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“TRADITION OF INNOVATION”: ROOTS AND TOPICALITY OF THE NEW EDUCATION IN PORTUGAL¹

Abstract: In this paper we aim to develop a critical reflection on the trajectory of the New Education in Portugal, considering its roots and metamorphosis, which are plural in both cases. We try to relativize the underlying dichotomous rhetoric of the New Education discourses and systematize and analyse the major ideas included in its project. Finally, we intend to reflect on the New Education’s legacy, considering the set of ideas and beliefs that have become part of what we can call a “progressive educational tradition”.

Keywords: New Education; tradition; innovation; “tradition of innovation”.

1. According to António Nóvoa, “New Education combines a set of new perspectives on educational things” and “another vision of the child and the educational act” (1995, p. 33). These statements provide a great account of what comes today before our eyes as unquestionable: New Education represents a turning point in the trajectory of educational ideas and practices, and many of the ways we think and the things we do are still inspired in that kind of “pedagogical revolution” (Lima 1925, p. 106). I believe this idea is justified, although it represents only one side of the issue. It is true that New Education has radicalized its struggle against the so-called “ancient”, “traditional” or “old school”. An example of this rhetoric is the following excerpt by Adolfo Lima, the main driver of the pedagogical renewal done in Escola Oficina No. 1 [Professional School No. 1], the great reference movement in Portugal: “Bankruptcy declared to the old school of *magister dixit*, ferule and psittacism – criticized for all aspects of its organization, its means of teaching were judged and taught, and its vices and inconsistencies were patented – rather infamous

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to children and society – the old school of the authoritarian and grouchy master without pedagogical and social orientation, it was and it is considered a damaging institution that should disappear” (Lima 1914, p. 5).

The New Education appeared as a counterpoint to this caricature of “traditional education”. According to Faria de Vasconcelos, inspired by John Dewey, it should have a scientific, dynamic, genetic, social and differential character (1916, p. 11-16) and, according to Álvaro Viana de Lemos, “New Education prepares the child, not only to be the future citizen [...] but also to be a human being aware of its human dignity” (1930, p. 38). The use of this kind of binary oppositions by renewal movements, in order to legitimize this option of apparent rupture and mobilization of actors around it, is interpreted by Jürgen Oelkers as it is presented: “All metaphors and renewing slogans are of the following type: to a bad past they oppose the image of a better, perfect future, from *true* to *false* education, without needing empirical evidence to confirm those two statements” (1995, p. 34). Similarly, Daniel Hameline notes the following: “The «nouvellisme» is a constant in history of education. Claiming that something new must be done because things are going wrong is an old complaint” (2001, p. 31).

The rejection of the somewhat imprecisely so-called “traditional school” turned out to be one of the key common denominators of New Education, considering its multiform character. In fact, this never constituted itself as a homogeneous pedagogical current, but instead as the confluence of several thinkers, educators and alternative school experiences, and a set of principles and practices that intended to be innovative. Lorenzo Luzuriaga considers that New Education resembles a “constellation” due to its unsystematic character (1994, p. 27) and António Nóvoa compares it to some kind of “amalgamation” (1900, p. 72).

2. Despite the aforementioned cutting with the past speech, it is important to consider the more or less distant multiple roots of New Education. Although we can go back in time, it is in Rousseau, “true precursor of new education” according to Luzuriaga, and in its work *Emile* that, in the opinion of António Candeias, we can find “the mythical origins of New Education” (1995, p. 14). Also, renewing speeches, in their search for historical rooting, build some kind of genealogy that comprises a set of thinkers and educators from the nineteenth century, including Pestalozzi, Froebel and Spencer, among others. An article by Simões Raposo from the late nineteenth century is very clear on this sacredness project of some “heroes” of modern pedagogy: “Comenius, Pestalozzi and Froebel are unquestionably the apostles of this new religion of popular teaching [...]. And it could not be otherwise; it is why, by claiming the laws of nature in education, the Froebel system knocked the old pedagogy to the ground forever, a pedagogy that was already deeply eluted by Comenius and Pestalozzi, by Girard, Fleury, Foe, Rousseau and other notable masters of science education” (1882, p. 15).

Moreover, there is a set of ideas whose renewing potential is already relatively consolidated in the second half of the nineteenth century, such as the new look on the project of comprehensive education with emphasis on handicrafts, physical education or school excursions, among others, and the importance of the so-called “intuitive teaching” and “lessons of things” as its privileged strategy. There are, therefore, many continuities between this first renewing moment, situated in the late nineteenth century, and the second moment corresponding to the New Education. Several authors have drawn attention to those continuity lines and to the rhetorical character of the disruption discourse. This is the case of Daniel Hameline when he states: “The pedagogy of popular school, as advocated by the editors of educational journals of the second half of the nineteenth century, endorses a «new education». On this matter it is exorbitant the pretension of Claparède, Ferrière, Binet or Decroly to present themselves, some decades later, as promoters *ex nihilo* of «Copernican revolution», first true intelligent interpreters of the Pestalozzian idea” (2002, s. 131).

In the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, the awareness that there are two paradigmatic moments of pedagogical revolution is also extremely present in the categories proposed by Nanine Charbonnel when she talks about the “Compayré moment” and the “Experimental Pedagogy moment” (1988, p. 7). It is also what Marta Chagas de Carvalho did for the Brazilian case when she identified two moments of pedagogical renewal in the transition of the nineteenth century to the twentieth century: the “modern pedagogy” and the “New School pedagogy” (2001, p. 137). Similarly, for the Spanish case, María del Mar del Pozo Andrés recognizes the existence of two consecutive and complementary currents – a first pedagogical renewal movement, corresponding to “renewalism”, and a second movement already aligned with the New School’s statements (2002, p. 115-160). We believe that identical periodization can be used for the Portuguese case. We should also consider the multiple reinterpretations, some with progressive meaning, such as Freinet pedagogy, and others with conservative meaning, such as some catholic and nationalistic appropriations of “active school”, which occurred after the typical phase of New Education, particularly since the 30s of the twentieth century. In this regard, the title of the 26th International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE), held in Geneva in July of 2004, was suggestive: “New Education: genesis and metamorphosis”. When addressing the issue of New Education, we should, therefore, consider the aforementioned plurality.

3. In any case, the contribution of New Education to what we can call “pedagogical modernity” seems unquestionable for us. Some of the great questions or new perspectives that today still mark the educational debate were then placed in the educational agenda, such as the awareness of the central part of the student in the educational act or the defence of active methods of teaching and learning. The modern look on issues like the student, the pedagogical relation, the comprehensive education or the school self-government practices finds a great contribution

for its development at this moment. If this is true, it is also true the fact that New Education simultaneously and paradoxically represents an important moment regarding the questioning and deconstruction of the so-called “modern school”. The model or school form of education, as it was historically built in its dimensions of space, time, actors, curriculum, subjects and rituals, and that was widespread between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, saw some of the central elements of its “grammar” being criticized by men and women of the New Education, which suggested more flexible (and scientifically justified) ways of organizing school time, a reorganization of the school spaces and furniture (allowing new kinds of pedagogical relations and favouring students’ circulation and activity) or a more integrated curriculum (for example, using “areas of interest” or “projects”). The ambiguity of the relations that New Education maintains with the school model is thus synthesized by António Nóvoa: “New Education is a paradoxical movement: the distrust and the belief in educational institutions cohabit in an unstable equilibrium, resulting from different educational and school experiences [...]. In a certain way, New Education is the beginning of the end of a «schoolarizing speech» about child education. But it is also exacerbating the belief in school’s potentialities (of *another* school of course)” (1995, pp. 30-31).

The potential modernity of New Education makes us feel like we are in front of ideas that preserve its topicality, continuing to challenge us to battle for its achievement in our schools and classrooms. The ease with which we still today adhere to the slogans and formulas of New Education, the dazzle that many alternative school experiences continues to cause us, whose vitality we can today witness, naturally involve some risks for its analysis as an object of study; these risks result from the difficulty of distancing ourselves from an object of which we affectively are very close. Who does not defend that the student should be in the centre of the educational activities? That active methods should be privileged? That children and young people should be educated in all dimensions of their being and existence? The search for possible objectivity implies a permanent critical detachment and the need to deconstruct things that we ourselves believe in. Larry Cuban is one of the authors that advises a constant surveillance before the clichés and dichotomies of renewing speeches: “Labels such as ‘teacher centred’, ‘traditional’, ‘child centred’, and ‘open classrooms’ may help researchers and promoters, but they do what labels inevitably do: categorize and simplify” (1984, p. 268).

Another author, António Nóvoa, tersely reminds us to question the “common sense evidence” present in educational discourses, due to the absolute need to have an attentive look towards complexity: “Evidently. All are evidences in texts and debates, in educational policies and reforms. No one has doubts. All have certainties. Definitive. Evidences of common sense. False evidences. Continuously denied. Continuously repeated. Beliefs. Doctrines. Visions. Dogmas. All mixed in an amalgam of illusions [...]. When it comes to education, no politician has doubts,

no commentator is wrong, no Portuguese hesitates. Worn out words. Useless. Banalities. Lies. What is evident, lies. Evidently (2005, p. 14).

4. The relation between tradition and innovation thus encloses a great complexity. In a fascinating text, having as reference the overall issue of culture (and not specifically educational issues), the English historian Peter Burke sought to express the complexity of the relations between tradition and innovation, and to rehabilitate the first concept, articulating it with similar ones, such as heritage and memory. The author draws attention for the fact that lesson tradition is a living tradition, not an anachronism; he emphasises the sometimes impure character of traditions by means of less creative receptions or “translations”, referring to the concepts of “bricolage” or “hybridism”. Accordingly, he suggests the use of a more flexible concept of tradition. Innovations are not themselves absolute and may be, in his view, apparent innovations that hide real continuities; the opposite may also be equally true with continuities that conceal true innovations. Burke also draws attention to the existence of innovation traditions, something that is present in some pedagogical movements, such as, for example, in the Portuguese case, those that still today claim Freinet’s pedagogy or the pedagogy of the Maternal Primer of João de Deus. Looking at the pedagogical thinking aiming to develop true genealogies of innovation runs the risk of becoming teleological. Until when does an innovative or practical idea remain? Forever? The way the author faces the issues that we have been addressing here, that is, the relation between tradition and innovation, is filled with implications for the educational field: “The oral academic tradition, the lesson tradition, is still alive today [...]. The survival of this tradition is not a pure anachronism [...]. We are finally reaching a theme full of paradoxes: the relation between tradition and innovation [...]. Those who teach, like all of us, have perhaps two incompatible goals: [...] On the one hand, convey to students the knowledge heritage, the tradition and, on the other hand, encourage critical thinking, independent thinking [...]. Sometimes, apparent innovation conceals the persistence of tradition; other times, the apparent continuity disguises innovations. Another paradox that I do not want to leave unnoticed – the paradox of traditions of innovation. Last paradox. After the tradition of invention, we can move on to the invention of tradition” (2007, p. 15).

The challenge to develop a complex look, which considers both poles of the binomial and the ambivalence of its relations is clearly present here. Unfortunately, in many past and present educational debates, the prudence that the author calls for is clearly absent.

In a work specifically more directed towards the educational debate by another stimulating author, the educational philosopher David Hansen assumes an identical exercise, seeking critical recognition for the unavoidable and nuclear presence of the concept of tradition in education. “No teacher is an island unto herself”, he claims, “nor does any teacher have to invent teaching from scratch. Every teachers’

work is saturated with tradition” (2001, p. 114). Looking to list the advantages of adopting a posture that considers the “sense of tradition”, the author claims that it enables teachers to have a richer perspective on teaching problems and a critical detachment from contemporary educational conceptions, “trends” or dogmatic interpretations. To sum up: “Tradition in teaching can be understood as a way of steering clear of ‘isms’, with their often polarizing, alienating connotations” (ibid., p. 115). Moreover, tradition appears as an expression of the “wisdom” of a particular community, the teachers’ community, in its effort to give meaning to the act of teaching, the “wisdom of practice” mentioned by Lee Shulman. For Hansen, the teachers’ work is a result of the permanent dialogue with tradition, making it a “living tradition” and avoiding the risk of what he calls “traditionalism”, because he recognizes that not everything that is traditional is good, since there are “evil traditions and practices” (ibid., p. 127). Teachers are not always inventing their teaching, but they can and should innovate. What is sought is an ideal of consistency.

Another classic work for the reflexion on teachers’ practices, including the historical dimension, is the one of the American educator Philip W. Jackson, entitled *The practice of teaching* (1986). Although this is not the only topic addressed, here we are particularly interested in emphasising the reflexion that the author does on the “traditional” and the “progressive” in the American education, demystifying and relativizing a simplistic and linear understanding of its opposition. Considering the attempts to describe the teaching practices through such notions, like “caricatures”, Jackson proposes the abandonment of the term “traditional”, because, according to him, “both outlooks [“traditional” and “progressive”] have been around for such a very long time [...] that each by now is something like a traditional outlook on educational affairs” (ibid., p. 100), in other words, we are here confronted with two traditions that have its own historical roots, hence attributing the epithet of “traditional” to one of them does not make sense; this issue was also addressed in the reflexions of Peter Burke, which have already been discussed. Similarly, the author proposes to abandon the term “progressive”, which he justifies through a lapidary question: “Do the so-called «progressive» methods of teaching constitute genuine progress?” (ibid., p. 101). The conclusion is directed towards the dialogue between both traditions, along the same line of what is proposed by David Hansen, which we already have emphasised. Resuming Philip Jackson: “In sum, to be genuinely true to their calling, all teachers must be partially conservative and partially liberal in outlook [...] The health and future development of teaching depend upon most teachers’ maintaining a balanced view both to the means and the ends of pedagogy” (ibid., 114).

Despite Jackson’s reminder and the difficulties imposed by the expression of the “progressive tradition”, we believe New Education – particularly if understood considering its (plural) roots and (also plural) metamorphoses, as previously discussed – can be associated with the concept of “tradition of innovation” proposed

by Peter Burke. We believe that the purposely paradoxical character of this concept may account for the complexity of the relations between tradition and innovation within “tradition” itself. With due caution and the necessary critical detachment, we even believe the use of the aforementioned “progressive tradition” category is not problematic. It seems to be unquestionable that we are before a tradition or a heritage, and also a memory (partially mythologized, naturally), a certain way to look at the child and the educational gesture, which was targeted on diverse and successive readings, translations or appropriations, not only at different times, but also through its international circulation, allowing us to view it, in addition to being plural, as a “hybrid tradition”, to use another category coined by Burke. If it is possible to do its genealogy, we clearly should abstain from seeing it as a teleology. In addition to being before a “living tradition”, the “progressive” character of this “tradition” is proven by the diversity and vitality of the many dozens of “laboratorial” experiments that are present in the Portuguese and international educational landscape, some claiming Freinet’s pedagogy, others Waldorf’s pedagogy, and yet others the High Scope’s pedagogy, not to mention the more obvious references, such as Pestalozzi or Montessori that name some of those different schools. A clear example of hybridism is provided by the Modern School Movement, inspired by Freinet, but combining its original source with elements from the “institutional pedagogy” and the overall “constructivist tradition”. The diversity of projects does not hide the visible fact that some great principles are being shared, as well as some pedagogical and didactic options, which, we say again, cannot enable considering them as part of the same “tradition”, whether it is called “progressive”, “innovative”, “renewing”, “alternative”, etc.

Considering the complexity, polysemy and problematic character of the “innovation” concept, object of broad discussions regarding the educational actuality (Perrenoud 2002), it is appropriate to clarify here the way we understand this concept and state that we have particularly considered its historicity. In this context, we use the concept of innovation as an attribute of educational practices that aim to question, relativize or subvert the so-called “school form” of education. The innovations can either be partial or associated with more radical projects that are focused on the development of a global alternative to the model, that is, another model of education, eventually a non-scholar one. The concept of “school form” was developed by Guy Vincent to account for a set of constants that characterize the modern school organization and which were associated with youth socialization purposes by the way time and school spaces were organized, the knowledge that was conveyed, the pedagogical relations that were established or the instituted rules (Vincent 1994). With a very close meaning, the concept of “grammar of schooling” was developed with the intent to identify the structural invariants that would explain the astonishing stability of school and its resistance to reform attempts (Tyack, Tobin 1994; Tyack, Cuban 1995).

5. Going back to the New Education and the Portuguese case, we can ask the following: what were the major proposed innovations which intended to question modern school organization that has been built since the mid-twentieth century and that was wide-spreading? In other words, what were the main building blocks of the heritage that was handed to us by New Education and that became an integral part of the *corpus* of beliefs in the aforementioned “progressive tradition”? The systematization that will be done here is necessarily summarized.

Firstly, the New Education movement emerges as part of the process, aiming at the scientification of the pedagogical discourse, a process that leads to the creation of the experimental pedagogy in the transition of the nineteenth century to the twentieth century. The need to scientifically study the child and the entire teaching-learning process is taken for granted. Faria de Vasconcelos is one of the Portuguese authors that has shown a great commitment by proclaiming the scientificity of the pedagogical discourse when he states, for example: “Contemporary pedagogy has a clear scientific character and spirit [...]. Pedagogy is an autonomous science with a defined field, and descriptive and explanatory methods that are its own” (1921, p. 12). This belief in the heuristic power of science has led, among other things, to the development of “mental tests” and overestimation of its part as a privileged strategy to penetrate the students’ intimacy and obtain a deep understanding of its abilities and tendencies towards professional selection and guidance. Other strategies, such as students’ sanitary surveillance or control of some everyday practices took over the will to use science as an instrument of knowledge and power over the child, over its life and school career. Anyway, for many authors, the affirmation of pedagogy’s scientificity did not question the need to harmoniously articulate “science” and “art” in the act of teaching. This is really one of the main debates in the pedagogical field of the beginning of the twentieth century. The ambiguity of the relation between the two terms is well captured by one of the authors of teacher education textbooks: “Today no one argues against the possibility of a science of education. This, considered in itself, is an art, a practical skill that surely implies other things besides knowledge acquired in books; the experience, tact, moral qualities, a certain predominance of the heart, a true intelligent inspiration [...]. Yet [...] before being an art in the hands of the masters who practice it, who fertilize it, by their own initiative, by their own dedication, education is a science that philosophers deduced from the overall laws of human nature and that the teacher uses as a result of its own experience [...]. There is, therefore, a science of education, a practical and applied science, with its own principles, laws, practical manifestations, which is named pedagogy” (Paím da Câmara 1902, p. 7).

6. Another central idea comes articulated with this, the idea of putting the child (and young person) in the centre of the educational process. There are several implications of such postulate. Firstly, childhood is recognized as a vital stage with particular features in any case different from adulthood. According to Adolfo Lima,

“the child is not an adult human being in a reduced size. It is a special being with its own immanent forces, which characterize and individualize it” (1914, p. 36). Thus, we should respect the child’s own nature, its individuality, by not demanding what it cannot give. “The adult must adjust to the demands of the child’s nature”, not the opposite, concludes the same author (1925, p. 107). António Sérgio, another great reference of the Portuguese New Education, expressed the same opinion by considering that “the life of school children should be the one of a child” (s/d, p. 28). Secondly, one must consider and respect the natural and spontaneous development of the child. Curriculum and teaching methods should, therefore, try to respond to the “natural tendencies” and “psychological needs of the students” (Faria de Vasconcelos 1921, p. 14). To make this possible, it is necessary to begin by getting to know the “child’s psychology”, formulating the stages of its development and identifying the laws that produce it (Lima 1914, p. 32). Thirdly, according to António Sérgio, education should have as a starting point “the spontaneous interests of the child”, what is significant for the child (s/d, p. 27). Finally, it is necessary to respect the child’s freedom and try to contribute to its happiness. In line with the appeal of Henriques Pires Monteiro: “It is indispensable to create the cult of the child” (1916, p. 327). Adolfo Lima reaffirms this idea by using one of the slogans popularized by New Education: “Let the twentieth century be the century of the child” (1914, p. 38). However, some authors express their awareness of the need to moderate the underlying idealism of such kind of proclamations and to relativize the more radical child-centred education. This is the case of Faria de Vasconcelos when he specifies that the child’s interests “are mobile and transitory”, corresponding to its “deepest needs”, meaning the teaching-learning process should contribute to the gradual emergence of new interests, needs, skills and tastes (1921, p. 13).

7. One of the most persistent criticism made by educational reformers of the beginning of the twentieth century to what is considered traditional education is, as we have seen, the fact that it is an abstract, verbal and bookish education. Alternatively, a more practical and tangible education is proposed, which thus sought to meet the features of the child’s psychology, regarded as “essentially concrete”. This is the opinion expressed by Adolfo Lima: “What interests the child, what makes education appealing, wanted and loved are the concrete facts the child sees, observes, the objects in which it touches and examines, composes and decomposes, making concrete experiments and life applicable demonstrations” (1916, p. 25).

According to João de Barros, the main ideologist of the republican pedagogy of the first decades of the twentieth century, “The child is unable to theorize, to abstract”, therefore, abstractions should be set aside as a starting point for teaching (1908, p. 131). The senses should thus be privileged, because the child should be able to see and touch objects. The observational capability should be fostered, drawing the child’s attention and curiosity. Sensory experience should be valued. In short, the aim is to implement the so-called intuitive process as a mean for

the child to become aware of the phenomena that surround it. Only then should one head out to generalizations through an “inductive method”. The previously presented assumptions lead to the diffusion of a didactic strategy based on the intuitive process – the “lessons of things” – turned into the great pedagogical “trend” in the transition from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century and which was incorporated by the New Education in its ideology. Adolfo Lima is one of the authors who subscribe to the idea that the “lessons of things” should be the method of excellence in primary teaching: “Primary teaching should have the *lesson of things* as its base and starting point, the simple examination of facts, regardless of the tyranny of words [...]. The *lesson of things* is made by drawing every possible lesson from the direct observation of an object or a phenomenon” (1921, p. 448).

The lessons of things actually represent the materialization of the principles formulated by Spencer, which assumed education should go from concrete to abstract, from simple to complex, from empirical to rational and from undefined to defined. For this purpose, it would be fundamental to have the natural and social environment of the child as a starting point. This was another way to enshrine the principle that the child was in the centre of the teaching process. One starts from what the child knows, from its close surroundings, from what it experiences in the present. From there one advances to the unknown, to the distant, to the past.

Despite being generically defended by the educator of the time, the “intuitive method” and the “lesson of things” evoke some reservations in some of the authors, namely in the aforementioned Paím da Câmara that, with some irony, claims the following: “From everywhere greetings to the advent of the instruction’s intuitive, saviour and regenerator new method are being made [...]. The use and trend sometimes make the words seem strange adventures [...]. The lessons of things have had the same fate as the intended intuitive method: these expressions are randomly used to designate school practices that have only distant relations with them. As with all new things, these lessons became a great word that everyone employs in its own way [...]. One can say that the lessons of things have been having an overall success, whose merit has only been taken by the committed abuses” (1902, p. 17).

In addition to the “trend” effect, it is particularly the ambiguity that comes associated with those expressions that has been criticized. Is the intuition reduced to the sensible intuition or is it more comprehensive? What is the relation between “intuitive method” and “lessons of things”? Could the “lessons of things” be considered a subject like the others? Were they only associated to natural sciences or would they be applicable to all subjects? For which levels of teaching and age groups were they valid? As knowingly noted by Pierre Kahn, the circulation of textbooks of “lessons of things” did not cease to accentuate the problematic nature of this area: “[the] lessons of things are more lessons on things – informative lessons – through things – observation lessons, since they are mainly narrative” (2002, p. 158).

8. For the New Education, the use of a pedagogy of the concrete, inherited from the nineteenth century, is a necessary but insufficient condition. Its follow up by an active attitude towards the reality to be studied becomes indispensable. The implementation of intuitive procedures thus comes naturally associated with the wager on the so-called “active methods”. As a result of the importance that was given to it within the New Education, the activism actually turned out to be some sort of *ex libris* of the movement with implications, for example, in the use of the word “active school”, made popular by Ferrière. For those who favour the active methods, learning is a process where students develop their own knowledge from observations, experiments or researches undertaken by themselves. In this context, the child is regarded as naturally active, requiring the supervision of educator to guide this spontaneous activity. It should thus be led to discover – or, perhaps even better, to rediscover – knowledge based on its own action, on reality, and to solve the assigned problems. This is what Adolfo Lima proposes: “What, however, is essential is that children find and discover by themselves the experiments to be done and the solutions to the given problems [...]. Thus their knowledge is the result of their activity, their work” (1914, p. 85). Although motor skills are valued – which transpires, for example, in the importance given to handicraft – the activity is not limited to this dimension; there is place for the internal activity of the student’s thought. This is surely one of the most current inheritances of New Education preserved in contemporary pedagogy, though one should consider the several meanings assumed by the notion “active methods” and the need to relativize and complexity according to, for example, the several contributions of pedagogical “constructivism”.

9. The perception that a true education had to be a comprehensive education is not a novelty introduced by New Education. It has much older roots, having known successive interpretations. In the Portuguese case, educators connected to the pedagogical renewal have usually manifested themselves in favour of this idea. Adolfo Lima defines it in the following way: “Comprehensive education [...] is an education that intends the development of all functions of the person through the overall knowledge [...]. Not just the intellectual culture, nor just the muscular. Individuals must be fully educated to entirely fulfil their duties and exercise their rights” (1916, pp. 15-16).

The above mentioned ideal resulted in the valorisation of curricular areas that so far have been despised, such as the cases of physical education, educational handicraft and aesthetic education. Activities like the so-called school excursions are equally considered “one of the most powerful and effective means of physical, intellectual and moral culture that school has” (Faria de Vasconcelos 1921, pp. 131-132). However, we can also look at the other side of the question assuming, as some authors have done, a more pessimistic stance. The ideal of comprehensive education can be seen as part of a global intervention project for transforming

the child through education. The strong framework provided by some boarding schools inspired by New Education can be seen as such.

10. Naturalism is another trademark of the pedagogical renewal movement. On the one hand, there is not only the belief in the child's natural kindness, but also especially in the virtues of an education done according to nature, an education that has nature as an object of study and, if possible, occurring in a natural environment. The desire to promote, through education, the bond between the child and mother nature becomes evident, where mother nature is understood as growing life and source of regeneration, which are also symbolized by a child. On the other hand, the integration in nature is filled with educational potential, namely within the moral sphere. After several international experiences, João de Barros proposes the creation of "outdoor school stations". The advantages would simultaneously be hygienic and educational (de Barros s/d, p. 129 and 132). Faria de Vasconcelos, in turn, emphasises the physical and moral advantages of practicing gardening and, with similar purposes, recommends the implementation of pedagogical excursions and promenades. In this case, he also stresses the aesthetic potential of the contact with nature, which can be provided by the adoption of such strategies, namely regarding the "sensible education of the heart" and the "culture of love towards nature" (1921, pp. 131-132). Some of the other developed strategies were, for example, the tree school parties or the practices related with scouting. In an almost pantheistic note, the sacralisation of nature emerges alongside with the process of sacralising the child. Still, we can point out some difficulties on this project due perhaps to the relatively utopian feature of this symbolic return to nature, as recognized by Faria de Vasconcelos: "Evidently, the ideal lies in the fact that work and life should be done outdoors, outside. But, as with all ideals, it is not easy to carry them fully into practice" (*ibid.*, p. 142).

11. The so-called "self-government" was the privileged way to promote the education of the citizens of the future by educators who were linked to New Education and demarked the republican project of scholastic Civic Education, which was considered potentially "indoctrinatory". Faria de Vasconcelos, for example, considers that "the true object of self-government is the student's moral education" (1925, p. 356). The indoctrination of Dewey, Kerschensteiner and Ferrière is, in this regard, well patent in the Portuguese authors. The attribution of the responsibility to educate citizens to the "self-government" presupposes the acceptance of the idea that education is the work of the students themselves. "Moral life – admits Faria de Vasconcelos – is not taught [...]. It is acquired, conquered by doing, by experiencing" (1915, p. 206). In other words, it is the assumption of the American "progressive education" thesis, which advocates the concrete living of democratic experiences as a preparation for life in democracy. Paraphrasing Dewey, Adolfo Lima recognizes that "the only process that prepares for life is living one's own

life” (1925, p. 109). School should thus be “the image of life” or, in other words, “a miniature society”, where students exercise the practice of actions that represent the social life of the future adult: “The associations thus organized, reflecting in miniature all kinds of social institutions of the adults, are true social laboratories, where the child and the adolescent experimentally *execute* social life” (ibid., p. 119). Underlying “self-government” was one of the great antinomies of pedagogical modernity, regarding the relation between freedom and discipline, autonomy and control. The renewing proposal aimed at the achievement of discipline through self-discipline, control by self-control, that is, the creation of conditions to reach a “behavioural self-regulation” by children and young people, thus preparing them to become the free and participative citizens necessary to sustain liberal and democratic societies. Although this was a relatively consensual project at the time, some authors do not cease to criticise its eventual hidden agenda. This is the case of Virgílio Santos for whom students’ autonomy within “self-government” would merely be rhetoric. “According to this system, the influence of the master is not suppressed, it is disguised to better be exerted; it is the hidden power of witches and spiritualists. Those elected enforce certain regulations, drafted in an assembly of harlequins, where each one had the freedom to proceed according to the teacher’s will, which was conveyed by invisible strings. This is thus the self-government, sometimes advocated as character-building, but that actually is nothing more than a hoax” (Santos 1917, p. 217).

These arguments clearly anticipate the contemporary criticism, inspired in the theses of Foucault, of the “self-government” idea as the foundation of modernity. However, we believe some balance is necessary, both regarding the appreciation of these ideals and its deconstruction. When reinterpreting, in this respect, the legacy of New Education, we should combine critical detachment, characteristic of the historiographical view, with a yet realistic belief in the transformative potential of education and the possibilities of an education for democratic citizenship.

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This essayistic journey, which intended to be reflexive, was focused on the inheritance of New Education and its contribution for the establishment of a “progressive tradition”, and we end it like we started, that is, emphasising the “modernity” and “actuality” of the set of ideas, beliefs and practices that were systematized and divulged by this plural pedagogical movement and which are now part of our educational “heritage”. As such, they continue to inspire some of our current practices, although we are aware of the need to relativize, contextualize and, especially, deepen and enrich them with other contributions.

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„TRADYCJA INNOWACJI” – KORZENIE I AKTUALNOŚĆ NOWEGO WYCHOWANIA W PORTUGALII

Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu krytyczną refleksję nad drogą, jaką przebył ruch Nowego Wychowania w Portugalii, z uwzględnieniem licznych korzeni i przemian, jakim on podlegał. Autor podejmuje próbę relatywizacji dychotomicznej retoryki leżącej u podstaw dyskursów Nowego Wychowania i usystematyzowania jego najważniejszych idei. Ostatnia część została poświęcona rozważaniom na temat spuścizny Nowego Wychowania. Rozpatrzono w niej te idee i przekonania, które stały się częścią zjawiska, które można określić mianem „progressywnej tradycji edukacji”.

Słowa kluczowe: Nowe Wychowanie, tradycja, innowacja, „tradycja innowacji”.

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