

Memory narratives and education in Vitoria da Conquista -BA in the first half of the twentieth century - Do not forget in what world we lived in

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Abstract: In this article we discuss the narrative of memory of former students from Ginásio da Conquista and Educandário Juvêncio Terra schools, from 1940s and 1950s, taken from interviews carried out between 2007 and 2012, in an exchange of ideas with the trajectory of the Brazilian Education in the first half of the twentieth century, and the multiple determinants that influenced its history, based on legal apparatus and teaching practices. In order to analyze the experiences recalled and shared by the subjects who participate in a particular social group, the concept of memory we call 'social memory', is central to this discussion. We follow the theoretical elaboration of James Fentress and Chris Wickham, who find in the social, memory the collective and personal dimensions of the individuals' life. The studies were oriented by the theoretical-methodological field of Dialectical Materialism.

Keywords: memory, education, twentieth century

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As narrativas de memória e a educação em Vitória da Conquista\BA na primeira metade do século XX – Não se esqueçam em que mundo nós vivíamos

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Resumo: Neste artigo, discutimos as narrativas de memória de ex-alunos do Ginásio de Conquista e do Educandário Juvêncio Terra, dos anos 1940 e 1950, colhidas em entrevistas feitas entre 2007 e 2012, em diálogo com a trajetória da educação brasileira primeira metade do século XX e considerando as múltiplas determinações que influenciaram sua história, seus aparatos legais e os fazeres pedagógicos. Entendemos que, para analisar experiências recordadas e partilhadas por sujeitos que participam de determinado grupo social, o conceito de memória, que chamamos de ‘memória social’, é central. Para tanto, seguimos a elaboração teórica de James Fentress e Chris Wickham que encontram na memória social a dimensão coletiva e a dimensão pessoal da vida dos indivíduos. Além disso, orientamo-nos pelo campo teórico-metodológico do materialismo dialético.

Palavras-Chave: memória, educação, século XX

Narrativas de memoria y educación en Vitoria da Conquista \ BA em La primera mitad del siglo XX - no se olvide em qué mundo vivimos

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Resumen: En este artículo se discute la memoria narrativa de antiguos alumnos de Gimnasio Logro y Educandário Juvêncio Terra, 1940 y 1950, tomada de entrevistas llevadas a cabo entre 2007 y 2012, en diálogo con la trayectoria de La Educación de Brasil em el primer semestre el siglo XX, y los múltiples factores determinantes que influyeron en su historia, basado em La enseñanza aparato jurídico y las prácticas. El experiencias recordado y compartido por los sujetos que participan en un grupo social particular, el aspecto de la memoria que llamamos 'memoria social', es central e nesta discusión , para entenderlo, seguimos la elaboración teórica de James Fentress y Chris Wickham , que se encuentran memoria social La dimensión colectiva y la dimensión personal de la vida de las personas . Los estudios se realizaron en el campo teórico y metodológico del materialismo dialéctico.

Palabras Clave: memória, la educación, siglo XX

Introduction

The narratives of the memoirs of former students of the ‘Ginásio de Conquista’ and the ‘Educandário Juvêncio Terra’ in Vitória da Conquista BA Brazil during the 1940s and 1950s are analyzed. The trajectory of Brazilian Education in the first half of the 20th century is discussed, taking into consideration the many factors that affected history, its legal apparatuses and its pedagogical activities at that time.

Between the latter years of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, when current authors were primary and high school students in the government-run schools of Vitória da Conquista¹, the teachers had a common dictum: ‘During my stay at school, things were different [...] in my times, the students were different [...] education was different at that time [...]’. The nostalgia expressed by such phrases, actually a deep dissatisfaction with the present and a super-valorization of the past, is also linked to a comparison between the type of education given at the start and at the end of the 20th century.

The 40 or 50-year-old teachers had attended the 1940, 1950 and 1960 primary and secondary schools. In Clarisse Nunes’s (2000, p. 35) words, “The old and good high school is a source of yearning for the old days; it was a high quality school, especially for its excellent teaching”.

Between 2007 and 2012, current authors studied the narratives of the memoirs of former students who had studied in the Ginásio da Conquista and in the Educandário Juvêncio Terra in the 1940s and 1950s. Foregrounded by studies on the history of Brazilian education, current paper will investigate their social memory with special reference to its social apparatus and pedagogical activities.

Ecléa Bosi (1994, p. 421, author’s emphasis) remarks that “[...] the most curious expression is ‘in my times’, used by people who recollect bygone days”. In fact, it is a common expression in the memoirs of older people. The expression was recurring in the nostalgic exclamations of former teachers and the reports collected during survey. The same author asks, ‘Which is my time. I am still alive and I did not bequeath my times

¹ Vitória da Conquista, an important municipality in the mid-southern region of the state of Bahia, Brazil, in the early 20th century comprised downtown, districts, villages and plantations, many of which are currently neighboring towns in their own right.

to anyone. It belongs to me as it belongs to others who are my contemporaries'. She explains that "[...] the times that a person considers one's own is that period when he or she built his or her undertakings. The period belongs to younger people, during which they undertake their activities, the bases of their life projects" (Bosi, 1994, p. 421).

Remembering the 'golden school days', described with such zest, is a reference to the period when educational institutions were notorious for their strictness and discipline, for their hierarchical stance and order, for their values and civism, for fear and respectfulness imbued, and for their glamour, which, within the students' social memory, are neither contradictory nor questionable. Triggered by social or by images of the past shared by a cohesive group of people, in the definition by Fentress and Wickham (1992), the former students of the old schools brought and still bring similar memoirs.

The above authors remark that the common version of the past is established by communication maintained between people who lived certain experiences and not by the personal reflections of these same people. "Our personal memoirs and the very cognitive process are highly social from the very beginning" (Wickham & Fentress, 1992, p. 7-8). Therefore, there is an agreed-upon version of the past, with social communication as the basis of the process that triggers social memory.

When Brazilian education is analyzed within the context in which past teachers developed their activities as students or educators, a whole world is revealed in which the interviewed people, former students of the Ginásio da Conquista² and of the Educandário Juvêncio Terra³, lived through their adolescence and early adulthood the novel events of their school period and the scenario described in the group's social memory.

When the 'golden days' generation has the opportunity to share their childhood and adolescent memoirs, mainly when they speak of the time

² The Ginásio da Conquista was founded by Father Luiz Soares Palmeira (Rio de Janeiro, June 25, 1905 – Salvador 1988). He was the son of a family of educators and politicians. Palmeira moved to Caetité, in the hinterland of the state of Bahia where he was ordained priest in 1932 and established a school which was transferred to Vitória da Conquista in 1939.

³ Educandário Juvêncio Terra was established by teacher Rosália Figueira Silveira in 1946. She was born in Vitória da Conquista in 1915, the daughter of an important Protestant family of plantation owners. She studied in Belo Horizonte and in Rio de Janeiro.

when they attended school, as civil servants, or as teachers or students, their memoirs are a weaved cloth which, when extended on the events, is capable of coloring past laughter and attenuate sufferings.

[...] I remember with great pleasure my school days in the priest's Ginásio; it was a pleasure, a great pleasure; we used to play a lot, lesson breaks, three classes, then there was the break, during break we used to run, play [...] Mark, it was so [...] so nice!

It was a highly gratifying period in my whole life, very very good. The priest's Ginásiois highly important, very very important.

Today I still remember my teachers with endearment; when I meet those who are still alive, I pay them my great respects, a great endearment. In fact, it was excellent, very good (Mota, 2008).

It was a course which made you feel prepared; you were a graduate in Science and Arts. Today I perceive: 'Ah, no one fails'. The student accesses the Internet [...] I had never seen this sort of thing before [...] It was a school you were pleased to study in, a sort of joy [...] The students played, kicked balls [...] And class hours were actually for studying (Cunha, 2009, emphasis added).

Every event was remembered and narrated as if it were a bridge between two different and opposing behavior poles which belong to the past and to the present. "It is the specific return to the 'old man's memory' which acquires precisely at the moment of transmission to the younger the aspect of teaching, counseling and wisdom" (Bosi, 1994, p. 481, author's emphasis).

Remembering is an act filled with subjectivities. In other words, memoirs are motivated by emotions and feelings (Fentress & Wickham, 1992). When one listens to the seemingly harmonious description within the remembering process, one may think: 'I would have loved living at that time!' However, they are remembrances and for gettings that arise from a specific 'place'. The social memory that predominates among the agents of the Ginásio da Conquista and the Educandário Juvêncio Terra is the result of a set of feelings and meanings which are common to a social

class that consumed material and immaterial goods supplied by capitalism in the 1940s and 1950s.

It is not a question of classifying these memoirs as true or untrue since they are true for the social class in question. However, they are narratives which are a contrast to the scientific analyses on the exclusive and ambiguous nature of school education of the period. When the interviewed people were asked on events, themes and facts currently thought to be embarrassing, authoritarian and violent, the answer was always preceded by the following phrase, 'Don't forget the world we lived in'.

According to Paul Ricoeur (2007), memory is inserted in the world through human existence bonding the passage of time between two opposite poles: before and after. The experiences remembered by the group of former students and teachers of the Ginásio da Conquista and the Educandário Juvêncio Terra are the shared impressions of a common past which was relevant and significant for the constitution of the present group.

That is why current authors started their reflections in this paper by the warning: 'Don't forget the world you lived in!' While the authors acknowledge the complexity and the totality of the terms 'world' and 'time' experienced by the interviewees, the political and economic issues and their reflections on school education will be focused. Social memory caused 'fear and love' in the agents which, albeit currently contradictory, they were praiseworthy and harmonious for the time they referred to.

The period dealt with in current paper comprises the 1940s and the 1950s which also include the last five years of Vargas's dictatorship, called 'The New State'⁴, and the first fourteen years of the re-democratization period⁵. In the case of the Educandário Juvêncio Terra, the first fourteen years of re-democratization, between 1946 and 1960, are focused.

In current discussion, the parts are not defined for their own sake but are taken within totality: form and content, essence and appearance are

⁴ President Getúlio Vargas's dictatorship, called 'the New State', ranged between 1937 and 1945..

⁵ Administrations during the next twenty years after the 'New State' or the post-Vargas period introduced the democratic regime, now called 're-democratization'. The 1964 military and civil coup brought once more a military dictatorship..

reality's dimensions. The pedagogical practice, predominant in the mid-southern region of the state of Bahia, Brazil, in the 1940s and 1950s, was part of an educational perspective that delineated the profile of Brazilian schools, participated in ideological discussions, attended to political and economic interests. It materialized in legal terms and in practice in the schools nationwide. Although respects are always due to local specificities, one must understand how these factors were related, combined and contrasted.

The 'New State' introduced a policy of contempt for all democratic institutions. The policy was legalized by the Francisco Campos Constitution and education was foregrounded on the laws of Organic Teaching, proposed by Gustavo Capanema, Minister of Education and Health (Ghiraldelli Jr., 2003; Schwartzman, 2000)⁶. The New State altered the items in the 1934 Constitution, according to which Education would be the right of all and the duty of the State. The 1937 legislation started to call the State a 'collaborator' of the educational process and constituted the main responsibility for education on parents. The upper classes had a similar proposal for Brazilian education since rich people could opt for public or private schools, whereas the poor classes had only the option for professional schooling.

The High School Law, published on April 9, 1942, may be detected in the reports and results of the Ginásio de Conquista, as the oral affidavits reveal:

[...] I was benefitted because I could take an undergraduate course. It was all to my benefit. I owned a pharmacy in this town. If the priest did not establish the school, I am of the opinion that others would have done so. The town would not have remained for so many years without a graduate course (Melo, 2008).

Teaching was highly qualified and the students graduated and had a good profession. Schooling was higher than that practiced currently. I think we may distinguish 'before and after the Ginásio' (Silva, 2008, emphasis added).

⁶ Studies on the Vargas dictatorship revealed that many collaborators of Vargas were Fascists, such as Francisco Campos, Minister of Education and later Minister of Justice of the New State. They were founders of the Legião de Outubro, in Minas Gerais, an ephemeral fascist political party (Cunha, 1986a, p. 241)..

[...] for admission in the Ginásio, the candidate had to sit for an exam. Since it was a private school, people who could not afford the fees received a scholarship. My cousin, the daughter of an uncle of mine, received a scholarship (Câmara, 2007).

The Priest's Ginásio was highly relevant in Vitória da Conquista since it was [...] the spring board for people to continue their studies for higher courses [...] Going to high school was so important that graduation day was celebrated with a feast, ball, diplomas. [...] Graduation day was a nice day and very solemn! (Mota, 2008).

The above narratives echo the guidelines of the Organic Teaching Law for Secondary Schools: teaching quality, concern to lead students to higher education, supply of courses by private initiative, inspection of the Education Ministry for validation, predominance of humanistic and elitist studies, and deep concern for moral, religious, patriotic and family values. The first article of the first chapter of the Internal Rule concentrates on the aim of the Institution: 'The Ginásio de Conquista, founded and maintained since 1933 by the current Principal, aims mainly at providing high school education within the general plan established by the Ministry of Health and Education, its laws and regulations'.

Memoirs on the establishment of the Ginásio in the town of Vitória da Conquista reveal other events of the period:

[...] The priest's Ginásio was transferred to this town in 1939, when Germany started the war. The First World War [Second World War], evidenced a singular event in Conquista [...] (laughter) it was the first airplane to land in Conquista. I remember everybody was at school; we went on foot to the airfield to see the plane; we had never seen a plane before (Santos, 2008).

The West was living through World War II, a conflict that engaged a great number of citizens and the entire economy for its maintenance. Armies became a set of economic activities and several governments engaged themselves in war factories or with technological development, resulting in an industrial boom (Hobsbawm, 1995).

The support by the Vargas Administration to the Allies, negotiated in 1941 with the USA, triggered several controversies due to inherent

contradictions: the government had an external policy favorable to democracy while internally maintaining a dictatorship and an anti-democratic regime with a Nazi-Fascist policy.

The Brazilian industrial boom started at this period and involved the manufacture and export of many products for the Allies and the establishment of branches foreign firms in Brazil. This important economic change affected the educational system which underwent a deep transformation. An Organic Law was published in January 1942 precisely for industrial studies, adjusting teaching to the dictates of the New State, a national-developmental administration based on industrialization (Cunha, 1989).

Since the education laws were organized on a national basis, technical education was underscored, with special emphasis on the preparation of young people for work, on literacy of adults and adolescents, formation of professionals and the improvement of the National Agreement for Primary Schooling (Gandini, 1995).

However, the New State ended in 1945. During the administration of Eurico Gaspar Dutra the country's constitution was based on democracy and liberalism by which primary education was reinforced as mandatory and the competence of the central government on educational guidelines and bases was acknowledged.

The Educandário Juvêncio Terra enrolled its first students in 1946 under the aegis of the Capanema Reform and complying with the Constitution. Law 8529 or the Organic Law for Primary Schooling was promulgated on January 2, 1946. A National Fund was proposed for primary schooling which, till that moment, was catered by the individual states, always lacking funds and featuring the worst conditions (with the exception of primary schooling funded by the religious orders). According to this Law, partially influenced by the New School Movement, primary schooling should prepare students for the admission exam to secondary schools. Since the economical requirements of a developing nation made minimum culture mandatory for the entire population, secondary schooling became free of charge and obligatory.

In Brazil, free education was initially instituted by the Imperial Constitution. Article 179 declared: "Primary schooling is free for all citizens" (Brasil, 1824), ratified by all Republican Constitutions. In 1946, when free education was reinforced, secondary schooling became free only for those who proved themselves to be poor (Werebe, 1968).

In the case of the mandatory stance of Primary Education, established by the 1934, 1937 and 1946 Constitutions, the age bracket was omitted. Other documents were more explicit. In fact, the Constitutions of each state which regulated the matter, such as the 1946 Organic Law for Primary Education, established mandatory schooling between 8 and 12 years. However, obligatory and free education established by laws, albeit crystal clear on the documents, was highly disregarded by authorities and population alike (Werebe, 1968).

In spite of the law, the State in the mid-southern region of the state of Bahia, permitted the opening of schools by private institutions. Rosália Figueira, the founder and principal of the Educandário Juvêncio Terra, a private school in Vitória da Conquista, in 1946, grasped this opportunity. Her narrative in the Homage Report illustrates the debate:

My sisters were plantation owners and could not take their children to school in the town. So I started to teach at the homes of my in-laws. I remained on the plantations for many years but finally I gave serious thoughts to establish a school in Conquista; I decide to organize a school. I started teaching at Rua Fernando Spínola [...] with mere 14 students, my nephews. It was also a boarding school. The school developed and I had to move to another place (Vilas Bôas, 1996, p. 30).

The school children who attended school and remained till the end of the primary schooling were the siblings of rich families who paid the fees. In fact, they were families who appreciated the benefits of formal education and perceived that education was a means for social improvement. The great part of the population lived in terrible conditions and did not have the necessary means to keep their children in school, buy uniforms and school material. Since most families lived in rural areas, they would have had to pay for lodging or a boarding school if they did not have relatives in town where the government-run school was available. Otherwise, they had to depend on government funding.

She loved her profession, her school. It impressed all. She refrained from having things to enroll children in her school. She did not know how to distinguish between what was hers, her own, and the school's.

She was a loving person and totally devoted to her job. She had love for her neighbors; she was a very religious person and had Jesus in her heart. She helped people a lot and took care of them. Enrolling them in school was a help too (Fagundes, 2012).

Within such a perspective, receiving a scholarship reaffirms and proves the excluding character of Brazilian education during the period under analysis. The Brazilian educational system failed to guarantee schooling opportunities to people as a right, regardless of economic status.

Between 1951 and 1954, when Getúlio Vargas was elected president, the new and expanding economic and social forces required effective growth conditions within the political superstructure (Ribeiro, 2003). It was a decade full of strives between Catholics and intellectuals of the New School, the principal voices that vied with one another for the defense of the private and public schools respectively. However, Education tended towards a liberal stance led by the New School defenders. The latter were faithful to the modernizing and conservative position, the hallmark of the Brazilian Administration as from the 1930s.

During the Juscelino Kubitschek administration, between 1956 and 1961, the ‘golden age’ of economic development and contradictions, increase in the possibilities of employment was accompanied by the concentration of profits within the internal and external sectors. The proposal for enrichment was directed to the upper classes to the detriment of the people; agrarian structure was incompatible with industrial expansion and national development; the privileged admittance of foreign capital defeated the national one⁷.

The privileges of the dominant classes were preserved whilst the crisis produced by the new economic guidelines became worse and worse and the reformulation of the model in its political or economic aspect was required. According to Ribeiro (2003, p. 136), impairment consisted of making compatible the model’s political and economic aspects by “[...] opting for the maintenance of economic orientation and change in the political orientation or opting for the maintenance of political orientation and change in the economic orientation”. The decision of the Jânio

⁷ Effects on the economy were evident: diversified activities, new jobs, formation of Brazilian leaders for foreign firms and the maintenance of work exploitation as a form of accumulation.

Quadros and João Goulart administrations during the 1960s focused on changes in economic directions: a capitalist-based national-developmental political model coupled to a program of democratic-bourgeoisie reforms with the support of the Left⁸.

One may perceive the educational effects of the political and economic issues. An increase in the expenditure of the Federal and State governments in education and culture during 1955 and 1965 occurred, making possible the expansion of the school network, even though not enough to overcome the selectivity of the Brazilian schooling model. However, the municipal administrations lowered their funding of public education. In secondary schools, enrolment tripled and the number of teachers doubled (Ribeiro, 2003).

Although the re-democratization governments did not alter significantly the educational model, certain significant facts for the History of Education in Brazil, during the New Republic (1946-1963) should be underscored, namely, discussions on the Law on the Guidelines and Bases for National Education (LDB); the inauguration of The Educational Popular Center, the start of the School-Class and School-Park Anísio Teixeira in Bahia; the establishment of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC); in 1961, the start of the Literacy Campaign featuring Paulo Freire's didactic model for the schooling of adults in 40 hours; in 1962, the establishment of the National Education Plan and the National Literacy Program by the MEC, following Freire's method (Almeida, 1989).

After World War II, the Western world experienced an economic boom, albeit not uniformly, which produced a life style known as 'the Golden Years': novelties in the goods and service market, scientific and technological progress, automation in work triggered modern economy which during the 1950s and 1960s required investments and re-planning in Education (Hobsbawm, 1995). Such progress encouraged the middle class and pushed Brazilian economy even at the costs of putting the country in a tremendous debt.

Current investigation revealed traces of a bond between the manner by which society produced its material existence and her school. The social memory of the Ginásio de Conquista and the Educandário Juvêncio

⁸ The 1964 coup was provoked by people who believed in the compatibility with the maintenance of economic direction (based on foreign capital) with a change in politics (Ribeiro, 2003).

Terra is intertwined with the production of ideas and representations of consciousness which, from the start, is “[...] directly linked to the material activity and the material interchange of people as the language of real life” (Marx & Engels, 1977, p. 36).

The *a priori* concern manifested in current paper lies in the understanding of people’s concrete and immediate existence. ‘Real and active’ people produce their representations and their ideas, even though “[...] conditioned by a determined development of their productive forces” and their respective relationships. “Conscience is nothing else than being conscious; people’s being is their process of true life” (Marx, 1977, p. 36-37).

In the memoir narratives on the Ginásio de Conquista and Educandário Juvêncio Terra there is a unanimous opinion that the institutions prized values, quality, intellectuality, strictness, discipline and order. According to social memory, ‘man’s ideal’ formed by such institutions was the citizen imbued with civil, patriotic and Christian values inspired by bourgeoisie and liberal democracies.

When the interviewed peoples updated the period ‘as theirs’, they revived an ideal ‘school’. They remembered that strictness comprised the education method; discipline was a target; punishment was a pedagogical procedure. Therefore, the principal qualities of an institution emerge in the students’ memoirs. What is questioned is not merely memoirs and their contents but the ‘world’ to which the memoirs refer, of which it is the result and source and, even still, of which they feel orphans and desire to live again.

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