Political Education

Towards a European Democracy

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3.1.2. The Democratization of Democracy.
A South European View on European Democracy and Citizenship Education

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1. Introduction

The education of the political and social animal, conceptualized by Aristotle towards the concrete exercise of rights and duties of citizenship in the city-state, represents a topos in the theory of participatory democracy and is also a recurrent thought rooted in the idea of democratic and emancipatory education.

The importance given to the active participation of citizens, especially when the systems of direct democracy were proposed as a counterpart to the theories of representative democracy, led, early on, from Rousseau to John Stuart Mill, to the fact that education towards and by participation was advocated. According to Carole Pateman (1970), the importance conferred to participation by the theories of participatory democracy was not limited to acknowledging its results in relation to the democratizing of the decision-making process and the redistribution of power, but it also underlined the intrinsic value of participation as a process of socialization towards democracy, i.e., it attributed an important educational function to civic participation.

The development of the modern nation-state, the institutionalization of public education and the creation of the school as a specialized educational organization, and also the concepts of compulsory education and universal and free-schooling, brought about more complexity and more formality, not only in the process of political decision-making and civic participation but also in the processes of education and socialization towards democracy.

The conflicts between modernization and democratization, bureaucracy and democracy, centralization of decision-making and democratic decision-making process, rational/technical choice and political choice, represent some of the tensions and dilemmatic situations that have profoundly marked the XXth century. These situations were diagnosed, early on, by instrumental perspectives of democracy, in opposition to the participatory theories, but whose pessimism and disbelief in the value of civic participation has frequently been confirmed in the sphere of political choices and social practice. The writings of J. Schumpeter, R. Michells, or M. Weber, are a good example of this, forcing us to remember, bitterly, their analyses in relation to a concept of democracy limited to the economic sphere and to the competition between leaders, limited to voting citizens seen only as political consumers, subordinated to the "iron law" and the control of bureaucratic structures. Modernity was incapable of accomplishing its most important democratic promises, which is not surprising, if we consider that those promises were never really consensual and even less transparent in terms of emancipatory politics. The "deteriorating democracy", in the words of N. Chomsky (1991), with its ancestral horror of popular participation and of an exercise of citizenship involved in the freeing of all forms of inequality and servitude characterizes, today, an end of a century that celebrates the consumer society, the age of information, the era of robotics, and that appears, simultaneously, confusing and as if it were beyond our capacity to control.

Are these signs of a forthcoming "post modernity"; to use the famous expression by Jean-François Lyotard, or consequences of a "radicalized modernity", as Anthony Giddens (1990) prefers to call it? For better or worse, Giddens's point of view (1990:176) that "we have entered a period of high modernity" calls our attention to the emancipatory potentialities of the new social movements and the invention of new forms of social and cultural organization, and, at the same time, let us identify the renovation and the radicalization of rationalizing, optimizing and neo-taylorizing agendas, in the administration of the public domain.

The political and normative discourses turning on education and schooling, and also the conception and implementation of social policies linked to the crisis of the welfare state, show, today, profound contradictions; they sometimes emphasize, rhetorically, the supreme importance of education for democracy and citizenship in the fight against apathy and alienation of young people and adults and "emphasize the need for a coherent and sustained approach by school education for democratic citizenship" (in the words of the Resolution of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education on "Education for Democracy. Human Rights and Tolerance", Madrid, March, 1994), and sometimes they contradictorily defend the "domestication" of public education (as P. Freire called it, 1972) and the neutrality of school, transforming it into a managerialist agency rationally oriented towards the labour market, towards "the competitive advantage of Nations" (Porter, 1990), towards "economic competition" and "individual learning", and not oriented to social improvement (Drucker, 1993).

The construction of educational systems of the managerial type (Ferguson, 1994), subordinated to the paradigm of the "government by the market" (Self, 1993), based on economic and "public choice" theories, competition, efficiency and effectiveness, is oriented much more towards empowering consumers (market oriented) rather than towards empowering citizens (civically oriented). In this context, the ideals of political education and education for democracy and citizenship are profoundly threatened.

2. Citizens or Customers?
The Ideology of Managerialism in Education

As the ideology of managerialism and the defence of the "management ethos" (as Michael Heseltine called it in G. Britain) were being introduced into the public domain, especially into certain central countries and since the beginning of the 80s, various authors have been analysing and criticizing this political orientation that, meanwhile, seems to have expanded and ignored geographical and cultural boundaries. The crisis of the welfare state represents one of the central ideas and starting points and the defence of its dismantling, in the form in which it was created in various countries following World War II, basically rests on three arguments: the economic costs of welfare, its social consequences (namely, the bureaucratic paternalism that was created) and also the perception that the welfare state was constituted as a locus of power and political resistance.

According to Newman and Clarke (1994:23), the welfare state is seen as having produced "a complex of bureaucratic, professional and political power" which could only be transformed through "new managerist models". This signifies that, beyond the social and economic aspects, this crisis of the welfare state is, essentially, ideologically constructed, even when the economic dimensions are considered dominant. Ian Culpitt (1993:18) is clear in this aspect when he states: "Western governments are no longer ethically driven by the social needs of their citizenry but by the economic imperatives of survival", speaking in reference to "the eclipse of citizenship entitlements and social rights" (ibid., p.1).

If this is true, one can conclude that the XXth century will be characterized, contradictorily, as the century in which "social citizenship" emerged, guaranteeing citizens' rights of economic and social security; of education and health, and simultaneously, as the century that risks ending up putting in doubt and even disavowing the social rights already obtained. The classical triad proposed by T. H. Marshall, with its types of citizenship (civic, political, social), can no longer only be criticized for ignoring the cultural, economic and ecological rights, among others, but also for offering us an evolutionary perspective of the incrementing type that the last decades of this century deny, even in terms of a mere consolidation of social citizenship.
By opting for a strategy of managerialist modernization instead of insisting on the democratic and participatory reinvigoration of the welfare state and the concept of citizenship, the acceptance of new forms of discrimination and social exclusion and the naturalization of a kind of social Darwinism that is bringing about a "second-class citizenship" and a "new underclass" is taking place (Steenbergen, 1994).

As Steenbergen (1994:2) defends, "Citizenship represents the notion of participation in public life (which is broader than political life)"; but it is exactly the relationship of the citizen with the society, rather than his/her relationship with the state, that has been challenged and that has been creating conditions for a return to "a strict political definition of a citizen" (ibid.).

Either through neo-Taylorian perspectives (Lima, 1994) or through "new managerialist" models, social policies and public administration have been the object of processes of rationalization and optimization very similar in ideological terms to those held by Taylorism at the beginning of this century. Besides, the Taylorian ideology is confused with the idea of modernity itself, based on the principle of work division so commended by Adam Smith and on the positivistic defence of "scientific management". In this sense, Taylorian thought survived Taylorism, especially because it rested on the more general ideological frame of liberal capitalism and elitist conceptions of democracy. This type of modernization will signify, in the future, rationalization, optimization, effectiveness, efficiency, progress. The dominance of economic rationality institutes the search for effectiveness on a universal scale, dispensing with history and undervaluing the essential question — effectiveness for what, according to whom, and in whose benefit? — and refusing no other answer except the one of progress and general interest.

Meanwhile, in Education, management discourse is taking over the position once occupied by educational theories and pedagogy, constructing neoliberal narratives that legitimize a new "rational" order based on market ideology, the private sector, economic competitiveness and consumer-oriented management.

Conservative and highly normative organizational theories are called on to support an identification between education and business, organizations and firms, innovation and private management, educational opportunities and educational choice/market, learners and consumers, accountability and total quality control, etc.

The social and economic crisis of the welfare state, also politically constructed, is presented as justification for the cuts in public budgets, for deregulation and liberalization, leaving various sectors of Education, and specially adult and continuing education, to the responsibility of a "civil society" reconceptualized in market terms. The private initiatives are then presented not only as a compensation for the withdrawal of the state and public administration from the field of education, but also as an imperative choice when one is looking for "rational", "effective" and "efficient" solutions. The management literature and discourse, subordinated to business recipes and technocratic agendas, are now conditioning the values of the public domain, of democracy, citizenship, political choice, and Education is only now getting to be well known for its "bureaucratic" and "irrational" character that only management ideologies and styles from the private - business, and for profit-sectors can change, through triumph of the so-called "new public management" (for a critical analysis cf. Ranson and Stewart, 1994). Young and adult learners tend to be conceptualized as customers and consumers whose individual and subjective choices are understood as free, rational, and optimal, and, so, must be respected and must guide the organizational forms, actions and strategies through a process of adaptation (Lima, 1995).

Politics and public policies based on democratic citizenship, collective learning, choice and action, conflict of interests and discussion, participation and emancipation, are associated with modern, traditional and irrational forms of governing education. Consistently, intermittent movements of decentralization/descentralization and regulation/deregulation serve to concentrate and control central power decisions and political choices and, at the same time, decentralising functional, operational and instrumental decisions at the peripheral levels. Autonomy is then regarded as an instrument, a managerialistic technique capable of better articulating the centre with the periphery and, in this way, guaranteeing higher levels of educational performance and quality (Lima and Alfonso, 1995).

The "back to basics" movement in education is also strongly supported by a similar movement in organizational ideologies where neo-Taylorian perspectives appear as hyper-rationalized programmes that will create a new order based on consensual goals and on hegemonic meanings of efficiency, effectiveness and quality (Lima, 1994).

This movement of "business-management" of education, as it has already been called, does not seem to concede any important space for social and moral education, for discussion and for the advocacy of values, adopting an individualistic and limited conception of citizenship that, in certain European countries, has been referred to as "neo-republican citizenship". According to Gunstener (1994: 47), this perspective considers that "Citizenship is learned and confirmed primarily by its exercising, and in the organization of plurality. Family, church, school and other connections are important and possibly indispensable contributions, but in a plural society they can never be the officially designated sites where citizenship is defined and the citizen is formed". Certainly, education for democracy and socialization for citizenship does not begin end in school if, with Twine (1994: 92), we defend that "One of the main investments we can make in our societies to produce citizens who have the opportunity and confidence to debate their views with others". It is also true that citizenship is a social construction that should be defined, according to Bryan Turner (1993: 4), as "a set of practices". In this sense, citizenship is learned socially by exercising or through its actual practice. Fred Twine (1994: 85) states this very clearly when he writes: "[... as the non-material world is socially created, and therefore is continually re-created, many more people should be brought into participating in the process of recreation]. How can one accept, then, that school can assume a neutral position in response to the necessity of educating for participation and can shun the responsibility of constituting itself as a privileged locus of participation for democracy? Not recognizing that school is, above all, an agency of socialization for citizenship would signify going back in time and adopting conceptions of supposed neutrality, grossly confusing social and moral objectives of education with processes of indoctrination or, as Klaassen and Wesselingh (1995: 11) rightly observed, considering that "The social and moral education conception is a monster."

On the contrary, history teaches us that it is the repeated affirmation of school neutrality that, many times in the past, served as a cover for indoctrination.

3. Democratizing Democracy?
Education, the State and Civil Society in Portugal

One of the consequences of the globalization process is linked to the rapidity and range of the phenomena of production and reproduction of political and ideological orientations, apparently independent of the historical and socio-cultural characteristics of each regional or local context. Such normative orientations appear to be apotitical and non-ideological, naturalized as if they were only technical and rational instruments and are legitimized on the basis of universal imperatives of modernization.

In this context, Portugal constitutes no exception. However, if, on the one hand, we encounter political and ideological discourses and orientations similar to those we just finished examining critically, on the other hand, we can see that their implementation is still quite distinct when compared with other European and North American countries and that, eventually, the resultant contradictions are comparatively greater.

Situated on the European "semi-periphery" (Santos, 1985), Portugal has been sociologically characterized as a strong state, a weak market and a simultaneously weak and strong civil society. The Portuguese sociologist, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (1994: 89), states: "[...] the Portuguese civil society is weak, that is, atomized and fragmented, if we judge it by the models and forms of organi-
zation dominant in the central countries. On the contrary, one can conceive that the civil societies of the central countries are weak, when judged by the models and forms of organization with which the Portuguese society is strong”. For Santos (1994: 114), the Portuguese civil society is weak in the organization of the interests and the sphere of citizenship, but it is strong in terms of family structures, networks of solidarity and neighbourliness, as a domestic sphere that demonstrates its capacity for compensating some of the gaps of a welfare state that, twenty years after the democratic revolution of 1974, still finds itself in the construction process, and, at the same time, already in a crisis.

In truth, both the welfare state and the emergence of a civil society forged in a democratic atmosphere present themselves as new creations in a process of construction after a history marked by an authoritarian regime (1926-1974). If it is true that Portugal can summon some experience and democratic thought preceding the “Estado Novo” (the New State), and that political resistance, though not spectacular, was always present, it is also true that twenty years of democratic reinvention is not enough time. Because of this, the process of democratizing the society and the public administration itself (traditionally centralized) shows itself slower and more difficult than the democratization of the political regime and its formal institutions.

The extension of the political dimension and the process of democratization to the social, cultural, domestic, organizational spheres, represents, in this manner, an essential démarche, searching for new forms and new spaces for the practice of citizenship and reinforcing old and new social, associative and popular movements. The strong dimension of the Portuguese civil society is a relational and domestic one that can be developed, amplified and, above all, democratized, if it is shaped with political sense and if it is inscribed in an emancipatory agenda of active citizenship. If it is not, it will be condemned to compensating, unsatisfactorily, a “semi-welfare state” (Santos, 1993: 44) and to deteriorating the effects of the crisis with something that we never really reached in previous times. The specificity of, up to a point, the paradox of the Portuguese situation (in certain cases with similarities in other countries of southern Europe) reside exactly in the occurrence, simultaneously, of consolidation and crisis phenomena that, from the historical, political and social viewpoint, occurred in a deferred form in the central countries.

When the political definition of the problems, and of the solutions, began to use a more global ideological and normative framework as a central reference, whether through their own political choice or whether, also, through the over-determination of the policies of the European Union, a kind of conservative modernization resulted. Having mainly occurred throughout the last decade, this modernization process (understood internally as a “Europeanization”) has had as a consequence that the democratization of the state, and especially of the public administration, and even the empowerment of the civil society in terms of practice of citizenship and of intervention of social movements are the object of multiple contradictions. Also, it is much slower than necessary if we consider the legacy of about fifty years of authoritarian regime.

In this context, the contributions of education, school-related or not, towards the reinforcement of democracy and active citizenship seem to be inestimable. However, the achievements obtained after the 1974 revolution are not only insufficient but also, today, a great many are being questioned or even denied in light of the referred process of managerialist modernization. With the impossibility of analyzing this situation in depth, here, one can just mention the tendencies towards the rationalization of the educational system, the re-centralization of the powers of decision on the part of the administration, the insistence on the discourse of quality in opposition to quantity, the fragmentation of the sector of adult education, the liberalization of higher education and of pre-primary education, the defence of a national school curriculum of the centralized and selective type. The ideas of education for citizenship have not disappeared, it is true, but they are far from being helped along through consistent educational policies. But, especially in a country consolidating democracy, I believe that everything that does not represent a strong political will towards education for the democratization of democracy should be considered insufficient.

Finally, the Portuguese situation seems to be extremely interesting, because it is not alone and isola-

ted in the European Union (and even less so if we consider the future opening to new member-states) from the point of view of the emergent conflicts between the over-determination of the supranational policies and the historical and socio-cultural realities of each nation-state. On the one hand, the contributions of the European Union towards the political and social consolidation of the democratic regimes are not to be depreciated; but, on the other hand, the idea of constructing a “European” and “multinational citizenship” (Meehan, 1993) does not seem achievable through processes of mere addition of national citizenships, even if each of them could be individually considered consolidated and homogeneous. In this way, the construction of the European democracy cannot be based on abstract concepts of a “European citizen” or on a unitary theory of citizenship that, hegemonically, would dispense with and would deny diversity, historical and cultural plurality and the distinct processes and phases of social construction of democracy and citizenship. Not even the transfer of powers of decision of the nation-states to supranational agencies will be sufficient to justify the concept of “European citizenship” because, on the contrary, it seems, to us, that the concept of citizenship will not easily survive estrangement and the displacement of power levels where each concrete citizen participates, locally and regionally, in the concrete political decisions.

least, and cautiously, I believe that criticism of the managerialist and technocratic ideologies which I undertook at this time really justifies the warning and the doubts put by Habermas (1994: 28) about this subject: “The technocratic shape taken by the European Community reinforces doubts whether the normative expectations one associates with the role of the democratic citizen have not actually always been a mere illusion”.

References

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