

The two dichotomies of agricultural education in Brazil (1930-1960)

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ABSTRACT

(The two dichotomies of agricultural education in Brazil, 1930-1960). The debate over rural education in Brazil reached a peak in the 1920's. On one hand was a group that defended literacy training for rural workers and on the other one that emphasized vocational training. Between the 1930's and 1950's, this controversy involved innumerable State agencies. The post-World War II context facilitated ties between Brazil and the United States. From this arose a group of "cooperation" treaties, responsible not only for consolidation of the "ruralizing" vector in agricultural education, but also for its redefinition, transmuting its educational dimension into "technical assistance". In this realm, "agricultural education" in Brazil consolidated technically oriented discourses and practices that denied the existence of social conflicts in the countryside and consecrated a subaltern identity for rural workers.

Keywords: Agriculture, rural education, Brazil-US, rural extension.

Introduction

The educational system in class society is marked by duality and an asymmetrical expression of social relations and power. This is sharpened under the aegis of capitalism and has assumed an extremely painful character throughout Brazilian history. While Brazilian education experienced substantial changes and became more complex in proportion to the country's general modernization, the dual nature of the system remained a basic characteristic, reflecting the permanent interests of capitalist accumulation. Agricultural education grew in importance as one of the best manifestations of this dualism, expressing not only the polarization between manual and "intellectual" labor but also an antagonism between two political agencies: the Ministries of Agriculture and Education, particularly in the period from 1930-1950.

Nevertheless, the specialized historiography – which is limited in scope and not very "historiographical" – does not recognize the importance of this duality and its relationship with the social division of labor in capitalist development. Emphasis is nearly always given to either the extremely contemporary initiatives, or only one modality of rural education is mentioned, the "origin" of which is linked to the political movement of 1930 and the creation of the Ministry of

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Education and Health (MES) in 1931. The common explanation is that this branch of teaching was born from the “clear thinking” of the consultants to the new groups in power, who were responsible for “modernizing” the backward men of the fields.

Given this generic situation, we will first present an analysis of the mistakes consecrated by historiography of agricultural education for the period 1930 – 1950, in order to help question the dominant logic. We will then focus on one of the most blatant episodes of intra-governmental conflict in the field, the dispute between the Ministries of Agriculture and Education for control of agricultural education. The analysis is based on a criticism of the lack of a consideration in the specialized literature of the political factors related to the issue, given that the movement of 1930 involved not a break, but a continuity of practices perpetrated by the Agricultural Ministry in relation to rural education. This ministry retained responsibility for rural education until the approval in 1961 of the Law of National Educational Guidelines and Bases, which centralized all branches of education in the Ministry of Education.

Agricultural “education” in the First Republic

The origin of the precocious government interference in agriculture is related to the abolition of slavery - a landmark in Brazil’s transition to capitalism (Velho, 1979) – and a redefinition of the forms of compulsory labor in the field, which gave origin to an inseparable and contradictory alliance between large rural land owners and political society. Given this situation, one of the central actions of the Ministry of Agriculture of the First Republic consisted in implanting an *agricultural education policy* based on measures for the regimentation of labor, marked by the authoritarianism inherent to the construction of the country’s labor market. Simultaneously, the situation created by abolition mobilized various sectors of large land owners – mainly those linked to less dynamic agrarian complexes – to organize in reaction to their fear of the *disorganization of production* through the construction of a generic response to the *agricultural crises*¹ that nevertheless sought to consider regional conditions (Mendonça, 1997).

Numerous associations of large farmers were organized that sought to formulate alternatives to the *crisis*. The most active include the Paulista Agricultural Society and the Brazilian Rural Society in São Paulo and the National Agricultural Society (SNA) in Rio de Janeiro. While the first represented leading coffee producers, the second joined various agricultural sectors, above all those from the Northeast-Southern axis that, since the late 19th century, confronted obstacles to place their products in the international market. Thus, while São Paulo farmers saw the massive immigration of Italians as a solution to the *crisis*, the landowners of SNA focused their efforts on a diversification of agriculture and on the re-creation of the Ministry of Agriculture (MA), generating a heated intra-class political competition that continued for some time.

As both vehicle and driver for the *modernizing* proposals presented by the factions of Brazil’s dominant agrarian class favored by those in power, the MA would not respond to the demands of the “big bourgeois” of São Paulo, while it implemented agricultural policies favorable to the sectors of the SNA, including a policy for *agricultural education* based on the regimentation of labor and justified in name of education capable of producing a so-called *national worker*. A reading of reality was generated that not only blamed the *backward* man in the field for the *crisis*, but also preserved the land-ownership structure and legitimized *educational* modalities in conjunction with it, avoiding its escape to a market system. The MA’s efforts to construct and

¹ To facilitate the reading and understanding of the text, I decided to use *italics* for all expressions from another epoch or passages from documents.

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settle the *national worker* were materialized in two institutions: Aprendizados Agrícolas [Agricultural Trade Schools] and Patronatos Agrícolas [Agricultural Asylums], which were responsible for the preparation of workers *capable of handling modern machinery and cultivation techniques, teaching them, above all, their economic value* (MA, 1913: 67).

The Trade Schools offered an elementary two-year course, seeking to provide *teaching of rational methods of handling soil, as well as concepts of animal hygiene and husbandry, in addition to instruction about the use of agricultural machinery and implements* (Idem, 1911: 57). Another basic course was offered in reading and writing, theoretically aimed at improving the technical quality of the target public: youth from 14-18 years of age, who could prove they were children of small farmers. Operating as boarding schools, they had facilities similar to those found on a large farm, to support the eminently pragmatic labor education and training. From 1911 - 1930, the Ministry maintained from 5 – 8 of these Trade Schools, spread through different regions of the country, annually graduating between 150 and 250 youths. Most, however, were in the sugar and cotton producing regions of the North and Northeast, which accounted for 50% of the total, in response to the articulation among the landowners in SNA and in the Ministry, whose top positions were filled by SNA members.²

Despite their low numbers, the Trade Schools played an important role in promoting the principles of *agricultural education* as a tool of material and symbolic power of the dominant agricultural groups over rural workers. This is because they provided an education based on a notion of progress and an opposition between a “modern” agriculture and another “archaic” one, and the subordination of the former to the later, with both lacking a class content. The Trade Schools maintained the trainees immobile and available only to neighboring farmers who could recruit them, free of charge, for seasonal tasks (Mendonça, 1999).

In certain circumstances, however, the *agricultural education* institutions of the Ministry functioned as means for intervention among social categories that had few ties to agriculture, serving as a palliative for urban social problems. This was the case of the Agricultural Asylums, created in 1918 in response to the conditions after World War I. Rural by need and agricultural more by convenience than by vocation – given that rural labor was seen as the only way to provide for the students’ self-subsistence and maintenance³ – the Asylums sheltered *unprotected orphan children from the city of Rio de Janeiro*, attending to the interests of the urban-industrial segments striving to create a prophylactic image of the federal capital. Associating concepts of practical education and military defense, the law that created the Asylums made their scope clear, notwithstanding the philanthropic rhetoric that justified them: they were alternatives to urban prison institutions, which were seen as *degrading and odious*. Nevertheless, the Asylums produced another type of *detainee*, who was therapeutically disciplined for these work schools that *serve to check the intolerable anarchistic tendencies* attributed to the new social agent, the proletariat (apud Oliveira, 2003: 56). The Agricultural Asylums were professional education centers designed to train the interns in horticulture, gardening, fruit production, husbandry and the cultivation of industrialized crops, through professional courses offered to young orphans from 10 - 16 years of age, recruited by police chiefs and judges in the federal capital.

² Of the 11 Ministers from 1910 - 1930, five were from North or Northeastern states.

³ Decree 12.893 of February 1918 that created the Boarding Schools established that “what is expected, from the financial side, is that there are at the same time *fields for demonstration and fields for production*. It is required that *they are profitable* and produce results, *subsisting on their own*”. Ministério da Agricultura, 1918: 141, emphasis in the original.

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The dual importance of the Asylums, despite their reduced number – as a tool for social control and as a supplier of labor to less dynamic agrarian sectors – is revealed by a number of indicators. From 1918 - 1930, the total number of Asylums jumped from 5 to 98, spread throughout nearly all Brazilian states. Their role in the regimentation of rural workers stood out for two other factors: their national scope and their concentration in the Northeastern and Northern regions which, in 1930, accounted for 38% of all of these institutions, housing 2,300 youths from Rio de Janeiro, compared with 3,200 from the Southeast.⁴

The State and agricultural education after 1930

These initial comments support the finding that the agricultural education policy practiced by the MA after 1930 represented a continuity of earlier practices, contrary to the affirmation of the specialized historiography. As a rule, rural technical education was not an “innovation” established by the new groups in power and 1930 should not be considered as a “canonic landmark” when there was a complete redefinition of the direction of Brazilian Education.

Another continuity can be observed in the consecration of the first great duality in the country’s educational system: which made elementary school the responsibility of state and municipal governments, while high schools and higher education were the federal government’s responsibility. This maintained and broadened the gap between elementary schools that focused on reading and writing and “popular” education that was aimed at the bulk of the population and high school and university education, aimed at training the middle sectors and dominant groups. While this duality continued to segment education after 1930, it was more seriously consolidated in relation to professional education in general, which was stigmatized by the “mark of Cain” of manual labor and recognized to be partial and incomplete. In reality, the main characteristic of the reforms executed by Education Minister Gustavo Capanema, despite his rhetoric to the contrary, consisted in ratifying secondary education as a way to prepare *elites to lead the country* and professional education as preparation for the *people led*. (Werle, 2005: 34).

The historic conjunction marked by the crisis of 1929, population growth and the industrialization of the Brazilian economy and society made it imperative to alter the educational system. This took place in part because an entire generation of a new type of specialists – those called *educational professionals* – consolidated in the educational debates and reforms realized by some state governments in the 1920’s and organized in civil society around the Brazilian Education Association (founded in 1924) - appeared in the educational field, disputing with the traditional policies of Catholic intellectuals and liberal professionals for the imposition of a “new” legitimate educational plan.

Concomitantly, the victory of the dominant agrarian sectors, until then supported by the Revolution of 1930, would mean, in principal, the victory of the groups joined in the SNA and directors of the MA. In this sense, its “agricultural education” policy would be ratified, despite the emergence of a new focus of intra-governmental conflicts with the creation, by the provisional government, of two new Ministries: that of Labor Industry and Commerce (MTIC) and above all that of Education and Health (MES). The staff of the latter, in particular, included important antagonists, given that the new Ministry was charged not only with nationalizing the literacy goals of elementary education (Paiva, 1983), but also with decentralizing management over all and any branch of education. Composed of representatives with an eclectic social-

⁴ The other 62% were scattered through seven states, particularly, at the beginning, in Rio de Janeiro. Ministério da Agricultura, 1918 and 1930.

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political background, the directors of MES included, above all, *professional educators* thought to be capable of managing this field *scientifically and pedagogically*. The new Ministry, which was credited with “pioneering” activity in any modality of education, began to dispute with the Ministry of Agriculture the attributes of agricultural education, and maintained that even elementary schools in rural areas should distance themselves from technical or vocational education, to avoid the pedagogical error of over emphasizing the importance of preparing children to work.

In light of the creation of two new Ministries, the Ministry of Agriculture underwent a total reform highlighted by the formation in 1938 of an organ especially focused on educational affairs: the Superintendency of Agricultural Education (SEA), which was directly subordinate to the minister, who, in 1940, incorporated Veterinary education to the program (changing the initials to Seav). The goal of the agency was to guide and monitor the different branches and levels of agricultural and veterinary education, with special emphasis on the exercise of the profession of agronomy. Diplomas for agronomists would be registered and recognized by the agency.

Decree-Law 23.979 of March 1933 redefined some of the institutions that until then were responsible for agricultural education. The Asylums were turned over to the Ministry of Justice and became the Minors’ Assistance Service (SAM), with a character similar to that in place during the First Republic. The Technical schools were reclassified according to a new institutional typology that called for three distinct types of courses, that would be maintained until the approval by the Ministry of Education of the Organic Law for Agricultural Education (Loea), in 1946. The three courses were: a) basic agricultural education⁵ – a three-year program aimed at training *foremen*, for students 14 and older who completed elementary school, to maintain its character as a “work school” (Salles, 1941: 333); b) rural education – a two-year program to train *rural workers* aimed at children 12 and older, who had *some elementary education*, totally based on practical classes,⁶ and c) adaptation courses – these, were an innovation over the previous period, given that they were no longer aimed at children and adolescents, but at so-called *workers in general* as a rule adults *without any diploma or previous professional qualification*. Precisely for this reason, the adaptation courses did not have a formal schedule and were realized at any time of the year and were of short duration, with registration *open to everyone, without distinction by sex or age* (Salles, 1941: 314). If on one hand the new agricultural education establishments exchanged a near penitentiary-like character for a professionalizing dimension focused on technology, on the other, they were not infused by the

⁵ In this sense, nearly all the former Technical Schools were re-organized as Basic Agricultural Schools, offering both rural education, agricultural education and adaptation courses, such as for example the AA Manuel Barata (Pará); the AA Vidal de Negreiros (Paraíba); the AAs of São Bento and Garanhuns (both in Pernambuco); the AA Benjamim Constant (Sergipe) – which transformed from a Boarding School into an AA, offering rural education and adaptation; AA Sergio de Carvalho (Bahia), among others.

⁶ Rural Education, to the degree to which it wound up providing, *pari passu* technical skills and reading and writing, and divided into two one-year cycles. In the first year were offered disciplines such as: mother tongue, mathematics, notions of geography and cartography, national history, free-hand design, notions of elementary agriculture and agricultural machines, as well as the strictly practical courses (with a course load of twice as many hours as the theoretical classes) vegetable raising, fruit cultivation, gardening and work in the shops. In the second year classes were offered in: Portuguese, Arithmetic, notions of the physical and natural sciences, linear design, notions of domestic animal husbandry, and in the practical classes, abilities in poultry raising, bee-keeping, forestry, fish-raising, and work in the shops.

much discussed concern for ending illiteracy. As a counterpart that marked a change with the situation before 1930, Seav implanted supplementary courses with the same orientation as the adaptation courses, which were notable because they were aimed exclusively at adults.⁷

The space for a redefinition of agricultural education to train adult rural workers would provoke reactions from the directors of the Ministry of Education who, at the beginning of 1945, launched a “response” to the Adult Education Campaign, coordinated by the director of the National Institute of Pedagogical Studies (Inep) Lourenço Filho. Financed with resources from the federal government, states, territories and the Federal District, the campaign goal was to install *10,000 supplementary education classes aimed at illiterate adults and adolescents*, with 25% of the funds coming from the National Elementary Education Fund, created in 1942 (RBEP, 1947: 32). The scope of this campaign, however, would be quite urban, aimed at factory and city workers, despite the fact that directors of the Ministry continued to request support from all the country’s educational institutions. In the 1940’s, Minister Capanema insisted that

In support of the transfer of all the professional educational establishments to the MES, I would first say that it involves a rational administrative measure, called for by the principle of unified management; and second, that it is not pedagogically correct for the Education of young children to continue to be conducted without a unity of methods, programs and techniques, because the result of this is confusion and sterility (Arquivo Capanema, rolo 28, fotograma 566).

In contrast to the efforts of MES, the MA had few resources for its agricultural educational institutions. In addition to its low budget, it did receive contributions from some state governments that hosted, under contract, one of the three types of schools. There were constant complaints that the *Ministry of Education and Health, through the National Council of Social Service, provided very little assistance to some agricultural schools (MA 1942: 328)*.

The dispute between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Education took on new form after the involvement of the United States in World War II, which led to that country’s signing of a group of treaties between it and the Brazilian Production Ministry, originating the Brazilian-American Commission for the Production of Food Supplies in 1942. This agency worked in partnership with agricultural education institutions controlled by the ministry to accelerate the training of rural workers who could maximize production of the most important foodstuffs needed for the “war effort”. In conjunction with this initial “cooperation” experience, the first agricultural clubs were established in Brazil, (and will be discussed below).⁸ Meanwhile, it is important to emphasize that the practices of the MA in relation to agricultural education were until then still predominantly – although not exclusively – aimed at

⁷ This inflection cannot be separated from the first Brazilian-American Commission, that of the Production of the Most Important Foodstuffs, of 1942 which will be discussed later. According to Minister Apolônio Salles, “The *intensification of supplementary courses* was recently adopted, to promote *direct and generalized* education for all who need it, at any age and of both sexes. Efforts have been made to *correct the error* of supposing that the only targets of educational work should be *those who are still of school age* at the expense of those who have not had the opportunity to go to school or for those who cannot return to regular classes”. (MA, 1943: 327).

⁸ As a rule, the Ministry of Agriculture’s campaign in support of multiplication of Agricultural Clubs began in 1940, after the return of some of its technicians, all agronomists, from a study trip to the United States. Thus, the Ministry Report of 1945 has a register of 886 Clubs from January 1, 1940 and June 1 1944, which in turn supply fertilizers, seeds and similar goods, through Seav. Ministério da Agricultura, 1945: 392.

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the technical training of young people and adolescents, with the pragmatic spirit that marked its operation.

The new directions of agricultural education

Historically, the United States and Latin America, despite being neighbors, each maintained much closer ties with Europe than with each other. Only recently have new economic and political relations been established between the countries. President Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy" of the 1930's, established closer contact with Latin America through the Institute of Inter-American Affairs (IIAA), created in 1942 and responsible for the first program of "technical assistance" aimed at "improving" conditions of health, education and agriculture in Latin America (Leavitt, 1964: 221). According to some authors, the U.S. Cooperation Service functioned as an entity with joint funds and staffs, although with a semi-ministerial organization mobilized around specific projects, which were always co-sponsored by the Latin American governments involved. Its semi-governmental status conferred it reasonable independence to overcome the usual resistance to "innovation" encountered in the application of these projects, which were led by U.S. technicians.

The Point IV Program, meanwhile, launched in the Truman administration in 1949, would represent the consolidation of the first U.S. commitment to large scale U.S. technical assistance and was executed by the Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA), which combined new institutions such as the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA) and the International Cooperation Administration (ICA), at the beginning of the 1950's. Specialists affirm that the popularity of Point IV was due in part to U.S. "pride" in its ability to share advanced technical know-how that would be applied in less industrialized countries at low cost. The history of the foreign "cooperation" programs certainly revealed that the technique itself was not sufficient to produce the social changes needed for "development". This is because they did not consider the need for training local operators, or the need for approval of agricultural laws to end the concentration of land ownership, particularly in the case of Brazil, where the resistance of agricultural groups to any change in land ownership has been constant until today.

On the other hand, given that Point IV also sought to impede the advance of communism in Latin America, by building a "cordon sanitaire" typical of the recently inaugurated Cold War, it is appropriate to ask if the "development" sought would be capable of creating immunity to the "virus" of communism. The Program was based on the principle that poverty was the result of ignorance and a lack of capital. It did not recognize that a set of voluntary choices were not available, but given circumstances, many of them of a structural character. Thus, the limits imposed by a social order considered "archaic" should have been considered, as well as the fact that the countries "helped" were "poor" due to the inherent contradictions in their history and land ownership structure.

Many authors asked why the Program did not directly serve the "undeveloped" countries, by, for example, offering improvements in the terms of trade between the countries and establishing commercial practices more favorable to Latin producers. Despite the controversies, the explanation for the success of Point IV appears to reside in the fact that it defined Education as one of its principal instruments, and by identifying its operations in the category of "rationalization", would make the program more easily accepted by the dominant local groups, given that it would not touch the country's land ownership structure. Thus, not only did it minimize potential class conflicts in the rural areas, but contributed to "economic growth" (Carnoy, 1974: 160).

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At the same time, the educational projects implemented by Point IV, by assuring groups considered “marginal” limited access to “schooling”, attracted them with the dual promise of participation in the surpluses generated by exports and integration in the “modern” economic sector. Those who, to the contrary, remained excluded from these opportunities, continued to be stigmatized as “incapable”. This was not because of their class condition, but because of their “lack of technical abilities”.

It is with this information that we should analyze the changes in Agricultural Education in Brazil since the approval of the initial agreements signed with the United States. They are highlighted by the adoption, by the MA, of medium-term planning, justified in name of compliance with the deliberations of the Third Inter-American Agricultural Conference, which met in Caracas in 1945. For the first time, a Four-Year Work Plan was drafted seeking to reach the 1950's, without losing sight *that this is a Ministry for production and its principal purpose is to guide, support and defend agricultural production* (MA, 1946-50: 8).

In relation to rural education, the Plan had support from a new agreement, signed in October 1945 between the MA and the Inter-American Educational Foundation, planned to remain in effect from January 1946 – July 1948. The delay in the deposit of the Brazilian funds in the Banco do Brasil caused a one year delay in the initiation of the program. Its objectives were: a) to develop closer relations with Agricultural Education teachers in the United States; b) facilitate the training of Brazilians and Americans specialized in professional agricultural education and c) program activities in the rural educational sector that were of interest to the contracting parties (Agreement on Rural Education, 1945: 14).

From this agreement was created the Brazilian-American Commission for Education of Rural Populations (CBAR), an agency managed by the MA that began operating in 1947, through the proliferation of the Center for Training for Agricultural Workers, spread throughout the country, with emphasis in the North and Northeast. The Commission would also conduct studies in rural sociology and visual education, and realize the Rural Week programs during which, through “pedagogy by example” Seav would distribute prizes in materials such as beehives, hatching equipment, seeds, tools, and similar goods, thus supplying means of work for establishments without resources.

The concretization of the “cooperation” program would also include: the provision, by the United States, of a group of specialists in agricultural education; the realization, in cooperation with Brazilian authorities, of study and research through travel by Brazilian educators and technicians to the United States; the local training of agricultural technical education teachers; the purchase of equipment and teaching material including radio and film supplies, in addition to traveling rural missions. As a complement, all the material donated to CBAR would be the property of the Brazilian government (clause VIII).

One of the most significant consequences of the CBAR was that it required the MA to establish agricultural clubs that would operate in conjunction with elementary schools in rural regions. Although the first clubs were implanted in 1942, only with the creation of the Commission would they be institutionalized as a modality for diffusion of rural education under the rubric of the Ministry, together with which they should register to obtain other subsidies. The contradictory aspect of the new institution resided in the fact that it was linked to the regular elementary schools under the Ministry of Education and state and local governments, creating new political difficulties between the two Ministries.

Given the situation inaugurated by the CBAR in 1945, the Ministry of Education would approve the Organic Law for Agricultural Education (Loea) – part of a “package” formed by organic

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laws for each branch of education⁹. The law established the foundations for a new orientation for professional rural education that called for both the reorganization of the existing educational institutions – basic agricultural education, rural education and adaptation courses – and the creation of new ones in which teaching is “strictly objective and students learn by doing” (Loea, 1946: 37).

The law also increased the number of students matriculated in the establishments subsidized by the Agriculture Ministry, planning for an increase from 1,500 to 2,500, between 1946 and 1947. Another decree was sanctioned by the MES in 1947 to adapt the old establishments of the MA into five new modalities of institutions: 1) Agricultural Initiation Schools – aimed at elementary education in the 1 – 2nd years of the first cycle of agricultural education (corresponding to the initial phase of the regular elementary school) to which some old Trade Schools would be adapted; 2) agricultural schools – responsible for providing agricultural initiation education and an advanced courses, including the 3rd and 4th years of the first cycle (corresponding to the final phase of the regular elementary school) and which would include the Trade Schools of Pernambuco, Alagoas and Rio de Janeiro states; 3) agrotechnical schools – responsible for technical and pedagogical courses in the second cycle of agricultural education (corresponding to regular secondary education) as well as for extension and improvement courses into which were transformed the Trade Schools of Barbacena (Minas Gerais), Bananeiras (Paraíba) and Pelotas (Rio Grande do Sul); 4) improvement, specialization and extension courses, responsible for offering agricultural and veterinary education through regular improvement and technical specialization courses in the various career professions of the MA, in addition to other courses – for university extension and finally 5) the training centers (CTs) – established to train rural workers who are prepared for the *efficient performance of agricultural activity* (MA, 1946-50: 347).

In CBAR’s first year of operation, 38 Training Centers were established with 1,000 students. In addition to being labor training centers, they produced food and animals for the students’ consumption – almost all of whom were adults – as well as for sale in neighboring communities. The CTs received most of CBAR’s attention and multiplied after 1946 through the new agreements between the Commission and countless federal and state government agencies and the private sector.¹⁰ Even after the termination of the CBAR, in 1948, many of the activities they inaugurated were continued, with their income invested in the maintenance of the CTs.

Thus, the agricultural educational institutions created under the CBAR definitively consecrated the Agricultural School as the “School for Work”, although some were dedicated to improving administrative personnel for the MA. The most expressive redefinition promoted by the Commission consisted in the emphasis on education of adults and not children and adolescents, establishing an important shift in direction of agricultural education in Brazil, a trend that was ratified in the 1950’s in new treaties between Brazil and the United States, such as the National Rural Educational Campaign (CNER) of 1953.

The Agricultural Clubs were one of the most long-lasting initiatives of CBAR. If the debates of the decade of 1920 were polarized in two groups, those who defended regular elementary school for general education – identified with the Ministry of Education – and those who supported

⁹ This legislation was approved between 1945 - 1946, found in the Organic Law for Primary Education; Secondary Education; Industrial Education and Commercial Education.

¹⁰ In this case, 10 agreements were signed between the CBAR and religious schools or institutions, with seven dedicated to preparing rural teachers, one to educating home economists and one to training tractor drivers. Ministério da Agricultura (1946-50: 345-6).

vocational school beginning at the elementary level – the technicians of MA – it is clear that the political dispute between the groups linked to each ministry resulted from the fact that the government attributions for agricultural education had been superimposed and mixed, generating parallel systems for management and administration of the activity. Thus, although elementary education constitutionally remained defined as a right of all citizens, the responsibility of state and municipal governments, the viability of literacy efforts in regular school systems was only assured by the support from the MES and its National Elementary Education Fund. In parallel, it would be up to the MA to simply implement the various modalities of technical and vocational agricultural schools, although they would also provide elementary education in reading and writing.

The proliferation of the agricultural clubs illustrated the existing contradictions by introducing a new duality to the already dichomatic system of Brazilian education. This is because, although they were defined as “extra-curricular” responsible for promoting knowledge about life in the field, they functioned in annex to the elementary schools in the rural regions, and in certain cases, in the cities. Thus, the school groups were simultaneously found linked to the MES with “appendixes” created by the MA. According to its technicians:

As a school institution the “agricultural club” is that which is most recommended, especially *for schools in the interior*, contributing to the *better identification of the school with the regional peculiarities* and the education of an *enlightened rural mentality*, providing the child an *initiation at work* (MA, 1946-50: 351, emphasis in the original).

While in 1940 there were few clubs, by 1947 there were 1,450 of them registered in the MA (Lima et al., 1949: 52-53), aimed at *instilling in the child’s spirit the love of the land and its gifts*. The clubs were seen as “necessary and vital” because if

to educate is to prepare for life, *literacy on its own is not sufficient; it is necessary* to awaken in the citizens of tomorrow a *taste for productive activities*, orienting them for agricultural work, in order to create in youth, from tender childhood, the awareness of its value as positive factors in society (Idem: 3, emphasis in the original).

The club members were called *little ruralists*, and were provided *unique experiences*, that could only be acquired in the exercise of activities such as production, cooperation and internal administration, considered to be essential to *true democratic education*.¹¹ Their teachers, in turn, saw their activity as a *catechetical service*, aimed at *making the youths accustomed to responsibility*.

The clubs were required to send annual reports to the MA, and provide contributions to the constant renewal of the instruction book that was nationally adopted by all of the clubs, *Brincar e Aprender* [Play and Learn] by Fleury Filho. The meetings included participation of family and neighbors of the club members, and were recorded in standardized meeting minutes supplied by the Ministry, which exercised strict control over its activities. According to the agents involved in this process, *it is against this fever for “reading, writing and arithmetic” – that everyone thinks should exclusively be the function of the school – that you have to struggle, teacher. Teach the boys under your guidance to live the life of the fields* (Idem: 48, emphasis in the original). At the end of the 1950’s, the agricultural clubs continued in full operation, supposedly

¹¹ The agricultural clubs are based on their U.S. counterparts, the 4-H Clubs (*head, heart, hands and health*) created in 1937, the goals of which included “to dignify manual labor and ennoble the farming profession; develop the spirit of cooperation in school, family and collectivity; encourage poly-culture; teach economic habits; organize a cooperative for sales of products from crops and creation of partners”. Idem: 35-36.

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contributing *to the adjustment of the rural elementary school to the environment to which it belongs*. They totalled 2,183 in 1958.

The U.S. presence in rural education in Brazil would be considerably expanded in the 1950's through new agreements with the MA, which resulted in the National Rural Literacy Campaign (1953) and the founding of the Technical Office for Brazilian-U.S. Agriculture (1954). In the new conjuncture, treaties were signed with the Ministry of Education. The agreements of the 1950's inaugurated a new modality of "cooperation" based on the implantation of technical assistance institutions for rural workers. This was materialized in the recently-created Rural Social Service of the MA (1955).¹² In relation to the Technical Office for Agriculture, 58 agreements were signed with 80 public and private entities, such as 12 Rural Credit and Assistance Associations (MA, 1960: 108). In the field of education itself, priority was given to the concession of study grants in the United States, for specialists in the Ministry. According to the director of the Agricultural Information Service, *the core of the ETA's work is rural extension, offering decisive support to all the Rural Assistance and Credit Associations that currently serve close to 100,000 families in twelve states of the Federation* (Idem: 111, italic in the original).

As seen, agricultural education took on new meaning in the 1950's, leaving aside school practices aimed at children and adolescents and emphasizing technical and financial assistance to farmers, based on the notion of "communities" that should be organized by means of a partnership movement.¹³ Even so, the agencies involved insisted on attributing to their practices *an eminently educational bent* and not a political one, given that they were working with rural communities and no longer with individual workers. The slogan *a man, a woman, and a jeep* summed up their role of *preparing rural populations to act on their own by taking advantage of community leaders* (Idem: 21). The political content of these new "educational" practices is evident, particularly considering that it was during the 1950's that rural workers began a process of organized political mobilization in support of agrarian reform, through the Ligas Camponesas [Peasant Leagues], a factor that was more than sufficient to explain the redirectioning of the U.S. "cooperation".

Concluding comments

If the disputes around agricultural education in Brazil reached a peak in 1920, they did not stop there. The disagreements over rural education continued until after 1945, during the "redemocratization" of the country. One of the greatest examples of this consisted not only in the approval of the Organic Law for Agricultural Education in 1946, but above all in the fact that it was approved separately from the other branches of education, thus establishing in an absolute manner one of the terms of the dispute announced: rural education as something special, as

¹² The Rural Social Service sought to "introduce cultural and technological changes in the rural environment, using the techniques of organization and development of communities. It involved placing in practice a set of rules and methods with groups of humans to achieve a higher economic and social level of the populations". Idem:19-20.

¹³ The Rural Economy Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, also created as a prolongation of the CBAR, recorded in 1960, the presence of 71 new Rural Associations that in addition to the 1,752 existing until then, had a total of 218,400 members. Equally noteworthy would be the membership movement realized in conjunction with rural youth, which had 1,500 Agricultural Clubs, joining 60,000 youth. Idem: 16.

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“education for work”, a concept that would be ratified by the alliances between Brazil and the United States and the proliferation of “cooperation” agreements reached among agencies of the two countries.

The maintenance of the simultaneous authority of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture over this modality of education was consecrated after 1930, establishing a type of “socio-political division of labor” between these ministries, in an attempt to overcome a dispute that allowed perceiving the political importance of maintaining the *status quo* of the social classes in Brazilian agriculture. The complexity of the question implied, in practice, the two dichotomies of agricultural education in the country. The first involved the preservation of the inheritance that determined elementary and high school education to be a responsibility of the states and municipalities, while superior education remained the responsibility of the federal government. The second dichotomy was the creation of the “new times” and concerned the fact that agricultural education constituted a special educational mode, administrated by two government agencies, each with different proposals.

The various initiatives analyzed here demonstrate the degree to which “rural education” took on new forms during the 20th century, little by little focusing more on the training of adult rural labor in detriment to children and regular schooling. Agricultural education, as redefined in the debates and practices from 1930 – 1950, would suffer an alteration in its academic meaning and acquire a dual type of social service role: as technical assistance and as social assistance itself. In this resignification, agricultural education became established not only as a tool to limit social conflicts in rural areas, but also as confirmation of the subaltern identity of the rural worker, in relation to other workers.

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