

# Educational Modernity: Representation and Writings<sup>1</sup>

*Edited by Antonio Viñao & Justino Magalhães*

## MODERNITY AND SCHOOL MODERNITIES

Western historiography distinguishes an initial Modernity, which emerged in the medieval transition and lasted until the Enlightenment and the Revolutions in the second half of the eighteenth century. Between the transition of the eighteenth century and the post Second World War reconstitution, a second Modernity surfaced, associated with a political, economic, cultural, educational and aesthetic mainstream and globalisation of the school. For some, Post-Modernity began in the 60s of the twentieth century, however for others this period represented a different Modernity.

This broad timeframe is what shapes the history of education, particularly the school institution, as it is essentially at the root of the combination of studies in this issue of *Sisyphus*. Given that the construction of time is a central concern to the historiographical operation, it is often the object of controversy, although by rule, it tends to prevail over the event, leaning more towards the construction of a sequence of time frames, highlighting them, representing them in developmental frameworks, and drawing out their more profound and longer-lasting solidity. One of the main conceptual strands of the texts that compose this thematic issue is, in fact, the acknowledgement of a very lengthy educational period which takes distinct school modernities into consideration.

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## REPRESENTATION, EDUCATIONAL WRITINGS, MODERNITY

The set of texts published in this issue focus, to varying degrees, on the education-institution as a singularity, as an institution-school, or, in a narrower sense, as institutional schooling. From a more objective perspective, they focus on the school. Within the scope of the theme and its timeframe, the concept of representation provides a plurality of objects, figurations, meanings and forms of communication and appropriation. Representation encompasses both the uniform and the diverse, reordering the historical and pedagogical fabric, language, symbology, theoretical and conceptual framework, intentionality and the nature of the object. In other words, it changes authorship and the ways of symbolising and relating.

The materiality, ethnicity, field of ideas, processes and practices embedded in education and institutional schooling are embodied in materials and artefacts, particularly those incorporating marks of use, which are reconstituted and take on new meaning through ethno-historiographical effort. Beginning with and returning to this *instrumentalia*, Agustín Escolano develops an ethno-history of the school with an underlying reconstitution of the institutional, attributing a (new) meaning of school culture to Western modernity. An ethnographic history, including the ethnography of the school, refers to objects, icons and writings; to voices and oralities. Representation acts in the absence of reality; it takes on meaning through *mimesis*, analogy, interpretation, making it possible to create a narrative. It is a relationship of symbolisation and hermeneutics. There is no canon of modernity, as well argued by Agustín Escolano, however, there are communalities and patterns in the idea of the school, as may be observed in the images he presents. Representation reflects and affects the historical, cultural, social and symbolic framework.

Drawing attention to the polysemy of the concept of modernity, Antonio Viñao and María José Martínez Ruiz-Funes work on an extensive collection of illustrated postcards to show that the concept of modernity also reflects progress and innovation in the field of the symbolic and in the way of communicating. By briefly combining the image and caption, and reserving a space for a short dialogue between the transmitter and receiver, the illustrated postcard has become emblematic of a modernity characterised by progress, the assertiveness of communication and expansion. By preserving a joint, composite and identitary vision, secured by figuration and aesthetic quality, the postcard popularises and publicises, without compromising the selective or even the sublime, in the case of school sublimity. As Antonio Viñao and María José Martínez demonstrate in their broad historical and geographical analysis, the illustrated postcard has served the school in a completely unique manner. The illustrated postcard sheds light upon intentionality and



institutionality as it combines the figurative representation with the message, thus synchronising the timeframe of the institution, the time of transmission, the time of reception and, in the end, the educational horizon. Everything happens as if it were a single act of communication. The illustrated postcard combines figuration, spatiality and temporality, alluding to an educational imagery. It's a representation of education-institution.

Modern school has taken root in written vernacular acculturation. Schooling is unthinkable without reading and writing, their associated teachings, forms of learning, appropriation, use and methods. Through a highly long-term retrospective approach, reaching as far back as typographical mechanisation (which enabled the multiplication of printed matter and didactic means, in favour of a standardisation of the vernacular), when reading was deemed as the ability to deal with a unique text format, up to the 1970s, of being capable and knowing how to get the best out of any kind of text, Anne-Marie Chartier presents an evolution that associates literacy models with reading methods. In her text, Anne-Marie Chartier combines the history of reading with the history of the school. She presents a genealogy and an evolution of reading forms. Reading syllables and words and, in an intensive manner, reading textual situations and small texts characterised the beginning of the first historical phase which formed the basis of written acculturation and inspired reading pedagogy. This initial evolution yielded to the onset of extensive reading. From extensive reading, which was common from the second half of the eighteenth century, up to the generalisation of the principle that to read was to extract information from any kind of text, a common conception of the 1970s, a second evolution was born. Literacy, schooling and reading moved forward in union and became an integral part of schooling. Continuities and rifts may be established by examining the methods, means and aims, as is clear in the practice of extensive reading throughout the eighteenth century.

Arguing against a historiography that has referred to an educational void during the colonial period, Thais Fonseca offers a reconstitution of education in Portuguese America, particularly through the dissemination and circulation of the modern European school model. Educational modernity in Portuguese America corresponds to the circulation of models and manuals and also to a geography of *Cadeiras de Estudos Menores* [Minor Studies Subjects] and *Mestres de Primeiras Letras* [Primary School Teachers]. The demand frequently came from the local population itself, or from the local authorities. These requests reflect a representation of education and teaching as a form of civilisation, Christianisation, social and political order, the formation of elites and prosperity of the nation. Teaching was undertaken by the religious Congregations, but also by individuals and *mestres régios* [schoolmasters]. In the Minas region, the diocesan clergy also played a central role. With the Enlightenment and the standardisation of teaching, the right to education of

the local population was acknowledged. Information on written acculturation and schooling, referred to in terms of appropriation and symbolic representation, has progressively been studied and interpreted through accessible documentation such as testaments and codicils. These studies show that there was an intense demand, namely in the region of Minas, and an association between education and social order, inherent to the local and regional contexts.

The systematic and serial study on the aforementioned schoolmasters enabled Álvaro Antunes to obtain a representation of the specific features and secularising perspective that characterise education and school organisation in the region of Minas Gerais. This singularity is particularly evident in the period between the Pombaline Reform of 1759, which prohibited the Jesuits from teaching, and the proclamation of Independence (1822), namely the Additional Act of 1834, which transferred education to the municipalities. Álvaro Antunes concluded that this period was marked by the nationalisation of education, a feature that was intensified with the establishment of King John VI in Rio de Janeiro. Through characterisation and evaluation, supported by quantitative statistical data and the distribution of teachers, this study reveals that written acculturation and the implementation of the school institution varied from one region to another. It also shows that the body of schoolmasters or teachers, with specific characteristics and entrusted with the implementation of common practices, represented the uniformity and diversity of institutional schooling.

The geography of schooling highlights the fact that the institution accompanied the missional, written acculturation and colonisation. However, in the contemporary period, the times and meaning of territorial occupation had changed, making way for expansion and conflict, generated by the resistance and preservation of the cultures and identity of populations established outside their respective national territories. The study of Alberto Barausse on the Italian colony in Brazilian territory, in the period from the last quarter of the nineteenth century up to the period following the First World War, shows that schooling was used by the immigrants and the Italian government itself as an instrument of “Italianness”. The Italian government established a programme to support the Italian colonies in Brazil, namely by providing Italian manuals. On the other hand, with the advance of Italian fascism, an intensification of Brazilian nationalism, “Brazilianisation”, emerged on the part of the Brazilian authorities.

The representation of education is material, institutional, but above all symbolic. The school institution affirmed itself and evolved as another world. The language issues reflect the convenience of intrinsically symbolising and communicating these worlds; communicating from world to world; in other words, a world within and inside another world. It is here that the metaphor takes on an urgency and acquires a position in educational communication, as



revealed in the text by Alberto Filipe Araújo. The metaphor enables one to symbolise and tell the natural world within the school world, as it also assures that the school world acquires verisimilitude and meaning when symbolised and told in natural language. By using agricultural metaphors to symbolically represent the contents, gestures and ethics, and to reify the teacher-pupil relationship, resorting to the gardener and plant interaction, Célestin Freinet not only granted intelligibility to pedagogy, but also explored a supply instrument. A context of approximation and mobilisation was created and intentionality was fostered. An appeal to the agricultural universe, immemorial in human history, was also a rescue of the institutional component that characterises education and was important to transfer to the school.

The school institution consolidated elementary schooling, however it was in secondary education that schooling became converted into comprehensive education, representative of the future. Higher Education was also progressively assimilated by institutional schooling and benefited from educational modernity. It was in the context of University Education that the dialectic among internationalisation, nationalism, scientific and cultural progress, essential to political diplomacy and economic and technical development, became indispensable to the formation of contemporary elites and was transformed in representation of institutional schooling. Antonia María Luna briefly presents the historical confluence in Paris of the foundation of the League of Nations with the construction of *la Cité Universitaire de Paris*, immediately involving dozens of nations. The implementation of the *Colegio de España* [Spanish School] occurred at this same conjuncture and was built as a representation of the Spanish identity abroad. Bearing architectural configurations, habitats and nationalistic symbologies, the *Cité Universitaire de Paris*, whose project was idealised and constructed at the time of the emergence of the League of Nations, and prevailed, even after the failure of the latter, represented the implantation of another world for worldwide elites, and did justice to the utopia of Mercier in *L'An 2440*.

From culture and canon to boarding school, from the small school and intensive course to a comprehensive and continued curriculum (encompassing primary school, secondary education and, finally, higher education) the institution-education configured the institution-school and took institutional schooling as its content, means, process, weighting factor and future in the school-society relationship. The lengthy educational modernity consisted of school modernisations. The institution and the writing of education underwent changes, expansion and adjustments. Indeed, it is my aim to address this complexity and history in the last of this set of texts. History eventually and finally emerges to bring intelligibility and consistency; to prolong time up to the limit of what is historically manageable; to bring historicity and educability closer together. The school institution may have shaped the education-institution, but it was institutional schooling that forced the school to evolve.

Educational writing, which is essentially pedagogical, incorporated imagery and fantasy, but it also adapted to the statistical, metric and didactic.

## HISTORY OF EDUCATION AND INSTITUTIONAL SCHOOL WRITINGS

The studies published herein, which focus on the representation and writings of Educational Modernity, have recreated the historical operation, making it open to interdisciplinarity, flexibilising perspectives, intersecting sources, noting and interpreting different representations, establishing a meaning, constructing time, and writing a dense, representative and meaningful narrative. New perspectives on educational and school modernity have emerged from such labour, guided by a historiographic epistemology. A reconstitution of institutional schooling has been obtained, represented by different symbologies: working in distinct times and geographies; reflected in material, iconographic and written configurations; interpreted and narrated in a diversity of ways. In this joint cartography and narrative confluence, convergences and communalities may be observed, however each study contains its own theme, an authorship and in its own unique way has constituted an innovative study.

I truly believe that the Journal *Sisyphus* has been enriched by this edition of studies. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the *Sisyphus* Committee for having entrusted me with this challenge. However, I wish to show my particular appreciation of the authors who, despite their prestigious standing and constant invitations to join other challenges, gave priority to my request, converging through a structured perspective, and to whom I am extremely grateful.

Nevertheless, this certainly would not have been the case if Professor Antonio Viñao had not accepted the role as external editor, and whose collaboration is reflected in his supervision and advice, all performed with the mastery and rare knowledge that set him apart. To him I wish to express my sincere gratitude.

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