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WRITINGS AND REPRESENTATIONS OF EDUCATION IN PORTUGUESE AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

Beyond the analysis of educational processes present in the Luso-American society during the so-called *Ancien Régime*, it is necessary to focus on then current conceptions of education, and its appropriation by different walks of life in that society. On the Administrative, ecclesiastical, and legal fields, there was significant production of writing and, within it, representations of education characterized by its links with the most influential European intellectual production at the time, but also by the interposition of cultural environments in different parts of Portuguese America and the experiences of subjects in these regions. The objective of this work is the study of such representations of education by analyzing the writings present in the above pointed fields, in situations where the use of education—whatever its form—emerged as a solution to the problems present in the process of inserting America into the Portuguese Empire's context.

KEY WORDS

History of Education; Writings; Representations; Portuguese America.



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Writings and Representations of Education in Portuguese America¹

Thais Nívia de Lima e Fonseca

INTRODUCTION

It was a quite durable view, in the educational historiography of Brazil, that the colonial society gave little importance to education, reflecting the lack of interest of the Portuguese State in the matter. Derived from an interpretation forged in the first half of the twentieth century, which overrated the role of the religious orders in the educational field and the Republican projects for school education in the country from 1890, this view neglected not only the State's actions on school education but also other education modalities present in colonial society between the sixteenth and the first two decades of the nineteenth century. From the early 2000s on, there were studies that went deeper researching Brazilian and Portuguese archives, began to reveal more complex scenarios involving the actions of the Portuguese Crown promoting and controlling educational activities, but also a significant presence of non-school educational practices, many times independent from the State. The need to overcome outdated views on forms of education present in the *Ancien Régime* society in Portugal and its overseas domains, requires researchers to review the dominant conceptions of education in historiography, turning to the determination of the historicity of these concepts, according to the contexts of its production and circulation.²

From this perspective it is necessary to ask what were the current views on education in the Portuguese American world between the sixteenth and early nineteenth century, when Brazil was part of the Portuguese domains. In other studies³ I've been developing a reflection on this theme from the analysis of sources such as: the work of European thinkers produced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; legislation on education produced by the Portuguese State in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries; educational and catechetical work; administrative documentation produced by the agencies of the central government in Portugal and in the

1 Translation: Daniel Lima.

2 Although this analysis might show some similarities with the methodology proposed by Reinhart Koselleck, this isn't meant for developing a history of the concept of education, as understood by that author (Koselleck, 1992, 1997).

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administrative branches present in America (Denipoti & Fonseca, 2011; Fonseca, 2009). Analyses indicate the main lines of definition of what would be *education* and *instruction* and their roles in that society. Basically following the same movements present in other parts of Europe and its colonial possessions, education was seen as a family and church primarily function, and related to the building of civility, which involved necessarily the formation of a good subject and good Christian.

From authors such as Comenius and La Salle, Locke and Rousseau, along with Portuguese Enlightenment thinkers such as Luis Antonio Verney and Antonio Ribeiro Sanches, education was, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the object of conceptualization efforts in order to support theoretical proposals about what would be the best education. Understood, in general, as the process of training individuals for social interaction, education was defined as a key element in determining the order and social hierarchies, for the maintenance of good morals and for the observance of the religious precepts. Thus, education was also associated with catechesis and indoctrination, indispensable to the formation of individuals for the good of the State and the Church. Some authors differentially highlighted education and instruction, approaching the second one to the process of learning practical skills that would give greater meaning to the social utility of individuals. These views were also present in works of other kinds, such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, manuals of civility and catechism, textbooks for learning the first letters, and also permeate the legislation and the documents produced by the administrative and legal authorities of the State and the Church.

It is important to note that these concepts did not always involve the school institution because, as formation of the individual, education could be developed in almost any social space: the family and the Church in the first place, but also in the learning workshops, civic and religious activities held in public spaces, in arts appreciation, in relations among the various segments of society, including the relations between masters and slaves, between men and women, between the government authorities and the population. The first systematic initiatives of state intervention only began from the second half of the eighteenth century when, moved by the influence of Enlightenment ideas, several European monarchies—including the Portuguese—made legal and administrative reforms in order to make a part of school education become a matter of state. In Portugal this process started during the reign of Joseph I (1750-1777) with the end of the domain of the Society of Jesus in the field of education and the creation and deployment of the *royal schools*, financed and controlled by the state.

In addition to the implementation processes of the royal education and the analysis of its characteristics, it is also important to consider the forms of circulation and appropriation of concepts about *education* and

instruction in Portuguese America, meaning, what representations have been built on them in different walks of life of colonial society, administrative, ecclesiastical, legal fields. The study of these representations has the writing produced in those fields as a remarkable source, expression of situations in which the use of education—whatever its form—emerged as a solution to the existing problems in America's integration process in the context of the Portuguese empire, particularly in the eighteenth century and in regions marked by a more intense urbanization.

Central in these conceptions is the representation of education as the individual's training process for social life and their suitability to the existing order. As an extension of it, education shows itself as an instrument for spreading values and construction of modern civility. From another perspective, education also appears as the result of experience and example to be given by individuals and social groups of the elite of society. These representations of education, according to current thinking at the time, are present in the writings produced in different instances of social life, both in Portugal and in America and are the object of analysis in this article, through the study of some documents.

EDUCATION IN PORTUGUESE AMERICA WRITINGS

Education as a formation process and its consequences, as discussed above, appears in different types of administrative writing on Portuguese America in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and one of the most frequent representations is about its function for the “public good”, which means for the good of the state. Present in royal orders, letters exchanged between officials of the colonial administration, requests and petitions, and other types of documents, this representation of education helped legitimize official decisions. The first documents concerning the reform process carried out by the Portuguese Crown in the educational field presented arguments built around those representations. The *Alvará* of June 28th 1759, which marked the end of the Society of Jesus educational domain in Portugal and its overseas domains brought in its original text, the understanding of the importance of a “culture of science” to “the happiness of monarchies, saving up for them Religion and Justice in its purity and equality” (*Alvará*, 1759, p. 673). We found these references in many other writings emanating from the State, for administrative measures on the so-called *Minor Studies*, intended to justify the



necessity of such measures. Often the same kind of text was repeated in various documents, as found in two 1759 decrees dealing with the integration of royal teachers in the administrative staff of the Portuguese Empire:

hearing the needs of Mercy, which is the education and instruction of Youth, to better qualify them for the service of God, and Mine [the King's], and to make able to contribute to the common good of homeland those who laudably practice to their studies. (*Decreto*, 1759a, pp. 674-675)

In his famous *Recopilação de Noticias Soteropolitanas e Brasilicas*, dated 1802, the Royal Teacher of City of Bahia, Luis dos Santos Vilhena, analyzed the situation of studies in that area and remarked about their importance for the good of the state:

Classes are the seminaries of the most precious riches that any state could have, the richest and righteous mine from where you draw the big men, which no empires, monarchies, republics can stand without; without them the Church falters, the States are endangered, the justice is deserted, disorder, lawlessness walk free; more services does a feather to society one day than thousands of swords in years. (Vilhena, 1802, pp. 162v-163)

Population's claims also generated rich writings on representations of education as a requirement for the public good and to guarantee the monarchical order. Even though they may be seen as rhetorical devices, these representations were based on accepted concepts and legitimized on the role of education and instruction for the maintenance of order, social hierarchies and dominant values. A letter sent to the Crown by the municipal council of Cuiabá village, Capitania of Mato Grosso, in 1782, expressed these views in a clear and straightforward manner:

Your Majesty,

Understanding that the good education of the youth is responsible for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the States and the most appropriate means to achieve the great work of public tranquility, which makes the particular object of the rulers and lords of People. So that coming to sadly lack in the first age the solid principles of religion, being what regulates the hearts of men, and run their practices, by a sad and decisive experience is recognized not being possible to tame and retract the excess of human passions, born from the harmful and

pestilential ignorance. In these (...) rugged circumstances we are suffering by lack of teacher in this village, and its area, to teach the youth; but we expect the remedy to this very sensitive evil shall not delay as soon gets to the Royal Presence of Your Majesty our humble representation founded on the Royal Mercy, and remarkable leniency of Your Majesty that much seeks the good of his subjects. This is why prostrated at Royal Throne Feet we are full of humility, begging, and pleading over and often want Your Majesty to send to this land a teacher of grammar and other of Philosophy, to teach the innocent by their example, the most effective way of achieving temporal happiness and eternal, which is the basis of all true wisdom, and firming by this principle prosperity of the Church, Empire safety, and generally all the good Christian society, and civil: so we get to see the still tender hearts growing respectful worship with your Majesty, veneration and obedience to magistrates and ultimately Justice in its purity, and required equality. This is the poignant reason why we resort to Her Majesty's immediate protection, who wants to help us with two teachers, so we ask, for this Village carries many families of white men we want to have the consolation of seeing their children as yours, serving the Church and the State. (*Carta*, 1782)

Representatives of local government of Cuiabá village cried for something that, at the time, was considered a “right” of the towns that paid a tribute called Literary Benefit, created by the Portuguese Crown in 1771 to finance the royal education. As a taxpayer, the population of Cuiabá demanded the return, that is, the naming of a Royal Professor to give existence to public education in the village. What matters here is the construction of the arguments used by the municipal council in order to legitimize their demand, and at the same time, highlight the policy of the Crown in relation to education. The letter from Cuiabá municipal council does not use the term *education*, but *instruction*, linking to it the same set of elements that, in that context, marked the general definition of education. Although many pedagogical and philosophical works of that time expressed concern in conceptually distinguish between the two terms, it was not uncommon to use both with the same meaning. Some authors, such as Comenius, for example, sought to define education as training for social interaction, while instruction, for him, would be the process of learning about the things of the world needed to “open” to the young's intelligence (Comenius, 2001, p. 175). In addressing the education, Comenius brought attention to its function to prevent that young people were infected by the “corruptions of the world” and that good examples received would allow the “true knowledge of God, of themselves and the multiplicity of things” (Comenius, 2001, pp. 27-28).



These same ideas are present in the document under review. Its noticed that, when requesting a teacher of grammar and another of philosophy, the population of Cuiabá Village gave them in the first place the task of being good examples to the youngster, before they highlight the importance of the subjects that they would teach:

let them teach the innocent by their own example, the most effective way of achieving temporal and eternal happiness, vital to the prosperity of the Church, the safety of the Empire, and generally the good of all Christian and civil society. (*Carta*, 1782)

This perspective, in fact, had clear consistency with the dominant representations about the general purposes of education or the instruction of youngsters, as seen in the first lines of the petition sent to the King:

of good education of the youth, is what the spiritual and temporal welfare of the States depends on, being the most appropriate means to achieve the great work of public tranquility, which is the particular object of the rulers and lords of People. (*Carta*, 1782)

These are concepts that circulated through other writings and expressed the cultural relationship that was built with education and instruction. That's understood, for example, from the text of John Locke in *Some thoughts concerning education* (1692). In it, in addition to favor the education of elites, Locke emphasized the importance of it for the good of the state:

The well educating of their children is so much the duty and concern of parents, and the welfare and prosperity of the nation so much depends on it, that I would have every one lay it seriously to heart; and after having well examin'd and distinguish'd what fancy, custom, or reason advises in the case, set his helping hand to promote everywhere that way of training up youth, with regard to their several conditions, which is the easiest, shortest, and likeliest to produce virtuous, useful, and able men in their distinct callings; tho' that most to be taken care of is the gentleman's calling. For if those of that rank are by their education once set right, they will quickly bring all the rest into order. (Locke, 2007, p. 24)

The *Encyclopédie* also highlighted these functions of education, indicating its order of importance for individuals and for society:

Children who come into the world, must form one day the society in which they will live. Their *education* is thus the most interesting subject, 1) for themselves, whom *education* must fashion such that they will be useful to that society, obtain its esteem, and find in it their well-being; 2) for their families, whom they must support and honor; 3) for the state itself, which must reap the fruits of the good *education* that the citizens that compose it receive. (*Encyclopédie*, 1755, p. 397)

In these two classic and important texts, the collective instance takes central role as the main beneficiary of the education to be given to children and young people, other than themselves, of course. It is noteworthy that we are talking about texts written in cultural contexts marked by Protestantism or the secularism, where public good was related to the order and use to the state. The representations of education found in contexts marked by Catholicism also extended to the Church the actions of education and instruction. That's the case of Portugal and its overseas domains, as shown in the document of the municipal council of Cuiabá village, discussed above, in which education is defined as also being fundamental for the good of the Church and Christian society. In this sense, educating people also meant keeping them in obedience to the Catholic principles and, if possible, to Christianize those still out of it, such as indian people in the case of America. Such objective reinforced the legitimacy of education, whatever its sort, academic or not.

This representation of education as a legitimate instrument of social order and Catholicism spread is also present in the writing produced in the communication between the colonial population and local authorities, or the central government. Even though it was often just an argument, it was based on conceptions and practices inherent in the cultural background of the Iberian monarchies and its overseas domains. In a writing produced by one of the main inhabitants of Paraíba City and addressed to the Secretary of State for the Navy and Overseas of Portugal, this representation was used in an attempt to convince the Crown to provide education for local youth, hampered by the expulsion of the Jesuits and the closing of their schools. In the letter, 1765, Capitão Mor of Paraíba, Jerônimo de Melo e Castro, reported the complaint of the main people of the city, noting that

the total lack of Grammar Masters since the Society of Jesus priests were expelled, has made idleness grow among the youth, in a very serious damage of public utility, and in a short time will reduce everything to a pitiful ignorance, when it's most needed educated men to Christianize the barbarian gentile, which abounds in these hinterlands. (Cópia, 1765, doc. 14)



We see in this document two important aspects, part of the current representations of education and its social functions at that historic moment: on the one hand, the association between lack of education, idleness and social order; on the other, the need for forming educated elites to fulfill their civilizing role. These two issues are important pillars of the construction of accepted representations on education and instruction, particularly as they relate to their role in the set of relations between different social groups. The concern with the elimination of idleness was addressed to subaltern social groups, which would justify a minimum of education for them, learning crafts that would prepare them for work and eventually learning to read and write through the teaching of Christian doctrine, indispensable for the formation of good Christians and good subjects. Therefore, the opinion expressed by Capitão Mor Jerônimo de Melo e Castro, of Paraíba City, was not a particular view of the problem. The civil and ecclesiastical authorities communed this conception about the dangers of idleness to the public order and to the nation's prosperity. It can't be explained otherwise part of the contents received by Luiz Antonio de Mendonça Furtado on taking the role of Governor and General Captain of the Capitania of Minas Gerais, which he held between 1788 and 1797. In the document, the Secretary of State for Navy and Overseas, Martinho de Melo e Castro, detailed orders and tasks that should be put in place by the new Governor, one of which would be to encourage mineral and agricultural production in the region and prevent smuggling. Reminding the importance to encourage the people of Minas Gerais, the Secretary stated that there were no doubts

that the people who make the wealth of states are useful and laborious, and not the idle and loafers, which are the ruin of these States; and with this certainty the first ones deserve to be encouraged and protected, as the second ones must be considered outcasts and outlaws. (*Instrução*, 1844 [1788])

The need pointed out by Capitão Mor of Paraíba, of “educated men to Christianize barbarian gentility” may be related to two issues. On the one hand, the civilization of “gentiles”, meaning the native people, which involved in catechesis for religious indoctrination aimed at their conversion to Catholicism and, sometimes, in teaching mechanical skills and/or the first letters. The writing that discoursed on the need and usefulness of a forming and civilizing education for native people is vast and widely studied by Brazilian historiography. We limit ourselves here to indicate an example of how the representations of education as civilization agent were present in both documents produced by the State and the religious orders involved in

the catechetical process, and by other groups interested in this task. In the Capitania of Minas Gerais, where the religious orders were banned since 1711, we note initiatives of secular priests, whose ideas about the education of native are found in detailed descriptions sent to the Crown. In one of them, Father Francisco da Silva Campos requested a position and resources to stay on the task of educating the native of that region. In his education plan he intended to

employ the skills of each one, the jobs of the native, their Arts teaching, and their crafts, the country's agriculture, and their civilization, all founded on integrity and good faith but conducted to attract the spirits of those barbarians that once scandalized become tameless, when love and charity is always greater than the force of arms. (*Requerimento*, 1897 [1801], p. 688)

On the other hand, that need of “educated men” refers to a widely accepted concept that the elites should take responsibility in the education of people who always tend to imitate “the actions of their greatest” as stated Ribeiro Sanches, inspired by Locke (Sanches, 1922, p. 115). The ability of the colonial elites to serve as an example to the people of America was often called into question, which led many occupants of senior management positions to comment, in different writings, about the harmful consequences of the lack of this type of education.

It's important to highlight that, the fact that the Portuguese Crown had started a process of direct action over education, through the creation of royal schools from 1759 on, did not mean that it was done driven by the belief that people had a “right” to education. This is an idea only developed later, related to schooling processes marked by the influence of the enlightened thinking, especially after the French Revolution (Monteiro, 2005). The expulsion of the Society of Jesus and the closure of their schools aimed, primarily, to remove control of school education from the Jesuits. The royal schools were free for all to attend them, but we can not say there was any explicit encouragement, and it was certainly not considered yet, mandatory schooling. Once the dominant conception of education was training for civility, the learning of knowledge was often understood as a secondary purpose or workup for those who would enter seminaries or university.

But not only the elite could become an example for educating the people. Other segments of society were also called to this task, as the military, the clergy members and, of course, teachers of any quality. Some documents are very clear about this, as the dense Lavradio Marquis Report, Vice King of Rio de Janeiro, made in 1779. Commenting on the use of so-called *Terços Auxiliares* military detachments, the Marquis understood that its organization would



help soldiers and officers to put themselves in the “custom of subordination”, and that for being closer to the people would help compose the chain of obedience examples and respect for the law and the king, without which it would be “impossible to govern with peace and subjection” (*Relatório*, 1779).

Members of the clergy would also fit the educational role, not only as responsible for the spread of the doctrine—through celebrations, sermons, catechisms—but also by examples of personal conduct and fulfilling their ecclesiastical duties. In that same *Instrução* given to the Viscount of Barbacena in 1788, the Secretary Martinho de Melo e Castro highlighted these obligations of the clergy as the first of the seven most important parts of the government of the Capitania of Minas Gerais, “may the clergy and ministers of Church fulfill the obligations that the same Church prescribes them”, and to do so

teach people the precepts of the law they profess themselves, to preach the gospel to them, give them the sacraments and lead them with zeal, disinterestedness, and regular behavior of a good and exemplary pastor of the church, which they are children of. (*Instrução*, 1844 [1788], p. 5)

A lot of abuse done by clergy were reason for complaints of the population and concern for the Crown, especially those related to the excessive tax collection and contributions for the practice of ecclesiastical functions. In addition, it was also a fact that many clerical members got involved in gold leakage through illicit means. Thus, the use of representations of exemplary clergy and good shepherd of his flock, present in these official writings, not only expressed the desirable image for this segment of society but also helped to highlight the misconduct and justify control measures. In the same document analyzed above, the Secretary Melo e Castro ordered the new governor to care for the bishop to control those abuses and report his progress to the Crown, proving to be worthy of the trust of the Queen. The principle of obedience to the ruler was often remembered in official writing, and charged on civilian, military, clergy, occupants of the most varied positions in the colonial administration in its political, legal and military dimensions. This principle strongly marked the representation of power and social hierarchies, and its practice also meant to display exemplary acts that were imbued with pedagogical sense.

The importance of the clergy presence in Portuguese America exceeded its primary functions strictly related to religious activities, which put in evidence the issue of examples to be given in other instances of everyday life, especially in school education. The creation of the royal schools from 1759,

and the consequent establishment of the career of royal teachers–employees” admitted in civil service examination and their salaries paid with the resources of the Crown gathered from taxes–has attracted large numbers of secular priests for employment in these classes, mainly for the teaching of Latin grammar, but also reading and writing. Especially in the latter case, teachers, whether cleric or secular, were required to teach beyond the first few letters, the catechism and Christian doctrine. Their personal and professional conduct were particularly important, as established in the legal and administrative written on the so-called Pombaline reforms of education, and that forced teachers to a certain pattern of behavior.

The 1759 *Alvará*, for example, indicates some of the requirements for admission of teachers to the service: besides the necessary knowledge to exercise the royal teaching, should have “good and approved behavior” (*Alvará*, 1759, p. 677). These would be constant demands on notices that would be published to the fulfillment of the royal teaching jobs and that, during the second half of the eighteenth century, would consolidate the process of supervision and control over the work of teachers. One of the first steps taken soon after the start of the reforms of education by the newly named General Director of Studies, D. Thomaz de Almeida, was the publication of a notice for providing royal lessons of Latin Grammar, Greek and rhetoric. Discussing the criteria for the selection of new teachers, the Director indicated that should be “at the same time in life, and exemplary morals, and science, and known condition” to ensure the success of education that they should develop (*Edital*, 1759, pp. 669–670).

Prioritizing moral qualities of the candidates for royal teachers was consistent with the current concepts of education at the time, as we have indicated in this analysis. In the notice prepared by the Director of Studies they are the first requirements, followed by the specific knowledge of what would be taught, and teacher's background. Their skills for teaching different subjects–reading and writing, Latin grammar, rhetoric, philosophy or Greek–were not underestimated, but without the moral qualities, at least theoretically, the other qualifications would not suffice. There is, however, one aspect that can not fail to be remembered: there was not, at that time, specific processes for teacher training, which attached great importance to the experience and knowledge itself, no matter how it had been acquired. In fact, the process of evaluation of candidates was very flexible, and the experience that could come from the teaching exercise could be considered in case the applicant showed potential qualities.

Some of these situations become clear in the writings about the royal teachers admission processes, and leave us clues about how some of these aspects were part of representations of education and instruction, present in that society. The documents through which the State admitted teachers to the service, often serving their own requests, are fairly representative about



the matter, as the granting of mercy to Domingos Fernandes Barbosa e Torres de Pita Rocha so he would become Royal Teacher of Latin grammar in the Village of Victoria, Capitania of the Espirito Santo. In the document, the candidate's potential was valued on the assumption that the experience to be gained would be worth his approval. The final evaluation reported that

by the Examination notice that reaches out to the Real Presence of Your Majesty, contains the capacity of the suppliant, and by the exercise of the magisterium may soon turn out to be perfect; because those things forgotten in his exam, are easily acquired with very little exercise time. (*Consulta*, 1770)

The concepts and practices of a school type of education were not associated with an educational process itself. Therefore, education could often be represented as the result of specific and isolated actions that endowed the individual with skills competence to exercise any activity, especially the intellectual ones, as seen in the writings produced by the municipal council of the Village of São José, Capitania of Minas Gerais, to attest the competence of the teacher of Latin grammar in that location:

The Presiding Judge and more officers of the Council that we serve according to the law, this year 1800. We certify that the Chair of the first letters of the Village of São José finds itself vacant for more than five years with remarkable loss of its residents, and Joaquim Marques Temudo, legitimate son of Domingos Marques Temudo, attended the class of Latin grammar, in which always distinguished himself well for his advance, as for its commendable conduct; which principles themselves contain necessary circumstances for the mentioned to exercise the employment of the same chair. (*Requerimento*, 1800, Doc. 8)

The presence of educated individuals versed in knowledge that could open them the doors of the royal teaching and other positions in the colonial administration would be undoubtedly useful to State's demands, but would not necessarily guarantee the improvement of the general conditions of public education. Writing on the cultural environment of Pará City, getting to know that location during his scientific expedition, Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira was admired

though many educated men, in all sort of subjects, have been coming to this city, inhabitants haven't been showing any progress. Many have been to the city in the past, a Condamine, one Burneli, a Samuccête, a Gronfel, a Calheiros, a Galussi,

and still reside in the state, in addition to mathematicians and employed engineers in the marquees, one Charmont, a Mardel, and a Wilkeins, and not enough to overthrow ignorance from its throne. The clergy is particularly very little instructed: moral theology is explained to them, all founded on Scriptures, but scripture itself is not explained: this is the fruit expected a rootless tree. (Ferreira, 1784)

It does not seem that manual activities were already clearly associated with educational processes, as these were seen as forming the character and conduct, although the mechanical activities were identified as important for the improvement of behaviors to help prevent idleness, always dangerous. I believe it is reasonable to state that the mechanical activities were then more commonly associated with the idea of instruction, focused on the field of practical knowledge, according to the definitions often present in the writings of the time. That would explain why instruction used to be associated with the teaching, and education with the formation, although this was not a general rule, much less a consolidated and definitive notion. But it is suggestive realizing that when teaching was identified as education, it concerned the knowledge of intellectual nature; when it was identified as instruction, it referred, in general, to the practical knowledge, technical and/or mechanical.

In the context of everyday life these distinctions can be found in civil registry, especially *post-mortem* inventory processes and orphan tutoring accounts. When it comes to representations of education that include the teaching of knowledge, the most common referred to the learning of the first letters, for orphans with better economic situation since, in general, it implied the payment of private teachers. As has been said, mentoring accounts are documents rich in such references, as the documents relating to the inventory of Lieutenant Custódio José de Almeida, of the District of Rio das Velhas, Capitania of Minas Gerais, and the mentoring accounts his son José. In the accounts, the tutor hired to teach the orphan in 1796, Captain José da Costa Ferreira, claimed payment of lessons, stating that

the death of Lieutenant Custódio José de Almeida left a minor heir and this Court appointed officer Eulelio Manoel Teixeira to be his tutor, which soon took care of the education, sending him to learn to read and write and the Christian doctrine. The suppliant should have received half gold *pataca* per month, which had its beginning on April 25th and it's already past ten months. That is why the suppliant requires, as the mentor states the truth, the satisfaction of the time expended as well as the shaping of a big coat that made to him for half an octave of gold. The sum would be three octaves of gold. (Conta, 1799, p. 19. Emphasis mine)



This document presents a very clear understanding that the teaching of reading and writing was part of a child or youngster education, especially when there were economic conditions for this. We know that taking care of the education of the orphans was a legal obligation of the tutors, defined in the *Código Filipino*⁴, which explains the significant presence of references to education in registry writings on the mentoring processes. But the important thing for this analysis, is to check what kind of education concept those writings refers to, meaning, what kind of representations of education are present. The Inventory accounts of João Coelho da Silva, a resident of the Parish of Santa Luzia, District of Rio das Velhas, made in 1793, clearly indicate these representations, according to the cases of each of the four children of the deceased. Boys and girls were the object of character forming education, but received different instruction: reading and writing for boys, and manual activities for girls. In the accounts, the tutor Antonio Coelho da Silva responded to inquiries from the Judge of Orphans:

Asked by the Judge about the orphan's condition, Tutor Antonio Coelho da Silva's attorney replied that João was healthy and was at school learning to read and write, and found in the tutor's company, being well treated, care and dress and give proper education.

And being asked about Marianna, the attorney replied that she was healthy, learning to sew and other things a woman need to learn, and could also be found in the tutor's company.

Being asked by the Judge about the orphans Maria and Elena, the attorney replied they were healthy and in the company of the tutor, who was raising and giving them all the good education that is needed to a child of such a young age. (*Inventário*, 1789, fl. 58-59)

In this document education is associated with the household activities, which would be the responsibility of the family or their substitutes/representatives, such as tutors, “care and dress and give proper education”, “give all the good education that is needed to a child of such a young age” are statements that indicates this representation of education, as already discussed, associated to the process of forming of the individual, for their adaptation to life in society, and would involve the transmission of values, behavior standards and the principles of religion. Note that in this writing, the teaching of knowledge—reading and writing, and manual activities—was not defined as education itself. These distinctions are present in other documents of the same nature, sometimes quite clearly, as in the tutoring accounts of orphans of Pedro Rodrigues, from the same District of Rio das

4 Portuguese legal compilation, also valid on overseas domains.

Velhas, in which the tutor stated that “orphans Joachim and Joseph are in the company of their mother in the same house where lived the deceased Pedro Rodrigues, living with good education and teaching” (*Conta de tutoria*, 1772).

But clarity around these conceptual distinctions is only apparent, and can express the common sense, the way most people dealt with the notions of education, instruction and children raising. There are indications that, from a conceptual point of view, there was considerable controversy, such as we find in an interesting document in which a Judge of Orphans in Sabara, Capitania of Minas Gerais had a discussion with the curator of orphans José Gonçalves Chaves, in 1772. At that time the curator José da Rocha Machado had declared in his account that he had not used the property of the orphans to pay for their education, as prescribed by law. His excuse was that education wasn't included in the compulsory expenditure, that would only be feeding, dressing and caring for the health of orphans. This argument was contested by the judge and supported by the law and its interpretations, he stated that, contrary to what the curator said,

by food it's not only understood the eating and drinking but also many more circumstances (...) because where food is given to be “jure sanguinis”⁵, also are the expenses made in teaching and study. (*Conta testamentária*, 1772, fl.100)

The judge's considerations were based on the *Código Filipino*—which established the procedures for the raising and education of orphans according to their “quality and condition” (*Código*, 2004 Liv 1, Tit 88). This meant that tutors and curators would have different obligations towards orphans, according to their origin of birth, beyond feeding, dressing and caring for health. If the orphans were children of farmers or mechanical workers they would be sent to learn the crafts of their fathers; if they had wealthy origin they would be sent to learn to read and write. The Judge of orphans of Sabara, well informed about the legislation and case law, contested the trustee's arguments based not only on the *Código* but also on his commentators. Quoted by Judge, Payva and Pona stated that

The Father is not required at first to send his son to study, because there's no law that makes the father to do so, being the child under his power; if the father willingly sent his son to study the first letters and his son is able to learn most sciences, then the father is required to take care of the necessary expenses, and likewise the tutor. (...) This should apply to everyone, since they are mechanical

5 The expression is *jus sanguinis*, meaning “right of blood”. Source: <http://www.dicionariodelatim.com.br/jus-sanguinis/> (Retrieved 01.10.2016).



man's sons; But when they are the children of farmers, since their father haven't sent them to study, the judge, or guardian noticing the orphan is able to achieve the sciences, should send him to be taught because the farmers are noble men, and greatly privileged of the exercise of such art, and the whole Republic depends on its use, as a source of food for every human creature. (*Addicçoens*, 1761, pp. 163-164)

The late José Gonçalves Chaves, father of the orphans mentioned on the tutoring process, was a merchant and dealer, which put him in a more affluent social group in the region where he lived. According to the law and custom, therefore, his orphans could be sent to learn to read and write, what would be done at the heritage's expense. What matters in this case are the different forms of appropriation of concepts of education, teaching and raising, as were interpreted the laws, and according to the usual practices. As stated by the jurist Payva e Pona, quoted by Judge of orphans, attending studies—whether in school or in private settings—was not required for any segment of the American Portuguese society in the period we are analyzing. And even if that education alternative was more common and even recommended for the most disadvantaged social groups, there was the possibility that children and youngsters from other social backgrounds were sent to studies, if they had skills and/or capacity to do so.

In Portuguese America these possibilities seem to have been quite recurring. We have found significant evidence of this, especially in relation to the more urbanized areas, such as the Capitania of Minas Gerais, privileged place in our research. This effort of analysis on the ways in which the population of these regions appropriated of what we call representations of education, can still add other writings that expressed these appropriations. See, for example, documents that stated relations between portions of the poorest people and different institutions. One of the duties of city councils was to pay for the raising of exposed children who had been abandoned at the doors of churches, houses, or in the *wheels of the exposed*. A significant part of those who were paid to raise these children were women, who often sent to municipal councils their complaints of late payments. To have their complaints accepted, they provided documents indicating the names of the children who they were raising and the conditions they were in, in writings that made clear the presence of all social understandings—and they were also legal—on education and its consequences. Joanna de Souza Teles was one of those women raising exposed children who addressed the municipal council of Sabara village, Capitania of Minas Gerais. Asking for payment, she explained she had with her a boy named Manoel, and

she has been raising him, and educated and currently has him attending the School of First Letters and Music, as it shows in the parish notes and as for the benefit of the same boy, she needs the wages the Senate use to provide, to pay for his garments. (*Contas*, 1805, p. 49)

It's important to consider in the analysis of the production of this writing, the intermediation of the clerk of the council, possibly the most informed person about the formal procedures for forwarding these documents and also on the legal concepts relating to the various dimensions of a child's education, meaning, raising, education and instruction. This brief document is an example of the registration of these understandings. Joanna de Souza Teles explained she was fulfilling these steps, probably since the boy was very young: the raising was legally determined up to three years old; education did not have an established term, but was generally considered up to about twelve or fourteen years old; instruction could start by the age of seven and, as discussed at the beginning of this article, was associated with the acquisition of skills, preferably those that could serve to the person's own maintenance, when old enough to work. In the case of the boy Manoel, under Joanna Teles care, instruction was being organized in two directions: the learning of reading and writing, and music. The latter was, in the Capitania of Minas Gerais, a rather requested activity, considering the relatively busy cultural environment, influenced especially by local religious life.

For other people, opportunity for education depended on obtaining benefits from assistance to the poor, coming from actions and/or institutions linked to charity, such as seminars for poor children, founded by private initiative with the approval of the Portuguese crown. This was the case, still in Minas Gerais, of the Seminary of Vinculo do Jaguará, not a very well-known school at this time, that worked, it seems, between 1807 and 1811⁶. To be accepted as a student, the boy—or his representative—should present an application in which would prove his condition and justify his necessity. Applications sent to Jaguará Seminary have very significant indications of the possibility of a child or young poor receive an education that, at first glance, it would be a privilege of the wealthy groups. In one of these applications, Joaquim José de Araújo asked to be accepted into the seminary, claiming that his father was

a great decadence of goods and poverty, [] with many children, in such a way that still wasn't able to send the supplicant for the education in the first letters or at least assist him with proper clothing, and because the supplicant has no other means to seek the so wanted instruction, asks the mercy of your highness to give

6 About this Seminary, see: Fonseca, 2009.



him the grace granted by His Majesty for the benefit of poverty, admitting him in the seminary to be instructed to least on the first letters, so much needed, and to register it in the appropriate book. (*Requerimento*, 1807b)

In this requirement poverty is attested by the family's difficulty in providing one of the basic items for education, according to the current understanding at the time, as already discussed, namely the fact that it involved food, clothing, and health care for the children and the youngsters. The need for instruction in reading and writing could be seen as an opportunity for future support, for jobs in public or private functions that required this type of skill/knowledge. But the function of the seminary was seen beyond the instruction⁷, also being associated with ideas on education, considering its origins as an assistance institution. However, as we have noticed in other documents, the two definitions were often represented as the same thing. Another application sent to the seminary expressed these two “functions” of the institution, according to the understanding of the priest who testified the need for José Simplicio Guimarães to be admitted to study Latin grammar. According to the priest, the young man was

white, clean blooded, fatherless, very poor, and with good manners, and therefore worthy, fills the circumstances to be admitted, and receive the grace to be educated in Jaguara, which again has created for instruction, youth education. (*Atestado*, 1807)

But in another application, this distinction is ignored, and education is represented covering both directions:

Says Eugenio Pereira Silverio, who lives in this Parish of Santa Luzia, he as supplicant is entirely poor as stated in the affirmation of parish Reverend priest and also loaded with children, and two among them are already in terms of being able to receive proper education, namely Silverio, age of eight, and Felicio, age of six, as attested by the provided birth registry, as your highness will execute the order which approved by the intentions of the institutor of this Vinculo for the benefit of the poor, in whose circumstances the supplicant asks for the mercy of your highness to deign to admit his mentioned children at the Seminary of the first letters in order to be educated. (*Requerimento*, 1807a)

7 The seminary offered the teaching of reading and writing, grammar and Latin.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article is not to determine the existence of precise and definite concepts about education and instruction, but to analyze the production of meanings of these two dimensions and how they were appropriated for different types of writings in the American Portuguese world, between the eighteenth and the first years of the nineteenth century. As analyzed in administrative, ecclesiastical and legal fields, there was significant production of writings and, in it, representations of education characterized by its links with the most influential European intellectual production at that time, but also by the interposition of cultural environments in different parts of Portuguese America and the experiences of the subjects in these regions. This analytical effort is important to help clarify the historicity of a dimension of social life—education—so naturalized in our days, but at other times assumed meanings that do not always correspond to the widespread idea that education is linked necessarily to school institution and that it is, mandatorily, a state's function.

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