and their destination in the two educational offerings, will determine the legislative authority’s decision-making regarding the duration of the studies in the matter of the teaching system and the management of school subjects.

The length of the secondary education course was maintained at seven years so as not to postpone entry into active working life (PORTUGAL, 1947a), but the structure of 1931 was reinstated in the distribution of years for the general course – with the division into two cycles – and the complementary course (PORTUGAL, 1932), in a debate that has as its background the search for correspondence with the development of adolescents. In fact, the 1947 reform did not end an issue that seems far from being exhausted. Note the recent resolution of the Assembly of the Republic that instructed the current Portuguese government to “carry out a study with a view to the feasibility of restructuring the teaching cycles, replacing the current division into four cycles” and at the same time, to investigate possible “changes and impacts” resulting from it (PORTUGAL, 2019, p. 1542).

The fundamental aim of the general course, of five years’ duration, was “the harmonious and gradual development of the student’s faculties” and that the mass of the population, mobilizing an expression from the diploma, would obtain a “certain degree of culture”. Therefore, what should be taught in these first five years of secondary school education would be what is “useful and necessary, as knowledge, as a mental exercise, and as a training element” adapting it to the social background and the spectrum of professions that one would be expected to perform, fulfilling the intent of “today’s humanism” (PORTUGAL, 1947a, p. 881). With the student having obtained the “appropriate degree of general culture”, the 3rd cycle, in turn, understood as pre-university education, would have the purpose of imparting knowledge, contributing to the acquisition of “solid basic knowledge” of the studies chosen by the students (PORTUGAL, 1947a, p. . 882).

The choice of the system of class attendance was largely a consequence of the purpose and objectives established for each course. Clearly, at least in the understanding of the legislative authority, the purposes of the general course benefited from simultaneous study of a set of school subjects and from the connections that they established with each other, even contributing to reduce the risks of fatigue, as long as one fulfilled the scaled requirements of the work and worked in accordance with the nature and importance of the school subject. In this perspective, the class regimen was adopted, requiring a reflection on and management of the number of school subjects, as well as their syllabi. In contrast, in the 3rd cycle and considering the established objectives, a school subject regimen was chosen, accompanied by reduction in the number of subjects, “being limited to what is fundamental for the studies that the students intend to start, and the number of lessons in the subjects that are new is increased” (PORTUGAL, 1947a, p. 883).

The options indicated call for reduction in the number of school subjects, especially in the general course, whose duration was even reduced by one year. In this sense, the legislative authority, after ruling out the possibility of optional subjects, for the purpose of uniformity and definition of what is essential, prior to the interest of families and students, aimed at “the satisfaction of the common needs of life, or to pursue studies” (PORTUGAL, 1947a, p. 882). The emphasis on essentials involved reducing the variety of subjects to be studied simultaneously, as well as slimming down the syllabi in all subjects considered non-fundamental. The decrease in the variety of subjects should be accompanied by greater weight placed on the work and effort dedicated to each one. Fatigue would not affect the student and he would assimilate what was intended to be taught if, in a year, in a set of seven or eight subjects, he only had to apply particular effort to the study of two or three. On the syllabus level, a reduction was foreseen in subjects such as geography, history, and natural sciences, as opposed to mathematics, which was useful for intellectual exercise and reasoning power, and languages. In this sense, the revision and simplification of the syllabi focused on the abilities of the students and took into account the teaching experience (PORTUGAL, 1948, p. 1081).

Above all, efforts were made to ensure that simplifications assumed greater proportion in the syllabi of the general course, with the aim of ensuring that the syllabi would be appropriate to the students' receptive capacity and would reflect not so much what students should learn as what they would be able to learn at the age in which they attended the first five years of secondary school.

The result, apparently, must have fallen short of what was desired since six years later and exactly on the same grounds, the experience of teaching staff and the argumentation of adapting the programs to the ability of the students, the legislative authority once again publishes teaching syllabi of lyceum secondary school (PORTUGAL, 1954). Likewise, we find that the matter of health – e.g., fatigue – was present in the debates regarding the reform of secondary education, at least up to the beginning of the dawn of the 1950s, questioning the excessive workload – due to the extension and depth of the syllabi and the encyclopedism of the study plan, the pedagogies considered as totalitarian (PORTUGAL, 1948), or the absence of free time (GERSÃO, 1948).

In discussion of the problem of the excessive number of subjects, the legislative authority considered it natural that “the problem of teaching Latin in the general course” would arise (PORTUGAL, 1947a, p. 882). Driven by the need to reduce the number of subjects in line with the purposes of the general course and the cultural mix of the transformations in process, the subject of Latin was removed from the general course, which can be considered a logical result, consigning it to the complementary course and intensifying its teaching, and introducing Greek. Simultaneously, in the distribution of living languages beyond the mother tongue, German, like Latin, only becomes part of the line-up of subjects in the 3rd cycle of secondary education and, in both cases, only for students whose destination is the Schools of Law and some courses in the Schools of Language Arts. In contrast, French, taught over five years, and English, only in the 2nd cycle of secondary school education, are part of the line-up of subjects in the general secondary school course.

The problematic situation of the place and meaning of the humanities, in general, and of Latin and Greek, in particular, in the secondary school curriculum became the central question of the debate, which was possibly spurred by the proposal of the new humanism fraught with a certain utilitarianism and pragmatism, but likewise by something apparently implicit. Actually, as we have observed, only a part of the elite would have access to a classical humanist training in the course of their secondary school education, given that, even in the complementary course, only students whose destination was law courses and some of the courses taught at the schools of language arts would have Latin and Greek in their curriculum. The debate was so lively that it remained in the public eye throughout the 1960s. In an attempt at synthesis, the argumentation and discussion of the set of texts and articles examined can be arranged within three approaches: i) the issue centered on the analysis of syllabi (PAVÃO JR., 1951; ALMEIDA, 1956; SOARES, 1956; ALMEIDA, 1958); ii) the educational training value of the humanities and classical culture (FREIRE, 1947; ALMEIDA, 1956; SOARES, 1956; ANDRADE, 1959; SANTOS, 1960); and iii) questioning of educational policy options (GERSÃO, 1948; SOARES, 1956; DURÃO, 1959).

The exponential growth in students attending secondary schools, and, in a certain way, the legislative authority's assumption of broadening the student recruitment base and, consequently, redefining the purposes of secondary education, especially in the general course, acquires expression in the public arena through the level and performance of secondary school education, as well as through that of its students, sometimes bound up with the issue of vocational guidance. A proposal even emerged for the reconfiguration and unification of the 1st cycle, considered preparatory for secondary school and technical education (ALMEIDA, 1954; ALMEIDA, 1955a; ALMEIDA, 1955b; ALMEIDA, 1955c; ALMEIDA, 1955d; SOARES, 1955a; SOARES, 1955b; SOARES, 1955c).

It is noteworthy that the number of students enrolled in lyceum secondary education tripled from the 1950-1951 school year, at 48,485, to the 1966-1967 school year, at 155,445. In a more detailed analysis, the general secondary education course, 1st and 2nd cycle, tripled in number of students, whereas the 3rd cycle underwent an increase of four and a half times in the number of students. In 1969, 258,937 students attended secondary school, of which 31,005 were enrolled in the 3rd cycle. This reality is not negligible, but it must be tempered with the fact that in 1966-1967, students enrolled in secondary education represented only 17.4% of the total of those enrolled in primary education (891082) and 17.5% of students who had "entered" primary school four years earlier, in 1962-1963.

The reasoning in argumentation regarding student achievement in secondary school begins with the concept of "the student's mental level" (ALMEIDA, 1955a) and holds that only 25% of students attending secondary school have (such) a mental level to obtain satisfactory results. This is a problem that, according to the set of articles assembled here, dates back to the 1920s, and the reason it exists lies in the process of student selection. This selection, in the understanding of Pinho de Almeida, is rooted in the purpose attributed to secondary schools and, contrary to the educational policy adopted by the National Education Department in 1947, this professor maintains that it belongs to the secondary schools only to train the national elite; all other Portuguese children, in his view, would find a "culture" more suited to their future profession in technical schools (ALMEIDA, 1955c). The contribution of education to the development and mass participation in schooling are not, from this perspective, precisely in question. What is effectively in play is safeguarding secondary schools for a certain elite. His interpretation-proposal depends on the effectiveness of vocational guidance. In this perspective, he considers the postponement of selection to the age of 12 as positive, and puts forth the idea of transforming the preparatory cycle of technical education, created in 1948, into a preparatory cycle of secondary education for technical and lyceum secondary school. In the latter case, the 1st cycle of the general lyceum secondary school course would be eliminated, accompanied by an effective vocational guidance mechanism. In Pinho de Almeida's argument, making these decisions would solve burning issues, such as the poor performance of secondary education and the excess of students, and would doubly improve the quality of teachers' work by reducing the number of students per class and, simultaneously, limiting the heterogeneity of the mental level to the level of the class and, consequently, of the classroom (ALMEIDA, 1955d).

In 1967, twelve years later, the Preparatory Cycle of Secondary Education (Ciclo Preparatório do Ensino Secundário - CPES) was created, commonly seen as a decisive reinforcement for the broadening of compulsory education and a step in the process of massification of education, within the framework of a retrospective view of the historical educational process. It resulted from the merger of the preparatory cycle of technical education and of the 1st cycle of the general course of lyceum secondary schools, whose purpose

combined provision of general training suitable for pursuing studies and the observation of students for their guidance in subsequent academic choices (PORTUGAL, 1967). The legislative authority thus established the age of 12 as the time for decision-making regarding sequential studies and, in these two years, there was the opportunity to mitigate obstacles to the school guidance process, e.g., the differentiation of methods and cultures.

School guidance would consist of the systematic observation of each student, especially their “reactions to the stimuli of the different educational sets” (PORTUGAL, 1967, p. 3) that were part of the CPES study plan:

Set A, spiritual and national training aimed at humanistic appreciation, awareness of the origin and value of the national community, and the establishment of religious values as a basis for moral practice. Scientific initiation, set B, had the purpose of awakening interest in understanding natural phenomena and beginning the practice of experimental investigation. Drawing and Crafts were the pair of subjects that made up set C, of training in arts and crafts; it pursued the development of sensitivity by promoting the cultivation of aesthetic representations and creative arts, with “initiation in the mastery of materials and in the use and coordination of natural forces (PORTUGAL, 1968, p. 1343).

It was expected that observation, along with a certain systematic approach, would allow the provision of useful information to students, parents, and tutors, which would facilitate the choice of subsequent studies, as well as resolution of pedagogical and educational problems, under the responsibility of teachers and parents and guardians, safeguarding that the information shared consisted of recommendations or advice, the free choice of school career thus not being at stake. With school guidance services organized by class, information about each student was contained in the respective individual files.

It was a structure that had, at the top of the pyramid, a school guidance council, made up of the principal, assistant principal, the morals and religion teachers, two other teachers, and the school doctor, which was responsible for directing the guidance services, guiding the services in uncertain cases, authorizing the consultation of psychotechnical or mental health laboratories, and giving an opinion “on the choice of textbooks, manuals, and didactic material and regarding teaching methods, insofar as they are of interest to school guidance” (PORTUGAL, 1967, p. 3).

Final comments

The reforms of lyceum secondary education, to which special attention was dedicated here, and technical education, the steps of progressive expansion of compulsory education, and the creation of the CPES seek to meet the needs of training of qualified human resources, to value school capital, and to promote educational planning.

A full grasp of this process requires understanding the post-war transformations and accelerated construction of Europe guided by the belief in economic development and in the role of education in achieving this aspiration, where international institutions such as the OECD increasingly perform activity that is not insignificant, and where, domestically, unprecedented profound structural changes were experienced in this period (ROSAS, 1994).

Those responsible for national education emphasize three issues, namely, the duration of studies, the attendance system, and the excessive number of subjects that, in a certain way, obscure the core problem, that of the purpose(s) that was(were) attributed, or was(were) intended to be attributed to lyceum secondary education and, on the basis of which, moreover, decisions were made to resolve each of the issues cited. The aims attempt to adapt to new realities, both nationally and internationally, with the expectation that the lyceum secondary schools would fulfill the plan of promoting the schooling of a broader range of Portuguese citizens. This process, however, takes place on the basis of inequality in access to education, providing the general course to those who enter lyceum secondary education and reserving the complementary course for an elite with the aim of access to the university, an arena where social selection even overrode gender selection (NUNES, 1971). These circumstances underlie the progressive affirmation of a humanism sustained in a culture fraught with utilitarianism and pragmatism to the detriment of what we can define, to ease explanation, as classical humanism, with the implications and consequences observed in the syllabus of lyceum secondary education.

Concerns about the effectiveness of the system, linked to the idea of human capital and of recognition of the importance of vocational guidance were combined with the desire to preserve lyceum secondary schools from the massification process, conserving them as training schools for the elite, whereas the majority of children would have technical education as a destination. Upstream from this process, the CPES emerged, with the mission of establishing itself in the favored space of selection, endowed with the service of vocational guidance, which was responsible for collecting and disseminating information among the agents, families, teachers, and children.

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