

Presentation note

History of Education and Comparative Education: new territories and two contiguous fields revisited

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This first number of *Sísifo* aims to be a sample of the scientific production in History of Education and Comparative Education carried out by the members of the Educational Sciences R&D Unit of the University of Lisbon. All the authors have been asked to provide a work that might elicit, in an impressive way, the lines and structuring paths of up-to-date research or even underway. The challenge was evidence the extent to which these two disciplinary fields have been either subjected to analyses seeking to delimit new educational territories or revisited from the point of view of new theoretical tools capable of unveiling and throwing new lights on educational realities, so far regarded as solidly and consensually interpreted. At a closer look it is obvious that this asset's aim is to provide an overview although taken from particular plans — which means that if there is any coherence among the articles it will be merely due the purpose to write beyond the limits of present state of the art or rewrite, thus believing, as Derrida often noted, that the forthcoming text will impose itself as a whole from a platform that can renew and re-launch a discursive tradition.

This *dossier* symptomatically starts with a text by Justino Magalhães, which from theoretical horizons due to cultural history aims to show how a “research line” particularly related to *textbooks* can lead us to the very process of construction of “new epistemic objects”, in the context of an effervescent historiographic renewal. This way, in the materiality of a *textbook*— unavoidable in school culture at least

from the 19th century onwards —, this author finds a true regulator of culture, memory and collective action. In a text focusing on Bocage, signed by Rogério Fernandes, it can be said that the centre of the narrative is occupied by the still unknown tension game between a tendentially hegemonic school culture and the possibility of a cultural education carried out in opposition to the former — personified by the seventeenth century poet whose literary career seemed to do well without an academic one. In this article a hypothesis is forwarded according to which the process of affirmation of the nation-state seems to impose the principle that the so-called counter-culture phenomena should be viewed as phenomena of a mainly extra school nature.

The field of Comparative Education gathers two works. In the first one, Rui Canário provides a “reflective synthesis” of four challenges that must be faced for an effective “methodological renewal” to take place in this research field, which is supposed to be accomplished by abandoning the meta-narratives built on a nation-state basis. This article is organized around a thesis of causal nature — the processes of “regulation of the education systems” are the result of a vaster phenomenon of “transnational regulation” —, which in turn opens up to a wide discussion transversal not only to the global processes of economic integration but also to the erosion of traditional frontiers, in a context that enables us to find out social change, though in an indistinct way, both at the institutional level and at the level of each individual's professional life cycles.

The text signed by Ana Isabel Madeira also questions the theoretical-methodological work conditions of Comparative Education, although in this case the argument is confined to colonial education in the Portuguese speaking space. It incorporates a range of interpretative contributions aiming at deconstructing an analytical approach still strongly tied up with a “self-referenced” “Eurocentrism”.

School history is another area opening up to new territorialities and interpretations. Luís Alberto Marques Alves seeks to outline the identity of present Instituto Superior de Engenharia do Porto (ISEP), from its most ancient roots onwards. He not only provides us with an institutions’ genealogy but he also goes further. Taking us back to the beginning of the second half of the 18th century makes it possible for us to visualize the emergence and difficult consolidation of the so-called technical reasoning — the limits of the ambiguities and hesitations of Portuguese process of industrialization —, in relation to the field of policy decision-making. Maria João Mogarro also deals with the issue of school culture memory though her concern is mainly assurance and preservation of documental and patrimonial assets. It’s as if the renewal of studies in History of Education would now mostly depend on the conditions of implementation and organization of spaces like these within school institutions. After studies about great educational reforms and policies, researchers tend to believe that a true comprehension of school complexity can only be achieved through triangulation of a wide range of diversified sources. This explains the ever-growing emergence of studies of local history of education, as is the case of Maria Isabel Baptista, who provides

a panoramic synthesis of the parallelism between regal and regimental schools in Trás-os-Montes from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century. Quite rich documental assets have been mobilized to understand the process of construction of a certain homogeneity in school culture not only regarding lesson plans but also didactical and school materials, occurring in a peripheral region during the periods of Enlightened Despotism and Liberalism.

Paulo Guinote devotes his text to the educational actors. He deals particularly with the figure of the school regent in the context of a quick expansion of the educational system during the Estado Novo — which created a network of teaching posts at minimum cost —, but he also tries to take his analysis further into the field of first letters’ teaching practice. And from teachers we then move on into pedagogy. This *dossier* closes with an article by Jorge Ramos do Ó in which he revisits some deeply studied texts and authors — founders of the Educational Sciences from the last quarter of the 19th century onwards —, with the aim to propose a reinterpretation he wishes to place far beyond epistemological discussions: all modern psycho-pedagogy has been historically structured around the principles of self-governing; whenever educational authorities speak of autonomy or responsabilization they do mean discipline, self-regulation. An amplification of the sphere of power within heart and of self-awareness.

The outline of a practice, a handicraft, lies now before the reader.

Translated by Filomena Matos.