



From ‘education as salvation’ to the ‘crisis of the school’: notes on the history of the school institution¹

Da “educação como salvação” à “crise da escola”: notas sobre a história da instituição escolar

De la educación como salvación a la crisis de la escuela: notas sobre la historia de la institución escolar

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze two discourses which mark the representation of the school as a social institution. The first, based on an Enlightenment understanding of knowledge, constructed a positive perception of the school institution, understanding it as an ‘antidote’ for social problems. The second, strongly in vogue today, perceives the school as an outdated institution ‘in crisis.’ We intend to show that both of these seek to answer the same question: what is the role of the education in overcoming national problems?

Keywords: Education. School institution. School crisis.

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Resumo

Este texto tem como objetivo analisar dois discursos que marcam a representação da escola como instituição social. O primeiro deles, formulado a partir de uma percepção iluminista do saber, construiu um olhar positivo sobre a instituição escolar, considerando-a “antídoto” para os males sociais. O segundo, fortemente em voga hoje, percebe a escola como uma instituição superada e “em crise”. Procuraremos mostrar que estes dois discursos buscam responder a uma mesma pergunta, que poderia ser formulada nos seguintes termos: qual o papel da educação para a superação dos problemas nacionais?

Palavras-chave: Educação. Instituição escolar. Crise da escola.

Resumen

Este texto tiene como objetivo analizar dos discursos que marcan la representación de la escuela como institución social. El primero de ellos, formulado a partir de una percepción iluminista del saber, construyó una mirada positiva sobre la institución escolar, considerándola “antídoto” contra los males sociales. El segundo, hoy muy en boga, percibe a la escuela como una institución superada y “en crisis”. Procuraremos mostrar que estos dos discursos buscan responder a una misma pregunta, que podría ser formulada en los siguientes términos: ¿Cuál es papel que juega la educación en la superación de los problemas nacionales?

Palabras-clave: Educación. Institución escolar. Crisis de la escuela.

The question of the birth of the school as an institution has been the subject of various studies in the areas of history and the history of education. However, the quantity and above all the quality of research does not invalidate that it be revisited again, for two reasons. First, from the finding that the school is now at a crossroads: the meaning given to this institution, as well as the social value attributed to it and its agents – fundamentally teachers – has suffered a significant change in recent decades, changes which Anne-Marie Chartier attributed to the so-called ‘paradox of the compulsory nature of school.’ In other words, school emerged as an institution, expanded its field of action, and became banalized. According to Chartier, this banalization is at the same time its strength and its weakness, its success and its fragility. Success, since in a movement that encompassed various countries and societies, school expanded by following the path of compulsory education. Fragility, to the extent that this expansion naturalized it, hindering the perception of the school as part of a historic process associated with many conflicts (CHARTIER, 2013, p.432). This change in the social value of the institution and its agents was obviously not restricted to Brazil, as it became a reality in many other countries (SIBILIA, 2012; MASSCHELEIN and SIMONS, 2015). Understanding this inflection in relation to the social place of the school is fundamental, above all for those who chose to make this place and education a place of work and action.

Not dissociated from this first point, and thinking about Brazilian reality, there is a second reason which indicates the importance of asking about the place of school, which is the fact that the educational theme has for some time been placed on the political agenda as a result of question raised by very conservative groups, linked for example with the *Movimento Escola Sem Partido* (School Without Political Parties Movement), and also defenders of domiciliary teaching, also known as *Homeschooling*. Many of these groups, it is worth saying, not only exercise a very strong influence on the current Brazilian government, but also helped it to win the last elections. As a result of this, thinking about the place of education, the school institution, and teachers is now, due to our reality, a necessity.

The proposal of this text is to present a historical and panoramic approach starting with the construction of a discourse about the school institution, which confers on it a place as an ‘antidote’ for social ills (ALBUQUERQUE, 2019, p.238), and reaches the so called ‘crisis of the school’ – although, it is worth highlighting, a progressive line from one discourse to the other cannot be perceived. In fact, as we intend to show, these discourses often coexist and interpenetrate each other. We have sought to show that the debate which conceived and constructed the school as the space *par excellence* for the education of the Brazilian youth was possible to a great extent because various intellectuals placed it on the political agenda. In this way, we understand it is difficult to think about the history of the school institution in Brazil (and policies related to it, above all when talking about public schools) without thinking about the action of intellectuals, in other words, the action of men and women linked to the world of letters, culture, and science, who drawing on this repertoire intervened and took positions in the political debate (SIRINELLI, 2003), defending projects which saw education and school as ways to resolve important national problems. To deal with this question, we seek to establish some comparisons between the Brazilian case and other national realities. Our analysis here intends to call attention to a problem which needs to be raised given the current political framework: what is the contribution of the school as an institution for a democratic regime?

Believing in school, the book, and the teacher

To discuss with this question, the text is divided into two parts. In this first part, interested in thinking about the engagement of intellectuals with the idea of public education, we will return to the eighteenth century and the Enlightenment, drawing on Carlota Boto’s book *A Escola do Homem Novo* (1996). Boto uses the expression chosen for the title of the book to

designate Enlightenment pedagogical thought and the educational discourse formed after the French Revolution. A discourse which was evidentially not unique, since Boto highlights different educational proposals defended until that moment. Although not homogenous, it is a discourse which gives education an indispensable role in the eradication of obscurantism and in overcoming all types of ignorance and superstition. Education for the 'new man' had to be distinct from what had been taught during the Ancien Regime and also had to act as a mechanism to overcome the inequalities which characterized the different sectors of French society at the time of the Revolution (BOTO, 1996, pp. 21-70).

It is perhaps worth making a distinction between education, which as she notes (drawing on Blonislaw Baczco's study) was a word which designated at the time a broader process, and teaching, a word related to the institution of interest to us here: school – especially free and secular public school, which emerged as a value for post-revolutionary and republican French society (BOTO, 1996, p. 103). Both education and teaching occupied an important place in an emancipating project influenced by the enlightenment. In philosophical terms numerous questions were raised by thinkers such as Rousseau and Diderot about the power of education as an element capable of modifying human nature. Conquered by philosophy, the discussion about education and teaching also reached public policies in such a way that in France during the nineteenth century a set of laws allowed a widespread reform of public teaching in the country with the aim of the education of this 'new man.' This made possible the creation of lyceums and schools, the proposition of methods of teaching, the diffusion of school manuals, the perception of education as the responsibility of the state, and finally, free, secular, and compulsory primary education. Borrowing an expression used by Jean-Yves Mollier, we can say that public teaching was at the heart of a real *cultural revolution* in France in the nineteenth century, which affected all social classes and generations, to such a point that it accounted for 97% of students educated in France in 1900 (MOLLIER, 2008).

It is worth highlighting that the success of the school as an institution cannot be disassociated from certain elements: (1) the formation of a scientific discourse, interested in understanding how learning took place in children; (2) the formation of a judicial discourse, which understood the role of the state as ensuring the education of children; (3) concern with reading (linked to this is not only investment in the publication of didactic manuals which became *best sellers*, such as those of Ernst Lavissee, but also the spread of public libraries); and (4) concern with the training of those capable of teaching: the teacher. The latter was a very important agent in this so-called *cultural revolution*.

The project of the training school for the new man was updated for decades and was not exclusive for the French reality. The 'enlightenment promise' had a long life and travelled through various national realities, with it being appropriated and becoming a slogan among intellectuals in various countries (although it is worth highlighting that it is not a consensual theme). As Luciano Mendes de Faria Filho notes, the school went through a conflictual process of 'positivization,' which, on the one hand, involved affirming its necessity for the moral and intellectual education of new generations and, on the other, also involved criticism and suspicion in relation to the institution (FARIA FILHO, 2012, pp. 38-39). In the case of Brazil, since Independence the question of schooling and the presence of the state as the promotor of public policies have been discussed. In the Empire and the Republic various men and women linked to intellectuality and politics were engaged in favor of educational projects. Among these can be mentioned, for example, José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, Rui Barbosa (and his reports on teaching in the Empire), and Benjamin Constant, who assumed the position of Secretary of State of Public Instruction, Posts and Telegraphs in 1890, leading a reform in public education in the Federal District which became a model for the country, defending secular education and creating the so called *Pedagogium*.

In the passage from the Empire to the Republic, the preparation of analyses and diagnoses was very important, after all it was necessary to know the state of the art of education in Brazil to think about possible paths for the development of the sector. In 1890, José Veríssimo published his famous text, *A Educação Nacional*, seeking to identify the evils which plagued the country in this area, understanding education as a strategic means for the recently established Republic to overcome its problems and remake the nation.² Another example of this is Manoel Bomfim, who between the last decade of the nineteenth century and the 1920s published various articles in the press about education. Bomfim, according to Rebeca Gontijo, went against the current then in vogue about Brazilian backwardness, commonly explained by the determinisms of the environment (climate) and race (GONTIJO, 2010). Like other intellectuals of the epoch, he believed that the question of education and teaching allowed the definition of the intellectual identity of a people. Education thus assumed the status of the road of redemption for Brazilian backwardness. In addition to thinking about the role of education, Bomfim openly affirmed that the state was responsible for ensuring education as a right. He stated that in this area “the duty of the family is subsidiary, because their precarious means of achieving it are always incomplete.” Hence, “the state had the essential, primordial, duty.”³ Education had to be provided in a complete and rational educational system (differentiated from other forms of teaching, such as domestic).⁴

Many other Brazilian intellectuals can be noted here as exemplary cases who evidenced how reflection on the place and importance of the school came to be debated among them. In order to avoid excess citations, we would like to note those intellectuals who produced books on educating the future citizens of the republic, since confidence in education and school always accompanied the books, which had the aim of educating Brazilian children and youth. This also led to the development of a civic-patriotic literature produced by renowned men and women and aimed at youth. This is the case of Afonso Celso, president of IHGB, and his celebrated *Porque me ufano de meu país* [1900]; Silvio Romero with *A história do Brasil ensinada pela biografia de seus heróis* [1890]; Olavo Bilac and Manoel Bomfim, with *Através do Brasil* [1910], a success in terms of sales; and Julia Lopes de Almeida, with *Contos Infantis* [1886], written in partnership with Adalina Lopes Vieira, his sister, and the famous *Histórias de Nossa Terra* [1907].

To some extent since the Empire, but in a much more forceful manner during the Republic, these intellectuals placed their hopes for a project of a modern Brazil on a triad composed of **the school, the book, and children**. However, we can perhaps ask ourselves what this discussion about education and the positive valuation of school (and to a large extent public school) brought in terms of an effective public policy. In relation to this the bibliography shows that the Brazilian case is one of toing and froing. The gratuity of primary education was stipulated in the Imperial Constitution, but disappeared in the Republican one. Compulsory education did not appear in either of them. Secularity, however, became an explicit norm in the Republic. Under the new government established in 1889, elementary education became the responsibility of states and municipalities, while the federal government was responsible for higher education (BOMENY, 2003; GONDRA, 2009). In practice this represented, first of all, an asymmetry between states and municipalities, since in each of them the political elites decided how much of an effort and how many resources should be used in education. However, it is also important to observe the data. According to Helena Bomeny (2003, pp. 12-14), at the beginning of the twentieth century Brazil had an impressive illiteracy rate of 75% among the

² In this work, Veríssimo stated that Brazil “shone through absence”: there was, at best, bad and terrible education, According to him, in the Republic there was no deep rationalized feeling about education, except among a small group (VERÍSSIMO, [1890]1985).

³ BOMFIM, Manoel. O dever de educar. *Jornal do Commercio*, Rio de Janeiro, terça-feira, 27/09/1921, p.2.

⁴ BOMFIM, Manoel. Valor positivo da educação II. *Jornal do Commercio*, 04/07/1919, p. 5.

school age population. Not by chance, in Brazil in the 1910s and 1920s, associated with a certain disillusion with the Republic, the theme of education and illiteracy found its way onto the agenda of the intellectuals, who returned to the idea of education at the heart of a modernizing project. Compared with the Argentine case, studied in a comparative perspective by Gabriela Pellegrino Soares (2007, p. 35), it can be seen that at the beginning of the twentieth century Argentina had a solid public teaching network. In 1869, 77% of the Argentine population was illiterate. In 1914, the number had fallen to 36% between the population aged over 14. By 1947, it was less than 14%. According to IBGE, Brazil only reached an illiteracy rate close to 14% in the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, in other words 50 years after the neighboring country. In the Northeast, in the same period, the illiteracy rate among people age 15 or over was almost 25%.⁵ As Soares highlights (2007, p. 36), Argentine school growth was accompanied by the expansion of public schools.

In the Brazilian case, in the various diagnostics made in the first decades of the twentieth century in the country it can be seen that public teaching was far from covering the entire school age population. Of the few young people who studied, many of them were registered in private schools, especially Catholic ones. Not by chance, in the 1920s various intellectuals were involved in the founding of associations to make public policies feasible for the country, such as the Brazilian Association of Education (ABE), created at this time. However, it was during the Vargas administration that important advances occurred in the formation of a national education system led by the state. An example of this was the creation in 1930 of the Ministry of Education and Health and the National Council of Education (BOMENY, 2003, pp.46-60).

Once again, the action of intellectuals in the public sphere was fundamental. Many of them were close to the group which commanded the Ministry of Education and Health. One of the most significant names in this sense was Anísio Teixeira. His name is associated with various educational initiatives such as the *Escola Nova* movement, the creation of *Universidade do Distrito Federal*, INEP, the Brazilian Center of Educational Research (CBPE), and *Universidade de Brasília*. Along with other important intellectuals from the period, such as Fernando de Azevedo, Mario Casassanta, Delgado de Carvalho, Armanda Álvaro Alberto, Cecília Meireles, and Lourenço Filho, he was also a signatory of the *Manifesto dos Pioneiros*, a very important document in defense of free and secular public school.⁶ This was a fundamental moment for thinking about the organization of public state education, the connection between educational and political discourse, as well as reflection on what the public school was and its value. Fernando de Azevedo, for example, highlighted the national nature of public school for the transmission of common values. In the discussion of public school, he was concerned not only with stating what it was, but also wanted to define what it was not. For Azevedo, the public school was not neutral, nor could it possibly be, nor could it be expected that these intellectuals could understand it in that way. Rather, it was seen as propelling a set of larger and broader values than the private interests and confessions of each one. This is because it was understood that democracy presupposed a common faith and public school was fundamental for this (BOMENY, 2003, pp. 38-45).

To finish this first part of the text, we would like to highlight two elements. The first is, as can be noted, the strong political action of intellectuals during most of the nineteenth and twentieth century, although the 1930s were always considered by the historiography as

⁵ IBGE. Séries Históricas e Estatísticas. Available at: https://seriesestatisticas.ibge.gov.br/lista_tema.aspx?op=0&de=8&no=4. Accessed on 15 Feb. 2019.

⁶ These intellectuals came into conflict, for example, with representatives of the Catholic Church, who controlled a large part of the private schools and defended confessional schools and compulsory religious education. In fact, at various moments in Brazilian educational history, the development of free compulsory public education encountered strong resistance from the Catholic Church and private sectors. Important conflicts occurred when the 1934 Constitution was being drafted.

a moment of strong belief and action of intellectuals in favor of an education project in schools. Without neglecting what the first Vargas administration represented in question of the organization of education by public authorities, the bibliography shows us that, both before and after the 1930s, the political action of intellectuals can be seen on various fronts: 1) the state path, comparing for example their projects in the constituent assemblies and being called to occupy political positions; 2) the path of studies, diagnostics and planning in the educational field, in a strong dialogue with the social sciences;⁷ 3) social action initiatives. Paulo Freire, for example, occupied a public position, but he worked in the education of young people and adults, as is known. Before him, perhaps less known to the general public, there is another name, Armanda Álvaro Alberto, a feminist intellectual who in the 1920s founded a school in São João do Meriti, in Rio de Janeiro, to educate the children of workers. She was also the president of the Brazilian Association of Education, a signatory of the *Manifesto dos Pioneiros*, and a political prisoner in 1936-37.

The second element is actually a counterpoint which cannot be forgotten, even more when we propose to denaturalize school and to understand the social place given to it. If we ask ourselves about intellectuals and their contributions to the construction of a positive image of the school, another question which is worth asking is the following: when we discuss the school defended by these intellectuals, what school are we actually talking about? The answers to this are very diverse, as were the political and intellectual projects which these men and women took part in. They could be public or private, religious or secular. They could be military. However, leaving aside the exceptions,⁸ generally speaking, these school models shared certain elements of a disciplinary society (ALBUQUERQUE, 2019), which was based on the principles of reason, on the idea of emancipation through knowledge, love for the motherland, the valuation of a unique identity, respect for order and hierarchy, ideas of masculinity, the organization of knowledge in disciplines, and the control of bodies. It was this school model, constructed, discussed, criticized by sociologists, historians, and pedagogues for its elitist, exclusive, reproducing, and classist (LAVAL, 2019), defended and redefined over the last two centuries, which became established and imposed itself on family education (although often the two coexisted), constructing sensibilities and subjectivities, and constituting itself practically as a nature, in such a way that it becomes difficult to think about the education of a child outside this institution, the school.

From antidote to delegitimization: the crisis of the school

The education question was placed in the political arena by many of these intellectuals, who adopted positions in the public sphere and made the public school a project. Having said this, we would like to enter the second part of this text, which intends to move away from the debate which gave the school a positive meaning to discuss what has been called the 'crisis' of the institution.

For this, it is worth emphasizing that the 'school' institution was founded on a republican consensus around it, which saw it as an essential place for the education of citizens, even though what can be understood as citizenship is not something unique and which runs through all epochs. In this sense, as Marianne Bloch and Thomas Popekewitz (2000) have highlighted, the emergence of the school also involved the education of the family, in the sense of establishing a pact of trust on which this institution was based. This pact understood that each individual, although a member of a family group, was also part of something bigger: the

⁷ Moraes (2016), working with authors such as Fernando de Azevedo, Anísio Teixeira, Florestan Fernandes, and Darcy Ribeiro, sought to relate the development of sociological thought in the country and education policies.

⁸ The different school models proposed by groups and intellectuals during this movement to make the school institution more positive need to be emphasized here: religious, workers,' and anarchist schools, the latter, for example, postulating a more active learning on the part of children.

social collectivity – as Fernando de Azevedo highlighted, which indicates that this was a question considered by these intellectuals who worked with the word and through action at the moment of state interference in teaching and education. It is also worth noting that the 1932 *Manifesto dos Pioneiros* which highlighted “education as an essentially public function,” stated the followed about the relationship between state and family:

Education, which is one of the functions which the family has been depriving itself of for the benefit of political society, broke the framework of family communism and specific groups (private institutions), to definitely become part of the essential and primordial functions of the state. (...) It is still the “natural framework which socially supports the individual, such as the moral environment in which tendencies are disciplined, where they are born, began to develop, and continued to entertain their aspirations for the ideal.” For this reason, the state, far from dispensing with the family, has to base the work of education on the support it gives the school and in the effective collaboration between parents and teachers, amongst which, in this profoundly social work, was the duty of reestablishing trust and improving relations, associating and putting into common work these two social forces – the family and the school, which operated indifferently, if not in diverse and at time opposing directions (O MANIFESTO DOS PIONEIROS DA EDUCAÇÃO NOVA, 1932. Emphasis Added).

What is important in this extract from the *Manifesto dos Pioneiros* is precisely the idea of a consensus which underpinned the expansion of compulsory schooling in the country. In other words, educating children in school involved convincing families that it was the fundamental space for their children’s education; it also assumed an effort to convince them that what is learned in school was more than what was learned at home. As Luciane Barbosa notes (2016), this had judicial and legal implications. In the Brazilian case, as some scholars have highlighted, the legislation between 1934 and 1988 did not impose sanctions on domestic education, although intellectuals and public men encouraged the idea that education should primarily occur in schools. It was only in the 1988 Constitution and the drafting of documents such as the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases* (LDB – Basic Education Law) and the Statute of Children and Adolescents (Eca) that the possibility of education at home, outside the school environment, no longer appeared in a clear form (VIDAL, 2013; BARBOSA, 2016; CURY, 2006). Based on this, it seems, in the Brazilian case, when we speak of this process of the universalization of fundamental school education (which, as has been seen, happened much before in countries such as France and Argentina), that it only appeared in the country in the twenty-first century and owes much to the stipulations of the LDB, Eca, and the Constitution. The recognition by the 1988 Constitution that free and compulsory education from 4 to 17 years of age was a duty of the state was very important for the universalization of fundamental education and the expansion of second level education in Brazil. This leads to a question: while in recent years there were undeniable advances in the Brazilian case in the sense of the universalization of school education, where did the so-called ‘crisis of the school’ come from, or better where does this crisis reside?

The idea of the ‘crisis’ as a key for understanding education at a given moment, is not exactly new. In a text published in 1958, Hannah Arendt discussed the ‘crisis of education,’ understanding it as something more than a local phenomenon, although its most extreme form, as she highlights, could be found in the United States. In relation to the idea of ‘crisis,’ Arendt states that “whenever in political questions healthy human judgement

fails or renounces the attempt to provide responses, we are faced with a crisis” (ARENDRT, 2005, p.227. Emphasis added).

The idea of crisis as the impossibility of providing responses also appears in the way another author, Paula Sibilía, deals with the ‘crisis of the school.’ According to her, the ‘crisis of the school’ signified realizing that the bodies and subjectivities for which this institution was created some centuries previously are no longer the same as today (SIBILIA, 2012). While the initial impulse for school formation was linked to the utopia of a more egalitarian and clarified society, to the belief in the idea of the progress of the human spirit, the obedience of laws, and love for the motherland, the school now gains other contours and a new dynamic, closer to a company which provides one of the various services of a consumption society. According to her (and it seems to us, other authors would agree with her, such as Christian Laval [2019]), the school, which was previously seen as an ‘unpolluted’ place, receives other tones within a mercantile logic in which competences can be hierarchized and knowledge came to be measured and valued according to its level of application. Not everything is offered to all citizens. What is offered is what the customer is capable of buying, which suggests a movement away from effort-oriented and moral and patriotic education towards another type of education, one that has been emerging for some decades, based on principles such as that of technique and performance – or, to use terms much in vogue, *training* or *coaching*.

In other words, the school became democratized, but what actually democratized and universalized was a model of teaching which does not respond to the urgencies of a society increasingly hyper-connected by new technologies, which demands from bodies less their inscription in disciplinary apparatus and more their insertion in the maximum economic order (MBEMBE, 2018, p. 59). The discourse of the failure of Brazilian education, present since the change from the Empire to the Republic, can thus be updated. Now the question is not exactly the lack of access to school, in a general form, and to public school in particular. Rather it is problem of efficiency in school, its quality, and the quality of its teachers. An institution which previously had been considered the temple of the Republic, it is now the subject of doubt and delegitimization, when not hatred.

The finding of this failure, as noted by Christian Laval (2019), has been accompanied by the discourse of modernization and utility, which associates the school with a type of useless obsolete knowledge, “disconnected from the life of students.” The diagnostics and the discourse of failure and crisis is one of the elements which explain, for example, the massive investment in terms of financial resources by large business groups (and also governmental initiatives in this sense) in ‘innovative’ models of education which preach technology and the teaching of useful knowledge, aimed above all at the formation of an elite. It also explains movements that defend, for example, home schooling, which have gained space in the public sphere, especially since 2005, when a family went to court for the right to educate their child at home.⁹ The movement, which according to its internet site counts on the support of around 5,000 practicing families, takes advantage of the vague nature of the legislation and also an easily assimilated discourse which, on the one hand, sees the school as inefficient and outdated, and on the other, argues that education in the home is the fruit of the “desire to offer an education which preserves the moral principles of the family” and “dissatisfaction with the school environment, motivated by events of violence, *bullying*, inadequate

⁹ It is worth pointing out some important moments in the debate about domiciliary education (home schooling) in Brazil. In 1994, there was an attempt to regulate the practice by the Federal Deputy João Teixeira. In 2005, a family from Minas Gerais removed their children from school and went to court for the right to home school. Five years later a group of parents formed the National Home Schooling Association (Aned). In 2015, a family from Canela in Rio Grande do Sul asked for an injunction against the municipal Secretary of Education, who had refused their request for home schooling. In the following year, 2016, Rio de Janeiro hosted the Global Home Schooling Conference (BARBOSA, 2016).

social pressures, insecurity, and the exposure of children to friendships seen by their parents as undesirable,” configuring a frightening narrative in relation to school.¹⁰

In other words, we have here the updating of a question which asks how to overcome the problems of Brazilian education. In the past the answer to this was, for a significant group of intellectuals, school and above all public school. Now the question has been reformulated, constructing a discourse of the failure of public school and school as an institution, and presenting other ways out. One of these is home schooling, which removes the debate about education from the democratic public arena. It becomes an exclusively private subject, a family choice. The idea of education as a choice of the collective (hence the belief of many in public school for all) is transformed due to a privatist and atomized perception of education. Once again, this is not an exclusively Brazilian movement, but has also been growing in countries such as the US, Russia, Portugal (where it was never prohibited, but is regulated by the state), and France, amongst others.

Final Considerations

We would like to conclude this text highlighting two questions. The first can perhaps be formulated as follows: although school today is a space into which flow conspiracy theories and hatred, is it not the case that this discourse attacking schools and teachers also gives them a certain power? If we answer this question positively, this perhaps means admitting that school, far from being a failed place, without meaning and in crisis, can still be a space of impact on the formation of a child/youth. To a certain extent, the effects of school cannot be denied, but the suspicion and hatred are thrown on it in a moment when we can perceive the channeling of hatred against some democratic sectors and institutions.

The second question is about who is discussing education today and who discussed it in the past. What we have to highlight is that the question of education and public school have been part of the concerns of Brazilian intellectuals since the nineteenth century and also for a good part of the twentieth. The idea of the public school as an indicator of the democratization of Brazilian society and as a space of common learning was constructed to such an extent that it was not possible to think of a project for the country or nation disconnected from the school. However, a persistent diagnosis of the failure of education in the country has also been found. It is not a question of regarding these intellectuals as models and capable of providing answers to the questions of the present. In our opinion, they do not serve for this, also because the school models they advocated are to a great extent no longer suitable. Therefore, it is not a question of adopting a posture which does not perceive a way out for a school model created in the eighteenth century or which assumes in an uncritical manner the discourse of ‘salvation’ through education which, as we have seen, was accompanied by a school model suited to a control and classification society. However, freely drawing on the title of Carl Schorske’s book (2000), we can perhaps ‘think with history.’ In other words, we can do the exercise of thinking about which elements from

¹⁰ <https://www.aned.org.br/educacao-domiciliar/ed-sobre/ed-perguntas>. It is interesting to note that the home schooling movement uses certain fears and fantasies which are historically linked to books, knowledge, and school. Here we refer to the belief that these elements have a phenomenal power, for good or for bad, on the conscience of individuals, especially the young, supposedly more naive and thus influenceable. In relation to this, it is worth mentioning again Hannah Arendt, when, in the text previously mentioned, she discusses the function of the family and the school. The family is the group which has the function of protecting the child from the dangers of the world. On the other hand, it is fundamental for a child and their development not to stay only in their own world. It is precisely here that the school comes in, with its function of introducing the world to the child, although it is not in itself the world, nor should it be. Rather its place is precisely this between the home and the world. If the family preserves the child from the dangers of the world, the school preserves the world from the outbreak of the new, which emerges every generation, hence its essentially conservative nature, in the sense of teaching the child that the world is older than it, which implies responsibility for the world itself (ARENDR, 2005, pp. 243 and 246-247).

the past are still present in our present. Models of school and perceptions of education were formulated by men and women who in their time believed that education was capable of constructing a new man. To some extent, many of the questions we have raised are indebted to them and thus listening to how they responded to the problems of their time can perhaps help us to propose new questions, answer them based on our demands and help us think about where this other model of school/education can bring us, based on the discourse of modernization, efficiency, and utility, or even a model of education which, in the name of family values, denies and criminalizes school.

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