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POPULAR? QUESTÕES QUE ORIENTAM O DEBATE ATUAL

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ARTICLE

**WHERE IS THE INVESTIGATIVE FIELD OF POPULAR EDUCATION HEADING TO?
QUESTIONS THAT GUIDE THE CURRENT DEBATE****BETÂNIA CORDEIRO¹**ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5124-6962>**MARIA CLARA BUENO FISCHER²**ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2289-5282>

ABSTRACT: This article is dedicated to identify and problematize issues involving Popular Education and the State, based on the analysis of researches conducted in the field of Popular Education. The emergence of popular governments in Latin America, from the 2000s on, produces changes in the way the actors of Popular Education relate to the State, presenting new challenges and issues for the subjects that make up this field. Based on this understanding, we carry out an in-depth study of doctoral theses that present analyses focusing on Popular Education and the State, establishing some relationship between them. The research selected works defended between the years 2000 and 2013, in postgraduate programs in education in Brazilian universities, configuring itself as a contribution to a state of the art on the themes in question. This is a theoretical-bibliographical research based on a critical-dialectical theoretical approach. In general, it is possible to state that, in the analyzed studies, the capacity of Popular Education, as a political-pedagogical practice, to contribute to the transformation of capitalist society is the key issue that permeates all debates. The results of the research also show, among other elements, the existence of a dispute of meanings and goals concerning Popular Education; the predominance of the finding of shared responsibilities in the execution or formulation of governmental policies and programs concerning the relationship between Popular Education and the State; the concentration of analyses on the impacts and implications that such sharing brings to social and popular organizations and movements.

Keywords: popular education, state of the art, state

**POR ONDE CAMINHA O CAMPO INVESTIGATIVO DA EDUCAÇÃO POPULAR? QUESTÕES QUE
ORIENTAM O DEBATE ATUAL**

RESUMO: Este artigo se dedica a identificar e a problematizar questões envolvendo a Educação Popular e o Estado, partindo da análise de pesquisas realizadas no campo da Educação Popular. A emergência de governos populares na América Latina, a partir dos anos 2000, produz alterações na forma como os atores da Educação Popular se relacionam com o Estado, apresentando novos desafios e questões para os sujeitos que compõem esse campo. A partir dessa compreensão, realiza-se um estudo aprofundado de teses de doutorado que apresentam análises com foco na Educação Popular e no Estado, estabelecendo alguma relação entre eles. A pesquisa selecionou trabalhos defendidos entre os anos 2000 e 2013, em programas de pós-graduação em educação de universidades brasileiras, configurando-se como uma contribuição a um estado da arte sobre os temas em questão. Trata-se de uma pesquisa teórico-

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bibliográfica fundamentada numa abordagem teórica crítico-dialética. De maneira geral, é possível afirmar que, nos estudos analisados, a capacidade da Educação Popular, enquanto prática político-pedagógica, de contribuir para a transformação da sociedade capitalista é a questão chave que permeia todos os debates. São também resultados da pesquisa, entre outros elementos, a existência de disputa de sentidos e objetivos, no que concerne a Educação Popular; a predominância da constatação de compartilhamento de responsabilidades na execução ou na formulação de políticas e programas governamentais, no que concerne à relação entre a Educação Popular e o Estado; a concentração de análises nos impactos e nas implicações que tais compartilhamentos trazem para organizações e movimentos sociais e populares.

Palavras-chave: educação popular, estado da arte, estado

¿HACIA DÓNDE CAMINA EL CAMPO DE INVESTIGACIÓN DE LA EDUCACIÓN POPULAR? CUESTIONES QUE IMPULSAN EL DEBATE ACTUAL

RESUMEN: Este artículo está dedicado a identificar y problematizar cuestiones relacionadas a la Educación Popular y el Estado, a partir del análisis de investigaciones realizadas en el campo de la Educación Popular. La aparición de gobiernos populares en América Latina, a partir de la década del 2000, produce cambios en la forma con la cual los actores de la Educación Popular se relacionan con el Estado, presentando nuevos desafíos y preguntas para los sujetos que componen este campo. De este punto, se realiza un estudio en profundidad de las tesis doctorales que presentan análisis centrados en la Educación Popular y el Estado, estableciendo alguna relación entre ellos. La investigación seleccionó trabajos defendidos entre los años 2000 y 2013, en programas de posgrado en educación de universidades brasileñas, configurando una contribución a un estado del arte en los temas en cuestión. Es una investigación teórico-bibliográfica basada en un enfoque teórico crítico-dialéctico. En general, en los estudios analizados, la capacidad de la Educación Popular, como práctica político-pedagógica, de contribuir a la transformación de la sociedad capitalista es el tema clave que impregna todos los debates. Son también resultados de la investigación, entre otros, la existencia de una disputa de significados y objetivos con respecto a la Educación Popular; el predominio del hallazgo de responsabilidad compartida en la ejecución o formulación de políticas y programas gubernamentales, en lo que toca a relación entre la Educación Popular y el Estado; la concentración de análisis sobre impactos e implicaciones que dicho intercambio tiene en las organizaciones y en los movimientos sociales y populares.

Palabras clave: educación popular, estado del arte, estado

INTRODUCTION

Popular Education as a political-pedagogical practice has marked the history of the people from Brazil and other Latin American countries. Its path, under permanent construction, occupies researchers, educators, workers, activists, and public administrators.

It was in the 1960s, with a movement led by Paulo Freire, starting in the Brazilian Northeast and spreading throughout Brazil and other countries, that the formulation of a pedagogy concerned with the education of the popular classes began to gain importance. The author's theoretical contributions - which have their most important expression in the work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published for the first time in 1968 - lead Freire to become the main creator and one of the main inspirers of Popular Education, as one of the conceptions of education of the people (PALUDO, 2010).

But it is necessary to emphasize that, if this is a historical landmark in the development of Popular Education, other actors and social events have influenced and corroborated its development over the years. According to Conceição Paludo (2001), the beginning of the Brazilian modernity, marked by strong struggles for the slaves' freedom and by a nascent labor movement hegemonized by socialists, adds, with its theory and practices, elements related, for instance, to the search for decent living conditions or to the affirmation of identities, which will nurture an educational experience with a popular bias.

Raúl Mejía (2009) also helps not to lose sight of the historical aspect of Popular Education. The author states that if Paulo Freire is the "father" of Popular Education, its "grandfather" would be Simón Rodríguez, a Venezuelan educator and philosopher who was a teacher of Simón Bolívar. "It is important to recognize in Popular Education not a practice of now or of the last forty years, but a dynamic that for the last two hundred years has been present in the social web of Latin America" (MEJÍA, 2009, p. 206).

As the years go by, the disputes and tensions that cross Popular Education promote changes in its pedagogical and political perspectives, in its methodological practices, in its actors, but, apparently, there are permanent characteristics that give consistency to Popular Education and make it possible to say that it has not ended with the arrival of the twenty-first century. On the contrary, it was structured as a field of knowledge of its own, established from the south of the planet, characterizing a Latin American pedagogical paradigm marked by identity, history, context and struggle on the continent (MEJÍA, 2013).

Being historical, Popular Education composes the movement of reality, transforming and transforming itself and, thus, challenges its actors, including researchers in this field, to build it while reflecting on it in search of critical praxis. Therefore, this text proposes to analyze the unknowns and tensions that cross the most current debate on Popular Education, as perceived by some of the researchers in the field.

To this end, a research was carried out through which a dialogue was established with doctoral theses defended between 2000 and 2013, in postgraduate programs in Education in Brazilian universities and that had Popular Education and the State as the focus of their analysis. The goal of the research was to make a contribution to the state of knowledge on the themes, covering some of the work in the area. The entrance into the universe of theses was done with the purpose of examining how qualified texts present analyses about Popular Education and the State, and what relationship they establish between them. From this examination, a dialog was held with the works and questions were proposed and hypotheses were raised about this field of knowledge, allowing us to analyze advances and identify challenges. Such analyses are explained in condensed form throughout this text and more details can be found in Cordeiro (2015).

To make a comprehensive state of the art on Popular Education in Brazil is a collective task, and it is still to be accomplished³. It is worth mentioning here the state of the art on Non-school Education of Youth and Adults, coordinated by Sergio Haddad, who analyzed dissertations and thesis in the fields of Education, Social Sciences and Social Service, in the period from 1998 to 2006. The result of this extensive research work, which included 14 researchers, was published as a special dossier in 2009

³ It is also registered the realization of a state of the art on Popular Education restricted to the academic production, theses and dissertations, of the strictosensu post-graduations in Education and in Social Service of the state of Paraíba, in the Northeast of Brazil, between the years 1980 and 2016. This work can be known in Machado, Cavalcante, and Soares (2017).

(HADDAD, 2009)⁴. In this study, non-school education is conceptually referenced by at least five fields of knowledge, including Popular Education (the other four fields are: Continuing Education, Human Rights, Education for Work, and Human Development). For this reason, part of the study, especially the articles by Abbonizio (2009) and Silva and Marques (2009), dialog directly with this contribution.

In their final analysis, the authors comment:

The political situation experienced in the emerging democracies of the southern cone, and in Brazil specifically, may generate research topics on political practices in democracies, limited by the capitalist economy with huge inequalities. Such research would probably appear after 2007, since the experiences of popular governments are too recent for the time of study. Another look could be based on local power. There are experiences of people who, from the end of the 1980s, coming from popular education centers, start to take positions in the management of local power. What can we learn for political education from their practices? What contributions to the reformulation of the theoretical field of popular education have emerged? (SILVA; MARQUES, 2009, p. 29).

The contribution intended to the work that gave rise to this article is inserted, precisely, in this gap identified by the authors, particularly with an analysis of academic productions that address Popular Education practices and its relationship with the State, in Brazil already in the twenty-first century.

METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

The states of the art are bibliographic studies that survey the academic production of a certain space and time that can facilitate the organization of the scientific production and the understanding about the formation of a field of knowledge, its emphases and its gaps. Although recent, the states of the art "have already become essential to understand the breadth of what has been produced" (ROMANOWSKI; ENS, 2006, p. 39) and to enhance the socialization of this production. These are qualitative researches that sometimes make use of quantitative elements as analysis criteria. The multiple associations and the various clippings that can be proposed make the states of the art a process under construction that can be revisited, re-fed, resized, so they do not end in themselves (CORDEIRO, 2015).

For the construction of the research corpus, some methodological choices were made. We analyzed only doctoral theses defended and approved in postgraduate programs in Education at Brazilian universities, between the years 2000 and 2013. The exclusion of dissertations occurred mainly because they, in general, present a first approximation to the theme, while theses are responsible for a more in-depth and conclusive reflection, as was of interest to the research.

As for the time frame, it is justified because this is a very singular moment in the political history of Brazil and Latin America as far as the relationship between the State and Popular Education is concerned. It is in the 1990s that the countries of the continent, in general, and Brazil, in particular, experience a state reform based on neoliberal adjustment policies that implied "the expansion of the private space in the field of social rights and the reduction of public investments in the social area" (MONTAÑO; DURIGUETTO, 2011, p. 244). This historical period is marked, in Brazil, by the performance of the "new civil associativism" (GOHN, 2004, p. 27).

The reform of the State, promoted in the government of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso in the 1990s, foresaw those public policies for education, culture, among others, would only be managed by the State and no longer executed. Part of these policies started to be executed by the members of this new civil association, among them, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which differed from the NGOs operating in the 1980s with their claimant, participative and militant characteristics. The NGOs of the 1990s are "entities more focused on providing services, acting according to projects [...], seeking partnerships with the State and companies in civil society" (GOHN,

⁴ Youth and adult school education was also studied previously by teams coordinated by Sérgio Haddad. Two state-of-the-art studies were carried out covering the intervals between 1986 and 1998 and 1975 and 1985. The most recent study has a chapter dedicated to Popular Education (HADDAD, 2000).

2004, p. 27). This service provision also happens in the fields of education and Popular Education, leading the latter to political and pedagogical dislocations.

In the 2000s, in Latin America, there is the rise of "popular-democratic" governments (Hugo Chávez, in Venezuela; Evo Morales, in Bolívia; Rafael Correia, in Ecuador, for example) (MONTAÑO; DURIGUETTO, 2011) and the election, in Brazil, of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, inaugurating a historical moment that also generates changes in the relations between social actors and the political-institutional field.

Based on this context, in which the forms of relationship between Popular Education and the State change, the time frame of the analysis was defined. The option to research theses defended after the 2000s indicated the possibility that some of them could even contemplate this historical moment.

The decision to work only with research produced in Brazilian universities - despite the strength of the debate on Popular Education in other Latin American countries - was made because this is a field of knowledge in which Brazil has a sufficiently robust praxis to generate important analyses.

The theses analyzed were selected from the database of the Biblioteca Digital Nacional de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD)⁵ (free translation: National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations). First, the descriptor "Popular Education" was used in the indexation fields: title, keywords, and abstract. Then, the result was combined with the following descriptors in the same fields: popular participation, popular power, democracy, political participation, social control, civil society, NGOs, social movement, popular movement, and public policies - identified from the literature review as terms that cross the debate that takes place in the arena mediated by Popular Education and the State.

Thus, 13 possible theses were found to be analyzed. The first approach to the material indicated that two of them had not been defended in graduate programs in Education. Another thesis was eliminated because it did not include the Popular Education field of knowledge, despite having the term "Popular Education" in its abstract. Another one was excluded because it was difficult to find the full text, and another one, because it was not within the field of interest of the research. Eight eligible works remained, six of which were analyzed.

The theses were read in their entirety and were categorized in an analysis table, from nine operational categories (MINAYO, 2013) - "Conception of State", "Conception of Popular Education", "Relationship between Popular Education and State", "Theoretical-Methodological Approach Used", "Subjects Investigated", "Methodological Design", "Main Authors", "Subject Participation", and "Main Conclusions" - and two empirical categories (MINAYO, 2013) - "Explicit Approach" and "Implicit Approach". They were analyzed using Content Analysis (BARDIN, 2011; FRANCO, 2008) and the "theme" (FRANCO, 2008) as the unit of record. The theme can be a sentence or a set of them on a certain subject of interest to the researcher who performs the content analysis. Besides helping to find objective information in the text, this unit of record also enables the researcher to work with other levels of information.

A thematic question incorporates, with greater or lesser intensity, the personal aspect attributed by the respondent about the meaning of a word and/or about the connotations attributed to a concept. And this, of course, involves not only rational components, but also ideological, affective and emotional ones (FRANCO, 2008, p. 43).

As seen, the universe of texts covered can be considered small in relation to what is produced on Popular Education in the country, but expressive in relation to the number of works identified in the construction of the research corpus. However, it is worth pointing out that, for the purposes of the research carried out, the number of works analyzed was not essential. It was more relevant to reflect, based on the material production available, on how and what has been academically produced about Popular Education and its relationship with the State. It was about seeking how the singularity of each research is built on the universality of the field of knowledge of Popular Education and, at the same time, how this universality is materialized in the singularity of the works (OLIVEIRA, 2001), taking into account their historical specificities.

⁵ It is a database created and managed by the Brazilian Institute for Information in Science and Technology (IBICT) and fed, voluntarily, by Brazilian universities and research institutes that deposit the works produced by their students/researchers. It can be accessed at <bdt.d.ibict.br>.

In this way, this work intends to be an aid to researchers who seek to study the current practices of Popular Education that, as singular but historical manifestations, could not be detached from the more general elements that make up the field and that this article tries to elucidate. In the same way, the research to which this text refers is denominated as a contribution to a state of the art, for it not only suggests an analytical path to be followed by other states of the art on the subject, but also presents some conclusive notes that, if they cannot be taken as the majority expression of the Popular Education field, they certainly indicate central elements that constitute the contemporary theoretical debate established in this area of knowledge.

CONCEPTUAL REFERENCES AND ANALYSIS GUIDELINES

Paulo Freire (2006), recognized for his studies and pedagogical militancy, having his gaze set on another society, bet on education as a way to overcome the immobility of the capitalist hegemonic thought. By highlighting in his studies and practices the political dimension of education, Freire nurtured Popular Education with political and pedagogical elements with the potential to transform reality and recreate new forms of power. Beyond a literacy and teaching method, Popular Education became a concept, a means and a tool capable of providing another form of dialogue between the education of people and political action in society. In fact, it is a pedagogy freed from the prison of teaching and returned to learning and action (MEJÍA, 1994).

We resort to Zitkoski (2011, p. 20-21) for a synthesis of what Popular Education⁶ would be. It is a work of grassroots education guided by an analysis of social classes; it is action that aims to politically and socially organize the popular classes; it is the conscious action of workers in defense of their rights; it is an educational process that aims to free men and women from all forms of oppression (social, political, economic, cultural, and ethical); it raises awareness and promotes political participation; it is focused on the critical analysis of the people's reality; it is an education that promotes autonomy; it is based on the socio-cultural level of the students; it is experienced through the students' knowledge, by means of critical dialog; it is articulated to the social movements and may constitute them, in order to potentiate the project of social transformation. Dialog, in the Freirean perspective, widely addressed in educational literature, whose foundations are found in the work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is pointed out as a central element in the constitution of what came to be established as Popular Education.

From this definition, one can highlight two elements that are the basis for the Popular Education journey: the political, social, cultural and economic context in which it takes place and the possibility of transforming it. Popular Education takes place in a defined historical moment, and it could not be otherwise, considering the assumption that its reason is defined by the contestation and resistance to the unjust reality (CARRILLO, 2013), taking place through dialogue and from the experiences of the actors involved in the educational process (FREIRE, 2005).

In Brazil, in the 1960s, the organization of social movements and the questioning of the development project, based on the ideology of national developmentalism (PALUDO, 2001), promote the emergence of important educational experiences that will update the educational proposal executed at that time and give strength to Popular Education in the country. Some of them are: in 1960, the creation of the Popular Culture Movement, in Recife; in 1961, the campaign "De pé no chão também se aprende a ler" (free translation: "You can also learn to read by standing on the ground"), in Natal; also in 1961, the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops created the Base Education Movement; in 1963, the Adult Literacy Experiment using the Paulo Freire System, in Angicos.

Apparently, most of the popular educational experiences that stood out in history in those years were related to the transformation of capitalist society. They were experiences that strove to ensure social, economic and political advances favorable to subaltern classes; they were linked to organized social movements and dealt with collective demands linked to the structural needs of poor people (GOHN, 2013).

At that time, there was support, funding and incentive from the State to carry out activities already crossed by the debates held in the field of Popular Education, but focused on the literacy of the

⁶ For the elaboration of nine items that define Popular Education, Zitkoski uses writings by Carlos Rodrigues Brandão, Paulo Freire, and Raúl Mejía (ZITKOSKI, 2011).

popular classes. An example of this is that, still in 1963, Popular Education was the basis for the implementation of the National Literacy Program (PNA)⁷. Although at that time there was a closer relationship between Popular Education and the State, it was in the social movements that Popular Education deeply rooted, being committed to the working class.

The military coup takes place in Brazil, in April 1964. The authoritarian and arbitrary character of the dictatorship almost totally empties the popular power of dialogue, participation, and intervention in the State. Likewise, the educational proposal that had been developed in the country was hit with full force. The following years were marked by the reorientation of educational policy and by the cooling down of Popular Education's influences.

In turn, the 1980s registered the advance of popular forces with the creation of the Workers' Party (PT), the Central Workers' Union (CUT), the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST), and with the approval of the new Federal Constitution of 1988, which brought in its text advances won by the working class, among them, the compulsory and free elementary education⁸. The strengthening of the popular struggle in this period also reflected on public education. In schools, a popular educational project disputes space with another that marginalized the popular classes and contributed to the maintenance of the prevailing social order⁹.

The 1989 elections marked the dispute between two political projects: one neoliberal and the other popular (PEREIRA; PEREIRA, 2010). In the ballot box, the neoliberal project was victorious with the election of Fernando Collor de Mello. It will continue to be implemented in the country until the beginning of the 21st century. The strength of the neoliberal hegemony, the end of the real socialism, the new information and communication technologies, will shape a scenario characterized by the fragmentation of the working-class identity. Social movements no longer linked to local or national structural demands, but rather to the specific demands of groups are emerging. The fronts of struggle are pulverized, the movements move closer to international organizations and NGOs gain space. The years that followed seem to have been, on the part of social movements, a time of destabilization of their actions and conceptions, of evaluation of the historical moment and of reformulation of strategies (PALUDO, 2001).

For Popular Education, this was a time of revisions, with the debate focusing on refoundation and methodological and strategic reconceptualization, among other fronts. According to Gohn (2013, p. 42), the change operated in the work methodology developed by Popular Education from the 1990s, which went from problem areas to specific thematic areas, "[...] changed the meaning of collective social action. The actions were no longer an external goal to be achieved [...] and became goals that aim to operate changes in the individuals themselves".

With the victory of the PT in the 2002 presidential election, a relative change in the State was inaugurated. The privatizing logic was partially halted, and there was a return to investments and a defense of the quality of public services offered to the population, such as health and education. There is an expansion of the State towards greater popular participation, and there are more consistent practices of dialogue, transparency, and oversight of public resources. Historical leaders and social movement cadres are now occupying government positions and the dispute over society's projects is becoming more heated within political society.

⁷ The project, headed by Paulo Freire, had the goal of teaching literacy to thousands of adults through the creation of 20,000 culture circles, which would take place, at first, in urban areas and later in rural areas.

⁸ Later, in 2009, Article 208 of the Federal Constitution was amended, establishing as a duty of the State the guarantee of "compulsory and free basic education from 4 (four) to 17 (seventeen) years of age, including free education for all those who did not have access to it at the appropriate age" (BRASIL, 1988, s/p).

⁹ This is illustrated, for example, by the administration of the mayor of São Paulo, Luiza Erundina (PT), in 1998. On that occasion, Paulo Freire took over the Municipal Secretariat of Education and began to develop a basic project for a popular public education (GADOTTI; TORRES, 1992) that can be exemplified by the creation of the São Paulo Literacy Movement (MOVA-SP). "By popular public school we mean a school to which everyone has access, democratically administered and with a new quality. [...] this school should be a space for Popular Education and not just the place for the transmission of some knowledge" (GADOTTI; TORRES, 1992, p. 72).

In the field of Popular Education, the emphasis is also on popular participation in public policies and on the interface of educational practices with the "new social movements"¹⁰, from the most diverse areas. In this aspect, we highlight the creation of the Citizen Education Network¹¹ (RECID), starting in 2003, and the publication of the Popular Education Reference Framework for Public Policies (MREP). The MREP is the fruit of a process of popular participation and dialogue between civil society and the State, which begins with the creation of RECID and culminates with its publication by Ordinance No. 11, of May 23, 2014, of the General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic. It recognizes Popular Education as a possibility to qualify popular participation in public policies and as a way to proceed in the formative processes originating, mainly, in the scope of public power. Thus, it aims to "promote a common field of reflection and guidance of practice in the set of initiatives of Social Policies that originate, mainly, in public action and that contemplate the various sectors linked to educational-formative processes of public policies of the Federal Government" (BRASIL, 2014, p. 07).

The consolidation of more progressive governments in municipalities, states and countries of Latin America leads to changes in the relations of public administration with social and popular movements and with Popular Education. The dichotomy present in previous decades between governments and social movements, which perceived the State as an enemy to be faced, ends up giving way to another type of relationship and tension.

If with the establishment of more democratic conjunctures there was an increase in participation, this does not automatically presuppose a "sharing of power" between State and society, in the terms of Evelina Dagnino (2004, p. 205). In the framework of the neoliberal project, "participation" points to the so-called "'solidarity participation' and the emphasis on voluntary work and 'social responsibility', both for individuals and companies".

This type of participation promotes the transfer of social responsibilities and resources from the state to social organizations, giving shape to what has been called a "partnership" between the state and civil society. As Dagnino (2004) observes, under these circumstances, the meaning of civil society (understood as a space of contradiction and struggles for hegemony) has been restricted to designate NGOs, or even the so-called "Third Sector". The "so-called 'third sector' starts from the ideological assumption of a sectoriality social reality; thus, there would be a first, a second and a third sector: the State, the market and the 'civil society'" (MONTAÑO; DURIGUETTO, 2011, p. 305). From a critical perspective, the third sector phenomenon refers to individuals developing public activity to provide answers to social demands - previously the responsibility of the state - from values of local solidarity, volunteerism, self-responsibility and individualization¹².

As far as partnership is concerned, it should be noted that it is not only between the State and NGOs or the "third sector". The struggle of social and popular movements for the concretization of popular power, to expand the State in order to guarantee the conquests of the working classes, to overcome formal democracy, demanding more than just participation in sporadic electoral periods, also produces relations with the State that take place within the framework of partnerships. What we see "is the emergence and spread of a pattern of cooperative relations (which does not necessarily exclude the chance of conflict) between State and civil society organizations" (SILVA; SCHMITT, 2014, p. 98). However, in the advance of the 21st century and markedly from 2011, when the Brazilian economic growth recorded in recent years enters into decline (BOTTO JR, 2016), new challenges are posed and the

¹⁰ According to Brandão (2002, p. 232), the new social movements have as a general rule "a strong individualization of vocations and a strong appeal to a militancy of identities". In the social action of such movements the perspective of class struggle and the need to overcome the capitalist mode of production in order to transform society becomes less central.

¹¹ Recid is "an experience of shared political-pedagogical and administrative-financial management (in network), which occurs in the Brazilian territory, from the articulation between the State and civil society", according to information available on the Paulo Freire Institute's website <<http://www.paulofreire.org/>>. It develops actions that come from the field of Popular Education and are related to the "development of solidarity economy, social control of public policies, popular organization, generation of work and income, defense of all the rights conquered by the population", as stated in the network's website <<http://recid.redelivre.org.br/>>.

¹² The debate on NGOs is not reduced to the debate on the consolidation and expansion of the third sector. They predate it. In an international context, the term is used by the UN in the 1940s to designate entities that carry out humanitarian or public interest projects. In Brazil, from the 1960s on, they emerged as centers of Popular Education and advisory to social movements.

relationship between state and civil society seems, again, to change emphasis. The execution of a moderate neoliberal agenda, progressively tending to extreme neoliberalism led to "a strong political and economic offensive on workers and social movements" (MACIEL, 2012, s/p).

The coup d'état that ended the government of President Dilma Rousseff (PT) (JINKINGS; DORIA; CLETO, 2016) consecrated a victory of the orthodox neoliberal political field, extending the cooling of cooperative relations between the state and, mainly, the social movements and popular sectors of society. Thus, the political history of Brazil and Latin America is once again transformed. Conservative governments assume institutional political power and leftist movements are weakened. This conjuncture has radically changed the relations between social movements and progressive civil society organizations and the State, obviously modifying the nature and the forms of relation between Popular Education and the State.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The six theses analyzed add up to 1,431 pages - an average of 238 pages for each. Five were written by women. The oldest of them was defended in 2005 and the most recent in 2013. There are still two defended in 2009, another in 2007 and another in 2010, showing that there was a certain temporal regularity in the works, with no concentration of production, nor long periods without research carried out in the analyzed interval. Two studies were conducted in universities in the South region of Brazil, both in Rio Grande do Sul (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul and University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos); three in the Southeast region, two in São Paulo (University of São Paulo and State University of Campinas) and one in Minas Gerais (Federal University of Uberlândia); and one in the Northeast region, in the state of Paraíba (Federal University of Paraíba). However, the empirical objects of the research are not necessarily located in the same region as the universities.

All of the studies announce a dialectical approach and four of them are explicit in using dialectical historical materialism as a theoretical and methodological reference. Of the empirical objects investigated, three are NGOs, two are formal education courses - National Program for Education in Agrarian Reform (PRONERA) and Adult Literacy Movement (MOVA) - there is still one research made with residents of a popular neighborhood and one bibliographical study. Regarding the research methodologies, there is an experience systematization, a participant research, a case study and a bibliographical research. Only one of the theses is critical of Popular Education.

The authors and the author of the papers are university professors in Brazil. Only two authors had some kind of direct link, beyond research, with the empirical objects analyzed. The other researchers and the researcher approached their empirical objects for the realization of the thesis.

The main authors that constitute the theoretical references presented in the papers are: Paulo Freire, informing the debate on Popular Education. Vanilda Paiva is the most referenced name on the theme of public school. Antonio Gramsci is the highlight informing the State theme; Pedro Pontual and Danilo Streck are references for the themes of participation and partnership between State and social movements. Finally, Oscar Jara and Carlos Brandão inform the themes of participatory methodologies.

In general, it is possible to state that, in the studies analyzed, the capacity of Popular Education, as a political-pedagogical practice, to contribute to the transformation of capitalist society is the key issue that permeates all debates. The theme of social transformation transits between criticism and support for what can be grouped around the terms: community "action" or "conscience". At one extreme, that of criticism, there is the argument that actions framed in this grouping do not generate results that promote structural changes in society, and that they can often strengthen the capitalist system. At the other extreme, that of support, is the claim that the advancement of community organization minimizes the negative impacts of the capitalist system. In the middle of the road are those who defend the need for structural changes, but who do not lose sight of the urgency of local material demands and the potential for resistance experienced in the territories. Based on these findings, we can point out research and intervention questions for the field of Popular Education: are there Popular Education practices that are capable of interventions in a perspective that structures capitalist society? Where and how are they taking place? Can practices focused on the local conditions of communities contribute to the structural transformation of society? If they can, how do they do it?

However, even among those who reaffirm the commitment of Popular Education to social transformation there is the understanding that, at the present historical moment, there is no clear indication of a political project capable of presenting an alternative to the hegemonic project of society. The development of a common agenda that overcomes the fragmentation of Popular Education practices and points to the construction of a hegemonic popular project seems to be one of the great open questions for this field of knowledge and social practice.

State: the necessary denaturalization of the concept

In what concerns the conceptions of State, the survey corroborates Morrow and Torres's (2004, p. 33) observation that "Antonio Gramsci's contribution has been central in the work of intellectuals, NGO professionals, teachers and social activists in the context of popular education in Latin America". Only thesis 01 does not refer to Gramsci. But what would explain this adherence to the author and his theories?

Gramsci introduces the concept of an expanded State, which is formed by political society - responsible for coercive domination - and by the so-called civil society - where social groups organize themselves, dispute interests, disseminate values, cultures, ideologies, conquer or preserve hegemony.

Hegemony, in Gramscian theory, "is not equivalent to pure domination, but to social direction based on a certain consensus and acceptance of subaltern sectors (MONTAÑO; DURIGUETTO, 2011, p. 45). For the subaltern classes to conquer hegemony would require an intense preparation of the masses and a new conception of the world.

If individuals have embraced beliefs that reinforce the social order that oppresses them, then they will not automatically disappear when the objective conditions for revolutionary change (i.e. economic crisis) occur. From this perspective, therefore, a crucial aspect of revolutionary strategy had to be the cultural (and in a broader sense, educational) struggle prior to the emergence of a revolutionary crisis (MORROW; TORRES, 2004, p. 34).

The central presence of an educational dimension in Gramsci's theories may signal an explanation for the prominence they have in the researched works. Moreover, between Popular Education and Gramsci it is possible to trace relationships. Although it might have been absent in Paulo Freire's early writings, already in the 1970s Freire's thought and discourse do not separate education from politics. Starting with Marx and going all the way to Gramsci, Freire's writings give more and more space, directly or indirectly, to Gramscian concepts such as education as a process of cultural elevation, the new intellectuals, and the party as an intellectual-collective (SCOCUGLIA, 1999). Gradually and increasingly, Gramsci's theory is informing the field of Popular Education and, possibly, those who approach it.

Although Gramsci is, in most of the theses studied, a theoretical reference for the formulation of a conception of the State, even though the understanding of the State is not the same in all of them, perhaps the most relevant thing to highlight in this study is the fact that some works, even though they have the State as a relevant element in their analysis and discuss its aspects, do not present an explicit definition of the State. This is what happens in two research studies (theses 01 and 03) and, in these cases, it was necessary to search for elements throughout the texts to infer how the authors understand what the State is. In another, the concept is explicit, but not clear (thesis 02).

From the analysis of the theses, we can see a certain "naturalization", in different degrees, of certain concepts - in this case the concept of the State. The concept of State does not escape the fact that "every concept is historically constructed" (MINAYO, 2013, p. 177) and, therefore, dynamic. It can only gain meaning and materiality from a given reality, observing the particularities and aspects that conform it.

Likewise, when a concept is naturalized, one risk is to disregard the social totality, of which the investigated subject is part. According to Ciavatta (2001, p. 123), "in the Marxian sense, totality is a set of articulated facts or the context of an object with its multiple relations or, still, a structured whole that develops and creates itself as the social production of man". Social facts establish relationships among themselves and with the whole, which makes up a dynamic totality. To be concerned with rigorously debugging and analyzing a social totality, understanding and defining its components and their

relations is imperative for the understanding of the movement of the real, in its concreteness (KOSIK, 1976) and a requirement that must be permanently pursued when the objective is to capture the dynamics of the analyzed object, understand it and even transform it.

Popular Education: a dispute over meanings and projects

There are, in the works studied, differences regarding the conceptualization of Popular Education. Four great tendencies to understand what Popular Education is can be identified in the theses¹³: 1) one that relates Popular Education to local organization and community awareness processes, with no class perspective; 2) one that defines Popular Education as educational experiences that took place between the 1950s and the 1960s and had the purpose of adjusting the working class to a nation project; 3) one that frames Popular Education as non-formal education; and 4) one that understands Popular Education as a pedagogical practice that reaches the twenty-first century and has a political and reality transformation dimension.

The wide divergence of conceptualization found may indicate that there is a dispute of meanings and projects within the field that has been commonly called Popular Education. Admitting the possibility of such dispute, it could be relevant that researchers interested in the theme pay attention to it and try to reflect about what they are understanding as Popular Education in the contexts of their investigations. And, yet, if such disputes of meaning occur in the academic field, it is possible to conjecture that they also occur within the social movements and organizations that develop Popular Education activities. It is not possible, within the limits of this work, to advance towards the confirmation of this hypothesis. It is a sign that it can be explored in other studies.

The theses also dealt, in different degrees, with approaching and understanding the historical process through which Popular Education goes through - an imperative need for research, since it is not possible to talk about Popular Education as an abstract, generic, and applicable concept to any context. Only thesis 01 does not register the processes and issues that permeate the subjects of Popular Education from the 1990s until today - the so-called refoundation of Popular Education. Thesis 06, on its turn, makes the historical debate in an indirect way, by retrieving the history of the empirical object it is analyzing. In quite different degrees, the other works discuss the refoundation of Popular Education.

Theses 02 and 04 - which studied MOVA and PRONERA courses - draw attention to this aspect. The refoundation experienced by Popular Education is not central in either of the two works. They refer to this moment synthetically and slightly, but it is worth mentioning that both are the only ones that register some kind of resistance to a supposed weakening of Popular Education, regarding its goal of contributing to the radical transformation of society, having as a reference the expansion of the State, democracy, and the constitution of popular power. Perhaps explaining this approach is the fact that the two theses are the only ones made from a participatory methodology. Different from the other authors, the two researchers are the only ones with a history of social activism related to the research subjects. It seems that the conclusions reached by the works may be related to a type of relationship established between the researcher and the researched subjects. Such hypothesis does not represent a disqualification of the other works, it should be registered, but a distinction of these in relation to those.

Relationship between Popular Education and the State: a bond that impacts both

It is important to clarify that in this text we work with the perspective that the relationship established between civil society and the State is not given within a single, uniform, and permanent pattern. It is admitted that there are different relationships, with different objectives¹⁴. Here, relationship

¹³ The composition of this classification was based on Carlos Brandão (2002) who, when dealing with the course of Popular Education in Brazil, gives clues that help in the understanding of this "polysemic experience". This is not a reproduction of Brandão's classification, but the author's research informs and guides the analysis of the theses.

¹⁴ According to Silva and Moura (2008), there was, in the Brazilian national literature on this relationship, a predominance of an opposing - Manichean and dichotomous - view that placed the State in an authoritarian pole and civil society in a democratic pole. It is a vision that presupposes the existence of a naturally positive link between societal organization and democratization, generally maintaining a stereotypical and homogeneous analysis of civil society.

is not being observed and analyzed as something that occurs between a determined, pre-existing object, with fixed characteristics and that, later, comes into contact with another object. It is understood that the object itself only exists in the dialectical relation with the other "constituting itself in what it is, from this relation" (SILVA, 2006, p. 160).

We begin by observing that none of the theses situates the relationship between Popular Education and the State exclusively in a field of opposition and/or confrontation, or even of collection and/or claims. They all place this relationship in another relational level, closer to partnership or participation.

Theses 02 and 04, which analyzed educational activities planned and executed jointly by civil society and the State - MOVA and PRONERA, respectively - position the relationship between the two elements at the level of partnership. Thesis 02 speaks of a partnership between State and civil society, to the extent that there is "a process of joint construction of wills (objectives) of the State and society in the production of public services, where both share specific responsibilities" (Thesis 02, p. 25). It also records that it is a tense and conflictive process. "It was realized very early on that the state operated with another logic and was not 'prepared' to manage 'in partnership'. The difficulties were enormous to respect, in practice, the autonomy of social groups" (Thesis 02, p. 73).

In turn, thesis 04 does not seem to situate the partnership between Popular Education and the State focusing on the goals of joint action. The term "partnership", in this work, seems to be more related to a process of approximation that would have the purpose of "expanding the State towards the interests of the excluded sectors of society" (Thesis 04, p. 40). This thesis seems to make it more evident that the relationship between civil society and the State alters both and can result in processes that contribute to the construction of a popular hegemony or that strengthen the current project of society.

In a different direction are theses 03 and 06, which analyzed the activities of NGOs, and thesis 05, which carried out a bibliographical study. In the case of these works, the relationship is closer to a "substitution" of the State in the supply of social policies, with a consequent strengthening of the capitalist system¹⁵.

It is noteworthy that thesis 03 deals with the relationship between the two from the point of view of the educators who work in the two NGOs researched - which is a differential in relation to the other works. It is from how they understand Popular Education, how they define and explain their educational practices, how they see the results of their work that the author positions the relationship. Taking into account the vision of the educators interviewed, the author concludes that it is a challenge for NGOs "to carry out an effectively critical popular education" (Thesis 03, p. 206).

In the scope of this text, it is worth asking what kind of conclusion a researcher who would propose to analyze the relationship between Popular Education and the State could reach, having as focus of analysis Popular Education as a pedagogical practice mediating the relationship, with a certain intentionality, with specific strategy and methodology, with defined goals.

Finally, thesis 01 differs from the other theses. It situates the relationship between Popular Education and the State mainly in the field of social participation. The author understands Popular Education as a framework of theoretical and methodological concepts capable of informing a participatory practice. This practice would be characterized by the need for the population that makes up "all social segments" to be consulted (Thesis 01, p. 176), regarding the solution of the community's problems and the "obligation" of the public power "to revert or, at least, mitigate the picture of environmental unhealthiness" (Thesis 01, p. 174).

As seen, the field of Popular Education brings together a diversity of actors and intentionalities. Within its orbit are subscribed the educational activities of NGOs, rural education experiences, community education, union education, and many others. These actors establish, between civil society and the State, partnership relations or sharing of responsibilities in the execution or formulation of public policies and government programs that also present themselves with diverse nature and contents.

These relations were, considering the historical period of the experiences analyzed in the researches, conforming a new pattern of relations between civil society actors and the State. Such

¹⁵ Thesis 05 also adds that during the "Estado Novo" (1937-1945), the relationship of Popular Education with the State would be strategic, in the sense of adapting the working masses to a state project.

relations, as the analysis of the research indicates, would be producing changes in the dynamics of action in both the former and the latter, a conclusion already observed by authors from other fields of knowledge, such as Silva and Schmitt (2014). To observe and analyze these possible implications in social movements, linked to Popular Education and even in the State and in governments seems to be a field that still demands investigation and that gains unquestionable relevance as part of analyses on the recent electoral defeats of social movements and progressive parties. Moreover, understanding how Popular Education, as a political-pedagogical practice, has contributed to the training of social actors who fight for the construction of a popular hegemony, in civil and political societies, in the scope of academic research still deserves investigations.

CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing the theses and considering the affinities among the works, what can be noticed is that Popular Education keeps its historical bases and its original relations, which presuppose social transformation and the liberation of the oppressed (FREIRE, 2005), but that there is an intense dispute of meanings and goals. This dispute seems to highlight the need for organizations and social and popular movements that articulate themselves through Popular Education and that have as their action horizon the overcoming of capitalist society, to permanently and strategically think and rethink their actions.

There is also an approximation between the works regarding the relationship established between Popular Education and the State. None of the theses restricts such relationship to a position of confrontation of the State in relation to the State. All of them point, to some extent, to the existence of a certain degree of sharing of responsibilities in the execution or even in the formulation of government policies and programs, establishing partnerships of different natures and characteristics, as presented above.

The predominance of this type of relationship shapes the emergence and development of a pattern of relations between civil society and the State, with implications for both. The complex scenario that is presented to the movements is that of relating the execution of programs and projects to the dispute of political projects, both in the sphere of civil society and political society.

The six theses studied frame the relationship between Popular Education and the State in analyses that focus on the impacts and implications of those relationships in social movements or organizations. There are not, among the analyzed works, nor in the surveyed bibliography, any investigations that focus on these relations by analyzing, mainly, their implications and their impacts on the State or on the governments. Perhaps there is room for new analyses.

As for the theoretical-methodological approaches of the theses analyzed, all announce that they work with a dialectical approach. The historical-dialectical materialism is the reference of most of them. This data seems relevant to the extent that, in the field of social sciences in Brazil, from the 1990s on, "a broad constellation of post-modern postures takes over the research and teaching environment in universities" (FRIGOTTO, 2001, p. 25). Such indications inform that, in the knowledge field of Popular Education, the conservation of interest in understanding reality as a historical and dynamic totality and subject and object as elements in permanent constitutive relation, not giving in to fragmented, relativistic or evolutionist analyses of reality, has a relevant place.

Finally, it is emphasized that the analyses of the theses, the hypotheses raised here and the questions proposed are - as are the states of the art in general - the fruit of a possible reading of the materials. They should be seen as a proposal for dialogue with other researchers, in an attempt to contribute to the expansion and deepening of studies in the field of Popular Education.

Analyzed Theses

Thesis 01 - Eliana S. de Brito Paixão. Socioenvironmental Reality of Laranjal do Jari/AP: solutions pointed out by residents from the perspective of Popular Education. 2013 - UFU, Uberlândia.

Thesis 02 - Maria Alice de Paula Santos. Weaving the MOVA-Brazil Network: its history, its subjects, its actions. 2007 - USP, São Paulo.

Thesis 03 - Aline Maria Batista Machado. Non-Governmental Organizations - NGOs: trajectories, conceptions and practices in Popular Education. 2009 - UFPB, Paraíba.

Thesis 04 - Lucineide Barros Medeiros. Partnership and dissensus in rural education: marks and challenges in the MST's struggle. 2010 - Unisinos, São Leopoldo.

Thesis 05 - Luciana Pedrosa Marcassa. Movements and ideas on Community Education in Brazil: philosophical foundations and historical developments in the twentieth century. 2009 - Unicamp, Campinas.

Thesis 06 - Dilenio Dustan Lucas de Souza. Non-Governmental Organizations: a case study of the Federação de Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional (FASE). 2005 - UFRGS, Porto Alegre.

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