

ANÍSIO TEIXEIRA'S DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE: CARNEIRO RIBEIRO EDUCATIONAL CENTER

A EXPERIÊNCIA DEMOCRÁTICA DE ANÍSIO TEIXEIRA: O PROJETO DO CENTRO EDUCACIONAL CARNEIRO RIBEIRO

LA EXPERIENCIA DEMOCRÁTICA DE ANÍSIO TEIXEIRA: EL PROYECTO DEL CENTRO EDUCACIONAL CARNEIRO RIBEIRO

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ABSTRACT: Anísio Teixeira was part of the group of Brazilian educators that had dedicated their public lives to designing education in Brazil. Inspired by John Dewey's educational philosophy, Anísio Teixeira based his pedagogical thought on it, expanding and adapting it to the needs of Brazilian society of his time. This article aims to analyze the creation of one of his many projects, the Carneiro Ribeiro Educational Center, an educational center, under the Anisian and Deweyan democratic concept. To this end, this article explores the surface of Dewey's educational thought, with focus on his notion of democracy, and how it influenced Anísio's philosophy, comparing it to Anísio's goals in the creation of the Educational Center in a working class neighborhood, in Salvador/BA, at the end of the 1940s.

KEYWORDS: Anísio Teixeira. Democracy. Democratic education. Centro Educacional Carneiro Ribeiro.

RESUMO: Anísio Teixeira faz parte do grupo de educadores brasileiros que se propuseram a pensar a educação no Brasil e a praticá-la em sua vida pública. Em contato com a filosofia pedagógica de John Dewey, Anísio baseou seu pensamento e expandiu-o, adaptando-o para a realidade e necessidades da sociedade brasileira. O presente artigo tem a finalidade de analisar a criação de um dos seus projetos, o Centro Educacional Carneiro Ribeiro, sob a ótica da democracia presente no pensamento deweyano e anisiano. Para isso, se faz uma breve passagem pela pedagogia de Dewey, adentrando em sua concepção de democracia e como ela influencia sua visão pedagógica e, a partir daí, se compara com os objetivos pretendidos por Anísio com a criação do Centro em bairro operário, de Salvador, no fim da década de 40.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Anísio Teixeira. Democracia. Educação democrática. Centro Educacional Carneiro Ribeiro.

RESUMEN: Anísio Teixeira hace parte del grupo de educadores brasileños que se propusieron a pensar la educación en Brasil y a practicarla en su vida pública. En contacto con la filosofía pedagógica de John Dewey, Anísio Teixeira basó su pensamiento y lo expandió adaptándolo a la realidad y necesidades de la sociedad brasileña. El presente

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artículo tiene la finalidad de analizar la creación de uno de sus proyectos, el Centro Educacional Carneiro Ribeiro, un centro educativo, bajo la óptica de la democracia presente en el pensamiento deweyano y anisiano. Con este fin, hace un breve pasaje por la pedagogía de Dewey, adentrándose en su concepción de democracia y como ella influye su visión pedagógica y la compara con los objetivos pretendidos por Anísio Teixeira con la creación del centro en barrio obrero de Salvador a finales de la década de 40.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Anísio Teixeira. Democracia. Educación democrática. Centro Educacional Carneiro Ribeiro.*

Introduction

In the 120th year after the birth of Anísio Teixeira, his work and his ideas are still very current. Anísio, who dedicated his life to understanding and practicing education in Brazil, saw public schools as an instrument for the sowing and perpetuation of democracy in social life in its broadest sense (MAGOGA; MURARO, 2020).

In a society like ours, traditionally marked by a profound spirit of class and privilege, only the public school will be truly democratic and only it will be able to have a common formation program, without prejudice against certain forms of work essential to democracy (FÁVERO, 2000, p. 179 *apud* TEIXEIRA, 1958, our translation).

It is therefore necessary to educate everyone, regardless of social class. Education is a right, not a privilege. This thought runs through the desire to build quality education. Goes beyond. It serves as a project to build a truly democratic society. The school for Anísio resignifies itself as a project of the desired society, in an ideal that connects students to reality and inserts them into social, civic and community life.

The relevance of Anisian thought for the public school is realized when we look not only at the situation of this school today, but also at the Brazilian society itself, which is unequal in opportunities for its citizens of different classes, races, gender, and other forms of social discrimination (BRASIL, 2020). The relationship between education and democratic society is intrinsic (TEIXEIRA, 1984). Investing in universal, secular and free education is investing in progress.

With that in mind, Anísio starts one of his many daring projects: the Carneiro Ribeiro Education Center, the object of this research and which serves to exemplify his idea of democratizing education. Also known as *Escola Parque* (park school), the Center offered students free and integral education in a peripheral neighborhood of Salvador, putting them in contact with, in addition to traditional disciplines, the arts, music, dance, weaving, tapestry,

sports activities, among many other areas of knowledge (CORDEIRO, 2001, p. 243). *Escola Parque* also inserted the student in a community life and provided him with hygiene and food (NUNES, 2000, p. 12), thus making it possible for the students most in need to remain. Thus, this School, which designed Anísio internationally, is the embodiment of his democratic ideal.

The moment we go deeper into Anísio's conception of democracy and democratic society, we need, in order to fully understand it, to enter John Dewey's philosophical thought, as he makes this author ideas his philosophical bases.

Dewey and democracy

John Dewey (1859–1952) was a prominent American philosopher and educator. Built on the basis of pragmatism, his extensive work rejects exacerbated and excluding dualisms between metaphysical and epistemic concepts, reconstructing them as constitutive elements of a single continuity (HILDEBRAND, 2018). Thus, for Dewey it was impossible to dissociate theory from practice, thought from action, mind from the body, matter from the educational method. Together, they form a whole that, as a whole, must be seen and manipulated. To deny the dichotomy of these elements is to expand them together in concept and context. They redefine themselves. The mind (theory) does not passively observe the world (practice), it observes it, yes, but experiencing it, adapting and innovating (HILDEBRAND, 2018). And the world is not exempt from mind, as it is transformed in its joint experiences. There must be a bridge, not only in connection, but that it itself contains them - theory and practice - whereas when one is transformed, the other is transformed, when you know one, you know the other, that is, they are part of the whole. For Dewey, the method is not distinguished from matter, since that is the way in which experience is processed while this is the object of experience itself, neither method nor matter of experience is distinguished, and, consequently, method of matter (WESTBROOK, 2010, p. 55).

This unity has a significant influence on the educational process. Learning does not take off from the individual-learner. It is only effective, as it is part of their way of life (WESTBROOK, 2010, p. 56) and for this reason it is extremely important to consider one's interest. Now, more easily the student will absorb concepts and practices that are of his interest. Dewey, in this way, follows the line of the schoolchildren of his time by also placing the child at the center of pedagogical practice, but detaches himself from them when he places them in extreme opposition to traditionalists.

“Direction and control” are the magic words of one school; “Freedom and initiative”, those of the other. Law and order are proclaimed on the basis of one; spontaneity is what is sought in the other. Affection is turned here to what is old, to the conservation of what the past has conquered with effort and labor; novelty, change and progress win over all affections. Inertia and routine on the one hand, chaos and anarchy on the other, are the mutual condemnatory accusations. The school that makes the child the center of everything is accused of neglecting the sacred authority of duty; in turn, it attacks in its opponent the suppression of individuality by tyrannical despotism.

Such oppositions are rarely taken to their final logical conclusions. Common sense dislikes the extreme character of these points of view. They remain for the theorists, while, practically, a confused and inconsistent eclecticism is adopted (DEWEY, 2010, p. 72, our translation).

Its pedagogical philosophy must not be understood, however, as a balance between "discipline" and "interest", "control" and "freedom", but rather, and again, as a unity of the whole between these extremes. The individual is not isolated from society, which is also not constituted without individuals. Therefore, in the educational process, both parties must be considered, without pondering them, but uniting them, so that individual interests are stimulated and guided by society's goals for this individual.

Here, the concept of democracy and education for democracy comes to explain this relationship. Democracy as an inherent value of society and education for democracy as a way of perpetuating that value. A democratic society requires an education for democracy, because otherwise it is bound to be fragile in its structures and institutions. Therefore, it is not enough for the individual to be inserted in democracy, but to practice it, to accept it, otherwise his own relationship with democracy would be imposing and, hence, incongruous. This idea makes Dewey believe that the student in his/her experience process would reach the same conclusion, if in contact through education, and for that reason the democratic value should be absorbed by itself, without imposition. It must be a value strong enough to support itself (WESTBROOK, 2010, p. 30).

How to design a school that prepares the individual for democracy? As we have seen, Dewey discusses the impossibility of imposing democracy, or indeed any content about the child/adolescent. If he did, in addition to the clear contradiction with democratic methods, he would also be contradicting himself in his criticism of traditionalists. On the other hand, in an environment of pure freedom, without the slightest control, the historical collective experience of humanity would be disregarded. The daughter-society, as a result of this education, would be unreal (WESTBROOK, 2010, p. 42). To solve this problem, he turns to

the educator, conceiving him in his pedagogy as the conduit that connects the social to the individual.

The concept of democracy is linked not only to the idea of governments constituted under democratic political regimes, but also to the idea that internal relations in that society are fair, free and of equal opportunities to all who constitute it.

In order to have numerous common values, all members of society must have equal opportunities for that mutual give and take. There should be a greater variety of ventures and experiences in which everyone participates. Not being so, the influences that educate some to be masters, would educate others for slaves. And the experience of each party loses its significance when there is no free intertwining of the various activities of life. (DEWEY, 2010, p. 89, our translation).

Still, it is argued that the isolation between plural social groups and different intra-societies and inter-societies is detrimental to their growth, since they are limited to protecting their achievements, sharing experiences and, therefore, making progress.

Every period of expansion in the history of mankind coincided with the performance of factors that tended to eliminate the distance between peoples and classes that used to live in isolation. Even the alleged benefits of wars, when at all real, result from the fact that conflicts between nations at least increase the relations between them and, thus, incidentally, enable them to learn from each other and to expand, that way, their respective horizons (DEWEY, 2010, p. 92, our translation).

On these two pillars, he raises his concept of democracy and extends it to society and, consequently, to the school. His own conception of democracy was one of community spirit (HILDEBRAND, 2018).

Anísio and the influence of Dewey

Anísio Spínola Teixeira (1900 - 1971) was a Brazilian politician, pedagogue and philosopher. Like his contemporary educators, he assumed the task of thinking and practicing Brazilian education at the end of the First Brazilian Republic, inheriting the reform spirit of the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, contrasting, however, in the direction and form proposed by education reformists. Anísio believed that the lack of formation of Brazilians, especially the less fortunate, was due to the omission of the State (NUNES, 2010), and not a symptom of the determinism of social Darwinism.

Upon assuming the post of Inspector General of Education in Salvador, Anísio, who was formed at the Jesuit schools in Caetité and in the capital of Bahia, also graduated from the

College of Law of the University of Rio de Janeiro, goes to the United States in order to expand his pedagogical knowledge, thus qualifying for the position given to him without prior experience. Anísio puts himself in contact with Dewey's work, which gives him philosophical instrumentation to understand, after being contextualized, the social problems that afflicted Bahian and Brazilian education.

Deweyan ideas reverberated in Anísio, who not only made them his bases, but also elaborated them, practiced them in contact with the public administration of education on several occasions in his professional life, modified and adapted them. Dewey was a philosopher who saw education in the real world, but also ideal since he envisions the institution of transformation. Anísio transformed the real world in which he lived. For Nunes (2010, p. 45), Dewey turned to the past. Anísio, however, turned to the future.

The First Republic, the political regime when he was born, was not democratic. Neither was the Estado Novo or all the other regimes that followed until his death, which, even though some predicted the popular vote, were not truly democratic. He would agree, if he was alive, that we are not yet living in this society of ideal democracy, because, despite the universal vote, opportunities are still select for privileged groups. Anísio embraced Dewey's idea of democratic society, absorbing it in his vision and pedagogical practice.

For Anísio (TEIXEIRA, 1984, our translation), democracy is "the most difficult regime of education, the education by which man, all men and all women learn to be free, good and capable". Democracy is not distinguishable from education, a position similar to that of Dewey when he understands that a democratic political regime requires education because it is done with equally democratic citizens.

We were born different and unequal, contrary to what the founders of democracy itself thought. We were born biologically unequal. If democracy can be an ideal for us, a program for the indefinite development of human society itself, it is because it solves the problem of this devastating inequality. By offering everyone equal opportunities to confront the world and society and the struggle for life, democracy flattens native inequalities and creates the healthy environment of emulation in which rich and poor feel united in the same possibilities of destiny and success. This is the social justice par excellence of democracy. Education is, therefore, not only the basis of democracy, but social justice itself (DEWEY, 2010, p. 92, our translation).

Therefore, for Anísio, individuals are born and grow different. Democracy acts as a balance sheet, providing everyone with equal conditions to develop in their interests and in the interests of society.

How, then, to develop democracy in Brazil in a context of predominance of oligarchies, authoritarian governments, where the distance between social classes is abysmal and, consequently, this same scenario is repeated for the educational formation of citizens? First, it would be necessary for the school itself to be democratic, in line with Deweyan values. But just as importantly, the school should be accessible to the entire population. The school, for Anísio, should be public. It is with this thought that he builds his professional life in education.

The Carneiro Ribeiro Educational Center

Anísio was a philosopher and public administrator, student and teacher, theorist and practitioner. He solidified in his personality Dewey's conception of the unity of dualism. He lived and practiced democracy in his actions. He also knew that, in order to effectively make Brazilian society democratic, it was necessary to extend education to all, and that this education be democratic, not only preparing the student for the world, but for the democratic world, which has not been truly lived up to in today's Brazil. It is from this ideal that he conceived this one of his many projects, which serves here more to illustrate his practice than to act in a definitive way.

During his time as Secretary of Education and Health of the State of Bahia, under the government of Otávio Mangabeira, at the inauguration of the Educational Center he spoke:

The beginning that we inaugurate today is extremely modest: it represents only one third of what will become the complete Center. It will cost, not only the seven thousand *contos* that these three school groups cost, but some fifteen thousand more. In addition, it will be a center for only 4,000 of the 40,000 children that we will have to shelter, at least, in public schools in our city. We should have not only this one, but 9 more centers like this one. All of this may seem absurd, however, much more absurd will it be to march towards chaos, disintegration and disappearance. And we are threatened with nothing less. Those who are, like cassettes, announcing and expecting catastrophe and subversion, will build the schools that we have failed to build for the victory of their regime. If ours, the democratic, must survive, we must equip it with the strong and effective educational system that can give it that survival. The inauguration that is being held here today fuels this hope and ambition. I am well aware that ambition is overwhelming, but what measure does democratic survival have? (TEIXEIRA, 1959).

The Carneiro Ribeiro Educational Center (CECR) would be a starting point for other schools to follow it, a project that, when completed, would therefore meet the real demand of the students from Salvador.

Still in his inaugural speech, Anísio defends plural performance in the center's faculty, in order to foster the “intellectual, social, artistic and vocational culture” of the students. The Educational Center was truly a democratic project, as it is public, serves the local community, provides community life and represented an ambitious education project. Education was designed to be inclusive and for this reason it settles in the worker neighborhood of Liberdade, offers students free food, is integral and inserts the student in a formative environment not only for traditional disciplines, but also for the construction of their ideal civic and community. Let us also see part of the opening speech of the Educational Center in which Anísio speaks:

It is against this tendency towards destructive simplification that this Popular Education Center rises. We want to give the primary school its full school day again. We wish to give it its five years of course. And we want to give it its complete program of reading, arithmetic and writing, plus more physical and social sciences, and more industrial arts, drawing, music, dance and physical education. Furthermore, we want the school to educate, form habits, form attitudes, cultivate aspirations, to really prepare children for their civilization - this civilization that is so difficult because it is a technical and industrial civilization and even more difficult and complex because it is in permanent change. And, in addition, we want the school to provide health and food to the child, since it is not possible to educate them in the degree of malnutrition and abandonment in which they live (TEIXEIRA, 1959).

The speech is attentive to the educational need of traditional disciplines ("reading, arithmetic and writing, and more physical and social sciences") but also considers the curricular inclusion of "industrial arts", "drawing", "music", "dance" and "PE". The school prepares the student for community life through the replication of the community in its curriculum, not the one that the students live in - which in itself had already deprived them of these opportunities - but of an ideal, democratic society, idealized by Dewey and Anísio. Let us also see two testimonies given by former students of the Carneiro Ribeiro Educational Center:

Former student I: Anísio Teixeira is a person who made the son of a school attendant, the son of a driver, become a doctor without having to go through educational supplementation courses.

Former student II: I am the youngest of eight children, and if my mother had not found the Center in her life, I would certainly not be in the formation of an educator that I am today, because I would not be able to afford quality study. Because I received a quality study (EDUCAÇÃO, 2007, our translation).

The CECR, therefore, gave an opportunity to those who, without access to it, might have been overlooked by society.

The school had a canteen that prepared the food for all students. Despite being external to the pedagogical process, the students' food security is equally important, since its guarantee is necessary for the complete use of other school activities (EDUCAÇÃO, 2007). The student had also fostered his development in some craft - highlighting the importance given to his interest.

The techniques in which the students are engaged are the following: carton, bookbinding, or simple restoring of books, leather, metal, wooden, modeling, ceramics, basketry, tailoring, cutting and sewing, diverse embroidery, doll and animal making, tapestry and weaving (EDUCAÇÃO, 2007, our translation).

The importance of the School Work Sector designed by Anísio goes beyond the professional instruction given to students. Students also develop motor skills, independence and group cooperation. They learn to share activities. The purpose is to see the love of work flourish in the students; learn to work (EDUCAÇÃO, 2007).

Oriented or free physical activities were also offered in the Recreational Sector; music, dance and theater classes at the Artistic Sector; books for recreational reading, study or research, in the Library (EDUCAÇÃO, 2007).

The community spirit was also present in the Socializing Sector, responsible for “mirroring” social relations, internalizing them to the school social life of the students, who could assume responsibilities and tasks in the institutions built for this purpose: the Bank, the Newspaper, the Radio School, Student club and store. It is therefore responsible for promoting “integration into the school community”, “autonomy”, “initiative”, “responsibility”, “cooperation”, “honesty”, “respect for oneself and others” (EDUCAÇÃO, 2007).

Finally, the school community also received material assistance - for uniforms, books and teaching materials, and medical and dental care. Anísio also foresaw in his student housing project to accommodate 5% of the students, considered homeless. Unfortunately, this area did not materialize (EDUCAÇÃO, 2007).

Final considerations

Anísio had in Dewey a source of inspiration and knowledge to meet the needs of Education, mainly public, in Brazil. Dewey's idea of democracy was absorbed in the thought

of Anísio and practiced in his actions as public administrator of Education in his diverse projects, exemplified by the Carneiro Ribeiro Educational Center, concretization of the democratic anisian ideal. The two pillars of Dewey's democracy, that of ample opportunities for all and that of the reduction of spaces between inter-society and intra-society groups, are present in the school project, since it is public and installed in a working-class neighborhood - therefore, it advocates absorption from popular sectors of the local community, it is integral and encourages the civic education of its students. The Escola Parque provided an opportunity for the poorest people in the Liberdade neighborhood to have contact with a liberating education, preparatory to a truly democratic society.

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