



Youth and adult literacy in Brazil: a face of History in the academic productions in the late 20th century¹

Alfabetização de jovens e adultos no Brasil: uma face da História nas produções acadêmicas no final do Século XX

Alfabetización de jóvenes y adultos en Brasil: una cara de la Historia en las producciones académicas a finales del Siglo XX

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Abstract

Taking the academic productions as historical source, this study aims to analyze and understand the history of adult and youth literacy in Brazil, from the academic discourses produced in the period from 1978 to 2000. The initial time demarcation, 1978, for being in this year, the first dissertation identified research on adult literacy, inked to a Brazilian graduate program, and the year 2000 to put this article in the context of the 20th century. Thus, we present an overview of how the Brazilian research addressed the theme of youth and adult literacy, before and after the enactment of the Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional n.º 9394, of 1996, moment in Brazil, education of young people and Adults was recognized as teaching mode.

Keywords: adult literacy. Adult and youth education. Historicity.

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Resumo

Tomando as produções acadêmicas como fonte histórica, esse estudo tem por objetivo analisar e compreender a história da alfabetização de jovens e adultos no Brasil a partir dos discursos acadêmicos produzidos no período de 1978 a 2000. A demarcação temporal inicial, 1978, se justifica por ter ocorrido nesse ano a defesa da primeira pesquisa de Dissertação de Mestrado identificada sobre alfabetização de adultos vinculada a um programa de pós-graduação brasileiro, e a final, o ano de 2000, para situarmos este artigo no âmbito do século XX. Desse modo, apresentamos um panorama de como as pesquisas brasileiras abordaram o tema alfabetização de jovens e adultos antes e depois da promulgação da Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional n.º 9394, de 1996, momento em que, no Brasil, a Educação de Jovens e Adultos foi reconhecida como modalidade de ensino.

Palavras-chave: Alfabetização de adultos. Educação de Jovens e Adultos. Historicidade.

Resumen

Tomando las producciones académicas como fuente histórica, este estudio pretende analizar y entender la historia de la alfabetización de adultos y jóvenes en Brasil, de los discursos académicos producen en el período 1978-2000. La demarcación del tiempo inicial, 1978, por ser en ese año, el primer identificado tesis sobre alfabetización de adultos, vinculada a un programa graduado brasileño, y el año 2000 a poner este artículo en el contexto del siglo XX. Así, presentamos un resumen de cómo la investigación brasileña abordó el tema de la juventud y la alfabetización de adultos, antes y después de la promulgación de la Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional n.º 9394, de 1996, momento en Brasil, la educación de jóvenes y adultos fue reconocida como modo de enseñanza.

Palabras clave: alfabetización de adultos. Educación de adultos y jóvenes. Historicidad

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Introduction

Considering the academic productions focused on youth and adult literacy of the end of the twentieth century as the investigative theme, this study is characterized by a “historical operation”, which, according to Certeau (2010, p. 93), consists of “selecting the datum under a present law, which differs from its 'other' (past)”, with a certain distance, from the situation in which it was enacted or published. In this case, the time range established between 1978 and 2000 marks the selection of this research. This is due to the fact that, for Certeau (2010, p. 93), the historical operation has a double effect: one refers to the act of historization of the present, bringing to the discussion experienced situations, in a specific way. For this paper it was chosen the themes researched on EJA, in which a “proper place” is established, that is, a place for research and academic productions; another is the act of “representing what is missing”, knowing the limitations of expressing what is missing, such as data or documents, availability of productions in full and situations in which there is the challenge of working with the “unsaid”.

Considering youth and adult literacy as an area of academic discussion, it can be seen a detachment from the large production of discussions that includes the process of child literacy. Studies on the history of literacy in Brazil have their origin and, even nowadays, their tradition of research marked especially by the aspects of teaching children. However, when speaking of literacy, the idea conceived is the initial teaching of reading and writing, not restricted to a specific audience or age group. It is a broad and open concept and process as it can occur at any time in life. Thus, the history of literacy encompasses research on children, youth, adults and the elderly.

Considering the disparity in the accumulation of research and studies on the education of children, there has been, for decades, in the history of youth and adult literacy in Brazil, a gap of both theoretical and methodological references that subsidizes the didactic proposals and discussions about the literacy of young adults, which is why the foundation was based on discussions of children's literacy. The teaching material itself and the educational practices available to young and adult audiences were no different from those directed at children. It is known, from historical studies on EJA, that this modality has more recently conquered specific requirements for the production of didactic material and formation of those who will work with young and adult students. Some milestones of this trajectory were the approval by the National Education Council of Opinion number 11 of May 10, 2000, which dealt with the National Curriculum Guidelines for Youth and Adult Education (BRASIL, 2000) and the publication, in 2010, of a public bidding for the choice of textbooks for EJA students, within the scope of the National Program of Books and Didactic Material (PNLD).²

Therefore, in this work, the history of youth and adult literacy in Brazil will be reconstructed from an analysis of the academic productions taken as a historical source. The study aims to analyze and understand the history of youth and adult literacy in Brazil from the academic discourses produced from 1978 to 2000. The initial time of 1978 is justified by the defense of the first Master's dissertation identified within the limits of this research on adult literacy, linked to a Brazilian postgraduate program, and, finally, the year of 2000, to situate this article within the twentieth century.

The research was conducted from the survey of theses and dissertations in the repositories of the IBICT Digital Library (Brazilian Institute of Science and Technology Information) and the Capes Catalog of Theses and Dissertation (Coordination of Higher Education Personnel Improvement). Consequently, it was made an overview of how Brazilian research approached the

² The National Textbook Program for Youth and Adult Education (PNLD EJA) was created by Resolution 51 of September 16, 2009, of the National Fund for the Development of Education (BRAZIL, 2009).

issue of youth and adult literacy before and after the promulgation of the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (LDBEN) number 9,394, of December 20, 1996 (BRAZIL, 1996). At that time, youth and adult education was recognized as a teaching modality in Brazil, destined to all individuals who did not have access or did not complete basic education at their proper age. Until then, the school program to adolescent and adult students was named Supplementary Education, as stated in Law 5,692, of August 11, 1971, which established the Guidelines and Bases for the elementary and secondary education (BRAZIL, 1971)³.

From the perspective of the field of EJA public policies to the discussions produced in the scientific field, by Brazilian universities, that were historically constituted by the tripod of teaching, research and extension, this article focuses on the research matter, assuming theses and dissertations as results of written investigations, exclusively, within a higher education institution scope. Thus, in order to approach discussions about the history and memory of EJA, in universities, the analysis undertaken in this text was based on the following issues: how did the Brazilian university, especially in its research, address the theme of youth and adult literacy in the late twentieth century? What do theses and dissertations produced between 1978 and 2000 reveal about the history of youth and adult literacy, as well as of EJA, in Brazil? To this end, we started from the assumption that the theme of youth and adult literacy has a specific, plural and multifaceted place in the researches produced in Brazilian universities in the twentieth century.

At the end of the text it is pointed out that, by making this balance of academic productions, it is intended not only to analyze the themes and approaches prioritized over three decades, but, at the same time, to highlight the gaps that need to be investigated for historical understanding of the persistence of the phenomenon of illiteracy in Brazil.

Brazilian academic productions about EJA

By subsidizing the study on the theme of youth and adult literacy, the historiographic operation poses the need to understand, according to Certeau (2010, p. 66), the relationship built in the combination of a “social place”, “scientific practices” and “writing”. In this way the “place”, which in this case refers to academic productions, the “analysis procedure”, the methodological choice, the accomplishment of a bibliographical research and the “construction of a text” result in the production of this paper. Thus, we articulate an intersection of the writings produced about EJA.

In this field of production, three major groups of academic production that focus on EJA stand out. In the first group there is an attempt to understand it from a perspective of scientific productions that cover the area, in order to inventory them nationally; in the second one, there is a group of productions that discuss public policies and the curricular matter or educational practices of EJA; in a third group, the historiographic characteristics are highlighted, which tries to recover the historical facts related to EJA in Brazil.

From this path of academic production on EJA in Brazil, Haddad's research (1987) is highlighted as one of the first works to address the state of the art about the supplementary education in the country, from Law 5,692 / 71.

His work raised 31 titles on the subject, but it was selected only 16 of them to compose the analysis, because the remaining ones are not characterized as academic production, (5 official documents and 2 internal school documents) or the document could not be obtained (5 dissertations, 1 research and 2 journal articles).

³ During the period covered by this research, youth and adult schooling in Brazil had different names, Supplementary Education (until 1996) and Youth and Adult Education - EJA (after 1996); the reader should be reminded that the latter term will be used to refer to the entire period.

The research selection proposed by Haddad (1987) was the productions that discussed the supplementary teaching. Given this, the results offered preliminary indications regarding the implementation of supplementary education, which, after the enactment of Law 5,692 / 71, would have expanded, in a quantitative, systematic and formal way, the opportunities for youth and adult schooling in Brazil. However, the data also revealed extremely high rates of school dropout and failure, indicating that selective mechanisms identified in the regular education system, had been reproduced in the supplementary education at levels and intensity whose elements could be measured. The research points to preliminary indications that the curricular contents and the methodologies employed - at least in the supplementary courses and exams - were not appropriate to the client's needs (HADDAD, 1987).

In this context, Haddad (2000a) presents the result of a state-of-the-art research⁴, coordinated by the researcher, of a survey of a production by students of post-graduation program in Education between 1986 and 1998, which addressed the education of youth and adults. The survey, initially characterized as extensive, comprised not only the academic production *stricto sensu*, but all sorts of publications, including documents from public education bodies and non-governmental organizations.

It was found more recent works that describe the historicity of EJA from a critical perspective, such as the research by Friedrich *et al.* (2010), which is characterized by a documentary analysis of the literature of Youth and Adult Education and the movement of the teaching modality, public policies, as well as its trajectory in teacher training. The research makes a comparison with the historical evolution, with the formation of teachers, with the labor market in Brazil, from the academic productions and official documents as primary and secondary sources of research, covering the period from 1973 to 2007.

The historical reflection of Friedrich *et al.* (2010) on adult education points out that this modality is a result of the State's ineffectiveness in ensuring, through appropriate public policies, the supply and permanence of children and adolescents in school. For the authors, such "EJA initiatives, in its great majority, walk along the marginality of the Brazilian educational process, and the most incisive questions regarding this statement concern the proposals of government created according to the political needs of each ideologically dominant system" (FRIEDRICH *et al.*, 2010, p. 405).

Other studies, such as Ribeiro's (2001), besides the concern with the historicity of EJA in Brazil, presented curricular orientations regarding the literacy and post-literacy of youth and adults, with proposals for the first four grades of elementary school. According to Ribeiro (2001), the purpose of the work was not to outline a curriculum or program ready to be fulfilled, but to offer subsidies for the formulation of curricula and teaching plans, which should be developed by educators according to the needs and specific objectives of their programs.

The study by Ribeiro (2001) pointed out that youth and adult education is characterized not only by the diversity of the public that attends it and by the social, political and educational contexts, but also by the variety of models of program organization, more or less formal or extensive. It describes the open and flexible Brazilian educational legislation regarding the workload, duration and curriculum components of these courses, in view of which there is a curriculum proposal that advances the detailing of educational content and objectives, but allows a wide variety of combinations, emphases, deletions, additions and ways of fulfillment.

⁴ According to Haddad (2000a, p. 4-5), "it was used the catalogs of theses in Education and the CD-ROM3 produced by the National Association for Research in Education (ANPEd) - which bring the production of theses and dissertations from 34 institutions that maintain postgraduate programs in education - 98 collections of national journals and annals of the three main events in area 4. Through these procedures, more than 1300 titles produced in the period 1986-1998 were found. Almost 33% of knowledge production is found to be expressed in journal articles and special issues of journals, while theses and dissertations represent approximately 9.5% of total production. The books or serial publications published in the period represent only 7.93% of the production, which reveals the scarce editorial development of the thematic area".

Studies that address the public policies on EJA and were present in thematic dossiers of *Revista em Aberto*, which highlight the issues of educational practices in the national context in 1992, under the coordination of Sérgio Haddad (1992), discussed the trends of youth and adult education in the 90's. Machado (2009, p. 11) summarizes that this dossier presented discussions on “policies of international organizations for education, policies for EJA in Brazil, the perspectives of popular education in the 1990’s, the issue of youth and education, education for workers and the popular public education policy for youth and adults”.

After seventeen years, the theme of EJA public policies returns to *Revista Em Aberto* under the organization of Machado (2009). The author acknowledges that youth and adult education in Brazil has undergone a period of change revealed by different actions, programs and projects that, marked by a legal and normative framework, reveal another political conception and contribute to a reconfiguration of this educational field. The proposal of the dossier, according to her, by gathering six papers that discuss the public policies of the EJA in national and international dimension, reaffirms the right of all individuals to education, as envisaged in the Federal Constitution of 1988, as the modality of the basic education, augured in the Law 9,394 / 96 (MACHADO, 2009).

Regarding research on the historiography trend, there is a partial focus on the history of EJA in Brazil, from the analysis of official documents, laws and regulations or programs, highlighting the research of Haddad (1987), Haddad and Di Pierro (2000b), Di Pierro, Joia and Ribeiro (2001), Di Pierro (2004), Galvão and Soares (2004), Ireland, Machado and Paiva (2004).

Therefore, based on the studies presented, it can be recognized that EJA is a very broad teaching modality that has different aspects, not restricted only to teaching and learning practices; there is, in Freire's terms, a politicity intrinsic to the constitution of youth and adult education in Brazil. The researches on the state of knowledge of EJA previously referenced show different themes that this subject or field of research and studies entails, such as, among others, teacher training, public policies, teaching concepts and practices, popular education, the profile of the educator and student. To this end, it was chosen some clippings of academic productions on EJA, targeting the analysis to the literacy of youth and adults, located in the school, with the purpose of historiographizing a facet of EJA in the research carried out in Brazilian universities.

Youth and adult literacy in Brazilian academic productions

In the research conducted in Capes - Catalog of Theses and IBICT Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertation, it was possible to locate, between 1978 and 2000, 65 works, between theses and dissertations⁵, with the descriptors “adult literacy”, “youth literacy” and “youth and adult literacy” as shown in the table below:

⁵ To reach this number it is important to clarify that the survey was conducted in the repositories of the Capes Catalog of Theses and Dissertation and in the IBICT Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertation in January 2019. In CAPES, with the terms “adult literacy”, “youth literacy” and “youth and adult literacy” it was identified, respectively, 16, 30 and 28 works between theses and dissertations. In IBICT, 21 works were found with the term “adult literacy”, 5 designated with the keyword “youth literacy” and 5 for “youth and adult literacy”. Adopting the criteria explained throughout this paper and crossing these data, it was reached the number of 65 theses and dissertations on youth and adult literacy defended between 1978 and 2000 in Brazilian universities.

Table 1. Number of Dissertations and Theses produced per year (1978-2000)

Year	Dissertations	Theses	Total
1978	1	0	1
1981	1	0	1
1985	1	0	1
1986	0	1	1
1987	1	0	1
1989	1	0	1
1990	3	0	3
1991	3	0	3
1992	2	0	2
1993	3	0	3
1994	3	1	4
1995	1	0	1
1996	2	0	2
1997	4	1	5
1998	12	4	16
1999	8	0	8
2000	11	1	12
Total	57	8	65

Source: Prepared by the authors from the survey in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations of the Brazilian Institute of Information on Science and Technology (BDTD-IBICT) and the Capes Catalog of Theses and Dissertations.

To reach this number, for the composition of Table 1, it was considered only the research that addressed the literacy as reading and writing teaching.

If we compare the number of 65 works on youth and adult literacy identified during the twenty-two years of the twentieth century with the survey by Soares and Maciel (2000), which privileged the academic production on child literacy between 1961 and 1989, it will be noticed a substantial difference, since the authors inventoried 219 researches. This difference incites some reflections on a tradition that was constituted in universities and in the history of education in Brazil.

The concern about teaching children is a historical issue in the educational field. Taking as an example the discussions of the presidents of the Brazilian provinces in the empire, it will be noticed, as Marcilio (2016) warns, that there were more proposals and / or initiatives for teaching primary education to children and adolescents than attention to the education of young and adults, even though illiteracy rates reached the majority of the Brazilian population.

The first actions on youth and adult literacy in Brazil were, many of them, linked to the philanthropic activity of the Church or missionary groups. Soares and Galvão (2009, p. 261) add that there was also, in many provinces, the “creation of associations of intellectuals who, among their activities, offered evening courses for adults as a way of “regenerating” the mass of the poor [...]”.

Although there was an informal network of domestic education in the Empire and the early years of Republic, as shown by Gondra and Schueler (2008) and Faria Filho and Vidal (2000), it is considered that institutionalized youth and adult literacy actions in Brazil emerged to serve the process of industrialization, which the country was going through, and to the changes arising from the political and economic system established in the late nineteenth century.

With the Additional Act of 1834 (BRAZIL, 1834), which delegated to the provinces the responsibility for primary and secondary education, the regulations of public education in various localities were concerned about including the education of individuals over 15 years old (SOARES; GALVÃO, 2009). However, the first evening school in Brazil to teach illiterate workers was opened in 1854. Paiva (1973) demonstrates that the expansion of this school model spread throughout the provinces in a such way that 117 evening schools were already in operation in 1874. On the other hand, in this period, the child and youth population aged 6 to 16 was 1,902,454 boys and girls, with 320,749 attending a school, i.e. 17% (BRAZIL, 1872). Even though this number was low, it indicates, in relation to the number of evening schools for illiterate workers, a greater number of primary schools for children and adolescents.

Ferraro (2003), preparing a quantitative history of literacy in Brazil, shows that at the advent of the Republic, in 1890, more than 80% of the population was illiterate. The country promulgated the first Constitution of the Republic in 1891, prohibiting the vote of those who could not read and write. This prohibition, which itself reveals how the policies of democratic and social participation were being shaped in Brazil, suppressed the rights of a considerable part of the people, whose illiteracy was precisely due to the negligence of the public power. Education is, undoubtedly, an example of these denied or not privileged rights historically.

With high illiteracy rates in the Republic, the Brazilian government has invested in national campaigns, with some voluntary involvement of people for mass literacy and in a short period of time. At that time, many youth and adult-specific teaching materials were created to support the work of literacy teachers. In the 40's and 50's of the twentieth century, Lourenço Filho was one of the authors of publications aimed at adult literacy and one of the mentors of the Adolescent and Adult Education Campaign, inaugurated in 1947, one of the first initiatives of the Republican government to reduce illiteracy.

In the late 1950's, there was a disarticulation of the campaigns, especially caused by criticism from Paulo Freire and his group. Therefore, in 1963 they were extinguished, when the National Literacy Plan was constituted, sanctioned by Decree 53,465 of January 21, 1964 (BRAZIL, 1964). The law instituted a program to "take literacy to those most disadvantaged layers of the society" that were still unaware of it, using the "Paulo Freire System" for quick time literacy. This program was dissolved in April 1964, shortly after the establishment of the dictatorial regime.

It was in the 1960's, during the period of the civil-military dictatorship, that there was an expansion of adult literacy projects, culminating in the Brazilian Literacy Movement, MOBREAL. Extinguished in 1985, with the political opening, this program published several "booklet" materials for both teacher and student.

Also during the 90's of the twentieth century, two national adult literacy programs can be highlighted: MOVA, the Literacy Movement and the Solidary Literacy. Both based on welfare and with theoretical-methodological bias in which the illiterate was seen as an incapable individual, without rights, on the fringes of society for not mastering reading and writing.

As shown, in the history of Brazilian education, the theme of youth and adult literacy was a rather marginal aspect in political debates and legislations. The concern was very much centered on children's literacy. In a certain way, returning to Table 1, initially, the first impression is that in academic research at the university level, there is a reflection of this historical matter, the lack of evidence of the adult illiterate individual in government initiatives. However, looking at the number of postgraduate programs from 1978 to 2000, and the fact of the recognition of youth and adult education as a teaching modality only in 1996, the point of view can be redirected, confirming the hypothesis that the theme of youth and adult literacy has a specific, plural and multifaceted place in the research produced in Brazilian universities in the twentieth century.

The number of 65 academic productions is reduced compared to the data of Maciel (2014), who cataloged 949 theses and dissertations on children's literacy between the 1970's and 1990's. However, this number can be better understood by looking at the very issue of EJA in Brazilian graduation courses. The research coordinated by Gatti and Barretto (2009), analyzing, in the first decade of the 21st century, a large number of summaries of higher education courses for Brazilian teachers, shows the marginalization of EJA, as a discipline in the university, often inserted in the core of the elective disciplines, or even absent from their curriculum matrices. Although the data from Gatti and Barretto (2009) do not directly reveal aspects of the historical period of this work, they demonstrate the low repercussion of themes related to youth and adult education in the early years of the twenty-first century, even after being acknowledged as a teaching modality in 1996.

Di Pierro's research (2011) updated the state-of-the-art surveys on youth and adult education in Brazil, by a balance of theses and dissertations on teacher education in EJA, published between 1971 and 2008, pointing out that in higher education, studies on the continuing education of youth and adult educators predominated, since the actions aimed at meeting this specificity of teacher training were more on extension activities than on teaching or research.

All these data, clearly, have repercussions on the production statistics about the theme discussed in this paper. Although the number of theses and dissertations produced on youth and adult literacy in the late twentieth century is small, it is considered the beginning of a field of study and research, designed by its own characteristics, with very distinctive theoretical and methodological marks, as it will be evaluated later.

Another important point to consider is the fast expansion of research on youth and adult literacy in the 1990's, as summarized in the following table:

Table 2. Number of Dissertations and Theses produced per year (1978-2000)

Decades	Dissertations	Theses	Total
1978-1979	1	0	1
1980-1989	4	1	5
1990 – 1999	41	6	47
2000	11	1	12
Total	57	8	65

Source: Prepared by the authors from the survey in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations of the Brazilian Institute of Information on Science and Technology (BDTD-IBICT) and the Capes – Catalog of Theses and Dissertations.

The growth of academic productions in the 1990's relates to the diffusion of postgraduate programs in education in the various regions of the country. It is also in this decade that there are more defenses of doctoral theses. The data coincide with Maciel's (2014) research on child literacy; the author shows that during this period there is a growth in the production of masters and doctoral research whose theme is literacy. About this situation, Mortatti, Oliveira and Pasquim (2014) explain that, especially after the 1990's, there is an intensification of complaints about the problems of education and "literacy is highlighted as one of the priority factors in the definition of global commitments and goals, established by multilateral organizations" (MORTATTI; OLIVEIRA; PASQUIM, 2014, p. 12). The authors point out that in this decade there were worldwide emblematic initiatives in the field of literacy that may have induced research in the academic context: the Declaration of the "International Year of Literacy" (1990) and the Jomtien Declaration (1990).

As shown in table 2, 88% of the works produced are master dissertations, and only 12%, doctoral theses. Similarly, Maciel (2014), in his survey on children's literacy, indicates

the disparity between the number of productions in theses and dissertations, in a proportion of 4.7 dissertations for a thesis.

Ultimately, what was these researches about? Where were they produced? What do they reveal about the history of youth and adult literacy in Brazil?

Places and themes of Brazilian academic productions on youth and adult literacy

When dealing with the places of a research, it was delimited the space where it was produced and / or referred to. Looking at each of the 65 academic productions previously inventoried, it was possible to quantify, by university, the number of theses and dissertations produced:

Table 3. Number of Dissertations and Theses produced on youth and adult literacy by university between 1978-2000

Theme Category	Dissertations	Theses	Total
Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV)	5	0	5
Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas (PUC-Campinas)	1	0	1
Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais (PUC Minas)	1	0	1
Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro - PUC-Rio	2	0	2
Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS)	4	0	4
Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP)	4	1	5
Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ)	1	0	1
Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA)	1	0	1
Federal University of Ceará (UFC)	1	0	1
Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF)	3	0	3
Universidade Federal do Mato Grosso (UFMT)	1	0	1
Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB)	6	0	6
Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE)	2	1	3
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)	4	0	4
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN)	1	0	1
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)	3	1	4
Universidade de Brasília (UnB)	5	0	5
Universidade Estadual Paulista “Júlio de Mesquita Filho” (UNESP)	0	1	1
Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP)	6	2	8
Universidade Católica de Brasília (UCB)	3	0	3
Universidade de Passo Fundo (UPF)	1	0	1
Universidade Metodista de Piracicaba (UNIMEP)	2	0	2
Universidade de São Paulo (USP)	0	2	2
Total	57	8	65

Source: Prepared by the authors from the survey in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations of the Brazilian Institute of Information on Science and Technology (BDTD-IBICT) and the Capes Catalog of Theses and Dissertations.

The 65 academic productions identified are from 23 universities, 48% of these from the Southeast, 20% from the South, 18% from the Northeast and 14% from the Midwest. So far, it was not found any dissertation or theses on youth and adult literacy produced at a university in the Northern region in the twentieth century. The Southeast also stands out in the

number of postgraduate programs in education and, consequently, holds, according to data from Capes Catalog of Theses and Dissertations, more than 40% of the academic productions defended until the end of the 20th century in Brazilian universities. It is noteworthy that the first postgraduate program in education in Brazil originated in this region, in Rio de Janeiro, in 1965, which also contributes to a marked number of Southeast productions compared to other Brazilian regions.

From the analysis of the regions where the theses and dissertations were produced and moving to their contents, it was possible to map the places to which the researches refer, organizing an overview of the states that have investigations on youth and adult literacy in the twentieth century, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. States dealt with in the Dissertations and Theses produced between 1978-2000

State	Dissertations	Theses	Total
Amazonas	1	0	1
Bahia	1	0	1
Ceará	1	0	1
Distrito Federal	8	1	9
Goiás	2	0	2
Mato Grosso	1	0	1
Minas Gerais	1	0	1
Paraná	5	0	5
Pernambuco	2	1	3
Rio de Janeiro	8	0	8
Rio Grande do Norte	2	1	3
Rio Grande do Sul	9	0	9
Rondônia	1	0	1
Santa Catarina	3	0	3
São Paulo	12	5	17
Brazil	1	0	1
Total	58	8	66

Source: Prepared by the authors from the survey in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations of the Brazilian Institute of Information on Science and Technology (BDTD-IBICT) and the Capes Catalog of Theses and Dissertations.

Hence, it is necessary to clarify to the reader that the total of academic productions resulted in 66 works, since a dissertation referred to two Brazilian states. When the states are indicated, again it is observed a higher number of productions over the Southeast region, especially São Paulo. However, there is no total convergence between the place (university) where the researches were defended and the place (state) to which they referred, since there were 26 academic productions about the Southeast region, totaling 40%. Subsequently, there is the Northeast region with 21%; South and Midwest with 18% each; and the North with 1.5%. In table 3 there is a dissertation that referred to Brazil as a whole, making up a percentage of 1.5% of the inventoried works. This information corresponds to a very common phenomenon in Brazil during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, before the expansion and democratization of higher education⁶, when many researchers moved from their location to perform their Masters or Doctorate in regions that offered these courses, and they generally did their research on the cities they came from.

⁶ On this issue, cf.: Cirani, Campanario e Silva (2015).

It is important to mention that these academic productions came from postgraduate programs in different areas, whereas Education was predominant, with 71% of theses and dissertations; then Literature and Linguistics, with 17%; Psychology and Information Sciences, each with 3%; and finally, History, Political Science, Social Sciences and Communication Sciences programs, with 1.5% each. These data show that the theme “youth and adult literacy” circulated in other fields of knowledge that, in a way, has an interface with the educational area. Likewise, in the research by Soares (1989) on the state of knowledge of children's literacy until the 1980's, the author already demonstrated the linkage of research to the areas of Education, Literature and Psychology.

Regarding the privileged themes in the works on youth and adult literacy in twentieth century in Brazil, the analysis of theses and dissertations allowed us to create some categories that led to the organization of an overview of the knowledge produced from 1978 to 2000.

Table 5. Number of Dissertations and Theses by Theme Category (1978-2000)

Theme Category	Dissertations	Theses	Total
Historical aspects of youth and adult literacy	1	1	2
Linguistic aspects of youth and adult literacy	6	2	8
Cognitive aspects of youth and adult literacy	0	1	1
Study on theoretical bases of youth and adult literacy	3	1	4
Training for the youth and adult literacy teacher	7	0	7
Literature in the process of youth and adult literacy	1	0	1
Youth and adult literacy policies - programs, projects, governmental and non-governmental initiatives	16	0	16
Representations on youth and adult literacy	9	1	10
Youth and adult literacy experiences	14	2	16
Total	57	8	65

Source: Prepared by the authors from the survey in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations of the Brazilian Institute of Information on Science and Technology (BDTD-IBICT) and the Capes Catalog of Theses and Dissertations.

To establish these theme categories, some criteria were adopted. The first criterion was the approach of the works by certain features (themes and theoretical-methodological aspects) that distinguished them from others. The second criterion was to establish each category regarding the historical moment in which the works were written, without anachronisms. Finally, to constitute a category, even though the number of works on the subject was small, it was chosen to create an independent topic, to give visibility to the themes and researches that were the basis of the constitution of the field of youth and adult literacy. The categories “cognitive aspects of youth and adult literacy” and “literature in the youth and adult literacy process” are an example.

About the first, it was cataloged only the work of Tfouni (1986), which aimed to clarify aspects of cognitive function in a group of Brazilian illiterates. Founded on linguistic procedures, but with a central approach based on the studies of Psychology, the author concluded that one of the contributions of her work was that the logic of the analysis of cognitive processes of non-literate subjects, at that time, could be changed. In contrast to some psychological theories, Tfouni (1986, p. 216) made an analysis that took “the subject of discourse and the enunciation as privileged places where intellectual function (also) can be detected and investigated”. Tfouni's doctoral thesis (1986), published as a book in 1988 by Editora Pontes, was a milestone in the study of literacy in Brazil, because, according to Soares

(1998, p. 15), perhaps it is with this work that “literacy gains the status of technical term in the lexicon of the fields of Education and Linguistic Sciences”⁷.

The second category with the lowest recurrence of academic productions and highlighted as a specific topic, was the one that deals with literature in the process of youth and adult literacy. Silva's dissertation (1999) was the only one that addressed the formation of the literary reader in youth and adult literacy courses. Reading was present in other academic productions, but the terminology “formation of the adult literary reader” was first seen in this work. From an action-research, Silva (1999) analyzes the roles that the literature played in the process of formation of the adult reader. By distinguishing this research, it can be observed that it stands out as one of the pioneers on the subject field.

The themes with the highest incidence of reading in Table 5 were “youth and adult literacy policies” and the one called “youth and adult literacy experiences”. By analyzing and categorizing the works in these categories, it was observed the linkage of youth and adult literacy initiatives with political aspects throughout the history of education in Brazil. About this, an important fact, that is not imperceptible in theses and dissertations in the twentieth century, is the large presence of references to Paulo Freire, the educator.

From the 65 dissertations and theses inventoried, it was possible to access 35 texts in full. Of this total, 18 studies cited Paulo Freire in the bibliographical references. It is noteworthy that, even in the works that did not mention Paulo Freire's work in the bibliography, the author's ideas are present, through writings of other authors who relied on Freire to discuss issues related to the education and literacy of young people and adults. Another important aspect to consider is that in many of the works whose full texts were not found, there was mention of Freire's ideas and method in the summary available in the university repositories, which also demonstrates Freire's influence on the basis of a theoretical and methodological current, genuinely Brazilian, which constituted a popular education pedagogy for youth and adult literacy in Brazil, influencing the ways of conceiving and acting with this audience in schools.

Conclusion

By taking academic productions as a historical source of analysis, it was possible to understand aspects of the history of youth and adult literacy in Brazil, from the academic discourses produced from 1978 to 2000. The study shows a rising production, with a higher volume in the 90's, which could be seen as a concern of the academy to develop research on the theme of adult literacy, and 1998 was the year with the largest production on the subject. This issue can be justified if we take as reference the changes that occurred in the 90's in the scope of the educational legislation, when the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law 9,394 / 1996 was enacted, in which Youth and Adult Education was recognized as a teaching modality. This legal aspect directly influenced the academic production, since, after the approval of this law, from 1997 to 2000, 41 of the 65 identified studies on youth and adult literacy are concentrated, corresponding to more than 50% of the theses and / or dissertations defended in Brazilian universities during the research period.

An important aspect to consider concerns the research themes after the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (LDBEN). There was an increase in academic productions on the public policies of EJA, as well as actions, representations and experiences of youth and adult literacy. It was also observed a thematic diversity; during this period it was possible to encounter researches that were concerned with the discussion of the theoretical bases of youth and adult education. Another point of attention, analyzing the theses and

⁷ On the history of the term literacy in Brazil, cf. Mortatti (2004). In this book, Mortatti even alludes to the work of Tfouni (1986), in the basis of the theorization of the term literacy in Brazil.

dissertations from 1997 to 2000, was the recurring debate about the formation of young and adult literacy teachers. There were already researches that specifically addressed this theme, but there was reference to it in almost every work defended after LDBEN.

The publication “The state of the art of researches on youth and adult education in Brazil” (HADDAD, 2000a) points out that, in the matters related to the theoretical contributions of research on EJA, there is still a large dispersion among the authors mentioned, with some unity in the historical references of the EJA, and a great use of Paulo Freire's thinking, both in terms of practices and teacher training. The other reflections are scattered in several references.

Analyzing the 65 academic productions inventoried and analyzed throughout this paper, it can be observed that the theme of youth and adult literacy became a specific field of research in Brazil during the twentieth century, as there was a concern of the university to investigate the teaching processes and the learning of the young and adult public; thus, the constitution of a theoretical and methodological apparatus for these investigations has started. This field can also be called plural, because the themes and approaches, as seen, are not univocal, but multifaceted.

Some gaps, clearly, can be understood from the balance of the academic productions. The first of them concerns the intersection, in the twentieth century, of governmental actions, projects, programs and initiatives at national level with local initiatives (municipal or state). It was observed the absence of research that, in contrast to these education policies, at the macro and micro levels, warned or proposed changes in youth and adult literacy in Brazil. What could be seen was, generally, evaluations of practices, without many proposals for reversing the situation and the stigma of illiteracy among the Brazilian adult population.

Another shortcoming was the presence of researches on writing in youth and adult literacy. Most research had focused on teaching and learning how to read, without placing much emphasis on writing processes, as if literacy was restricted to reading. As a rule, in Brazil, as Soares (2016) explains, reading was historically contemplated as a privileged object in the literacy process; until the 1980's, there was a frequent talk of reading methods and books to teach reading. “Bibliography on early learning of written language throughout most of the twentieth century refers predominantly to the teaching of reading; even in dictionary definitions for literacy terms, reading is privileged” (SOARES, 2016, p. 25).

Another noticeable gap is that of works focused on the history of EJA. It was identified only two researches on the historical aspects of youth and adult literacy. This theme category, which was not prioritized in the twentieth century, encourages new perspectives and new objects of study not only to think about scientific production in the twenty-first century, but also to analyze the historical permanence of the phenomenon of illiteracy in the rates of Brazilian education. After all, in fact, “for the critical conception, illiteracy is not a 'sore', nor a 'weed' to be eradicated, nor a disease, but one of the concrete expressions of an unjust social reality” (FREIRE, 1981, p. 13).

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