

REVIVING LISTENING AND HOPE: REFLECTIONS ON PEDAGOGICAL ACTION IN EJA FROM ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

REVIVENDO A ESCUTA E A ESPERANÇA: REFLEXÕES À AÇÃO PEDAGÓGICA NA EJA DESDE A EDUCAÇÃO AMBIENTAL

REVIVIENDO LA ESCUCHA Y LA ESPERANZA: REFLEXIONES A LA ACCIÓN PEDAGÓGICA EN LA EJA DESDE LA EDUCACIÓN AMBIENTAL



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ABSTRACT: The present text constitutes a theoretical essay that seeks to highlight a reflective exercise of the political-pedagogical approach between youth and adult education (EJA) and environmental education (EE), questioning: What are the contributions of the field of EE to the pedagogical praxis of EJA? A dialogical reading of references that engage with EE and YAE in their historicity and praxis is essential to accomplish this. Through this study, it was possible to reflect upon and comprehend the importance of the contributions from the field of environmental education in the constitution of a praxis in youth and adult education that recognizes the foundations of problematizing and emancipatory popular education, directed towards men and women, and conscious of the shared responsibility for caring for the planetary life of all beings, both human and non-human.

KEYWORDS: Environmental Education. Youth and Adult Education. Popular Education.

RESUMO: *O presente texto constitui um ensaio teórico que busca evidenciar um exercício reflexivo de aproximação político-pedagógica entre a educação de jovens e adultos (EJA) e a educação ambiental (EA), questionando, quais são as contribuições do campo da EA para a práxis pedagógica da EJA? Para isso, a leitura dialógica de referenciais que dialogam com a EA e a EJA em sua historicidade e práxis é essencial. Através deste estudo, foi possível refletir e compreender a importância das contribuições do campo da educação ambiental para a constituição de uma práxis na educação de jovens e adultos que reconheça as bases de uma educação popular problematizadora e emancipadora, voltada para homens e mulheres e consciente da responsabilidade compartilhada pelo cuidado com a vida planetária de todos, humanos e não humanos.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Educação Ambiental. Educação de Jovens e Adultos. Educação Popular.*

RESUMEN: *Este texto constituye un ensayo teórico que busca evidenciar un ejercicio reflexivo de aproximación político-pedagógica entre la educación de jóvenes y adultos (EJA) y la educación ambiental (EA), cuestionando: ¿Cuáles son las contribuciones del campo de la EA para la praxis pedagógica de/en EJA? Para este desarrollo, la lectura dialógica de referentes que dialogan con la EA y la EJA en su historicidad y praxis constituye suya centralidad. De este estudio fue posible reflexionar y comprender la importancia de las contribuciones desde el campo de la educación ambiental hasta la constitución de una praxis en la educación de jóvenes y adultos que reconoce las bases de una educación popular que problematiza y emancipa a los hombres y las mujeres y que es consciente de la responsabilidad compartida de cuidar de la vida planetaria de todas y de todos, humanos y no humanos.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Educación Ambiental. Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos. Educación Popular.*

Introduction

Giants, fools, monks, monsters, wise men
Bards, rude angels, full of themselves
Crazy-faced ghosts
Ah, let's disappear!
Come, walk with me across the planet
Let's disappear!
Come, nothing holds us back, shoulder to shoulder, let's disappear! (RAMIL, 1987, our translation).

The music of Vitor Ramil allows us to reflect on a multitude of winds and transformations, on choices uttered, and on nuances assumed. Whom do we invite to walk with us? To whom do we address ourselves to disappear across the planet? For whom do we narrow our freedoms to the point of recognizing ourselves shoulder to shoulder? In the lyrics of the mad-hearted, we understand that starting this text has primarily allowed us to embark on this acceptance: "[...] walk with me, across the planet, let's disappear!" (RAMIL, 1987, our translation). Defining the vanishing and its reasons is not easy, especially through the subjective hands that guide them, but they are also sketches that make us believe in the potential of the reflections that arise, starting from the capacity for sincere listening to/from others and nurturing hope.

Within this movement of listening and hopes, we aim to construct this metareflective dialogical text about the potential pedagogical encounters between Adult and Youth Education (EJA) and Environmental Education (EE). Particularly when questioning the educational action of EJA, we ask: what are the contributions of the field of Environmental Education to the pedagogical praxis in EJA? Therefore, based on some reflections on the pedagogical experience in EJA, propelled by the movements of critical environmental education, and grounded in the authors' teaching practice in initial and continuous teacher training spaces, both in EE and EJA, and also considering the experienced, felt, and reinterpreted experience during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has transformed many lives, this study aims to reflect on the possible contributions of the field of Environmental Education based on some understandings regarding actions and pedagogical praxis in contemporary EJA.

The development of the study began with the selection and reading of references from the field of critical environmental education, including documents such as the Treaty of Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Responsibility (1992), among others. Based on these readings, the historical foundations of Adult and Youth Education in Brazil were also revisited, leading to the contemporary dialogue that establishes EJA as an

instrument for education and lifelong learning through the approval of Law n. ° 13,632, dated March 6, 2018 (BRAZIL, 2018a). From these encounters, an interpretive and comprehensive dialogue was constructed regarding contemporary EJA and the potential contributions of environmental education to the educational praxis in this modality, especially through a dialogue with its foundations and by challenging certain horizons.

A Brief History of Adult and Youth Education in Brazil

Adult and Youth Education constitutes a form of education aimed at meeting the educational needs of men and women who, due to different reasons and social and existential experiences, have not had access to school, were unable to attend even if they had access, or were unable to complete their studies, even if they attended the institution for a period of time. These barriers that prevent entry or permanence in school are not isolated from other processes of social exclusion resulting from the exploitation and economic, political, and socio-environmental inequality experienced by numerous individuals. According to Miguel Arroyo (2001, p. 10, our translation), the "[...] official history of EJA is intertwined with the history of the social place reserved for the popular sectors. It is a modality of the elite's treatment of popular adults."

As a form of basic education at the elementary and secondary levels, Article 37 of the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law n.º 9394 of 1996, in Section V, Chapter II, establishes that "Youth and Adult Education shall be aimed at those who have not had access or continuity of studies in elementary and secondary education at the appropriate age and shall constitute an instrument for education and lifelong learning" (BRASIL, 1996, our translation).

However, it is essential to mention that the development of actions focused on youth and adult education began in Brazil during the colonial period when Jesuit missionaries also directed their educational activities towards adolescents and adults. According to Haddad and Di Pierro (2000, p. 109, our translation), "In addition to spreading the Gospel, these educators transmitted behavioral norms and taught the trades necessary for the functioning of the colonial economy, initially to indigenous people and later to black slaves."

According to the authors, after the expulsion of the Jesuits from Brazil in 1759 and the consequent disorganization of the education system, information about educational actions aimed at adults only resurfaced during the Imperial Brazil period (HADDAD; DI PIERRO, 2000). With Brazil's independence in 1822, legislation regarding education became the

responsibility of the independent nation itself. Barreto (2005, p. 44, our translation) informs us that

In the 1824 constitution, during the Empire, we had the guarantee of primary education for all citizens, which remained merely a constitutional intention, as nothing concrete was effectively implemented. Even though it was interpreted as a right for children, the subsequent Constitutions also demonstrated the legal intention of education for all citizens.

According to Soares and Galvão (2009, p. 260, our translation), "[...] a significant number of provinces, which became responsible for primary and secondary education following the Additional Act of 1834, specifically formulated education policies for young people and adults." Additionally, based on research and its findings, it has been understood that "[...] even in the case of children, who were a priority in the formal schooling system, home, and non-formal experiences outnumbered those within the formal system" (SOARES; GALVÃO, 2009, p. 261, our translation). Similarly, concerning adults, "[...] experiences seemed to multiply, particularly in urban areas" (SOARES; GALVÃO, 2009, p. 261, our translation).

Starting with the Proclamation of the Republic in 1889, and with the approval of the first Constitution of the Republican period in 1891, there is no reference to the "gratuity of education" (existing in the Imperial Constitution), while at the same time, the exercise of voting is conditioned on literacy (art. 70 § 2º) (BRASIL, 2000, p. 14, our translation). According to Carlos Roberto Jamil Cury, rapporteur of Opinion CNE/CEB 11/2000, which addresses the National Curricular Guidelines for Youth and Adult Education, the treatment given to illiterates was based on

[...] a way to mobilize illiterates to seek elementary education courses voluntarily. The liberal spirit of this Constitution made the individual the focus of personal pursuit of upward mobility, disregarding the clear existence and perpetuation of privileges stemming from slave oppression and patrimonialism forms of access to economic and social goods (BRASIL, 2000, p. 14, our translation).

Throughout the 20th century, various actions were planned and implemented to meet the needs of non-schooled young and adult populations, focusing on literacy. Some actions had greater involvement from the State, while others saw active participation from different social sectors, including organized movements, religious institutions, unions, associations, and other social organizations. As stated by Haddad and Di Pierro (2000, p. 110, our translation):

It was only in the late 1940s that adult education came to be established as a national policy issue, but the conditions for this had been set in place during

the preceding period. The National Education Plan, under the responsibility of the Union, as provided for in the 1934 Constitution, was supposed to include the provision of free and mandatory full-time primary education among its regulations. This education was intended to be extended to adults. Youth and adult education were recognized and received special attention for the first time.

According to the studies by Soares and Galvão (2009), we understand that the year 1947 marked the first launch by the Brazilian government of a national campaign for the literacy of adolescents and adults. This campaign established hundreds of classes throughout the country but received various criticisms, especially regarding its methodological aspects. In the words of Paiva (2003, p. 212, our translation), "The central idea of the Campaign director is that the illiterate adult is a marginalized being 'who cannot be aware of national life,' and it is associated with the belief that the illiterate adult is incapable or less capable than the literate individual."

In 1958, the II National Congress of Adult Education emerged, with notable participation from the educator Paulo Freire and a group of educators from Pernambuco. During the event, they criticized the approach adopted by the National Campaign in dealing with populations, emphasizing the need for "[...] the structuring of courses to be based on the student's reality and for the educational process to be carried out "with" the individual rather than "for" the individual" (SOARES; GALVÃO, 2009, p. 267-268, our translation).

The Congress is, therefore, an event that offers us the opportunity to observe the beginning of the transformation of Brazilian pedagogical thought, with the abandonment of "pedagogical optimism" and the reintroduction of reflection on the social in the elaboration of pedagogical ideas. Furthermore, it also served as a stimulus for developing new ideas and educational methods for adults. It is possible to see that "realism in education," that is, the consideration of the internal aspects of the educational process alongside its connection to societal life, tends to prevail over other positions. Quantitative concerns are no longer accompanied by prejudice against the illiterate, and the concern for the quality of education and the revision of methods persists (PAIVA, 2003, p. 238-239, our translation).

The effervescence of Popular Education experiences also marked the beginning of the 1960s based on pedagogical approaches that emerged from movements of critical reading in Brazilian society. According to Mota Neto and Streck (2019), it is more than an educational thought, as it is "[...] a movement of educators deeply connected to the history of the continent, with the reality of Latin American popular classes, their real experiences, their ancestral knowledge, their needs, and their life projects." (MOTA NETO; STRECK, 2019, p. 212, our translation).

This is also a crucial moment for the political, social, and pedagogical reflection of Adult Education in Brazil, as it is part of the movement to understand men and women as citizens, subjects who produce history and culture, as well as education as a thoroughly political act based on conceptions of the world, human beings, society, power, and participation. In this context, a proposal for literacy action emerged, developed by Paulo Freire and implemented in the city of Angicos in Rio Grande do Norte. In his pedagogical approach, "Freire establishes a relationship between the subjects (their cultures, their daily lives, and the macro-social conditioning), education, and the possibilities of overcoming the situations of dehumanization with which they live" (PALUDO, 2001, p. 92, our translation). Within the framework of praxis in Adult Education and dialogue with Pinto's understanding of the educator's action, the educator should provide the adult learner with the "opportunity to achieve a critical consciousness informed about oneself and their world" (PINTO, 1997, p. 84, our translation).

After his experience in Angicos, Paulo Freire committed to collaborating in developing the National Literacy Plan in conjunction with the Ministry of Education. However, this work was interrupted on March 31, 1964, with the arrival of the military in power (SOARES; GALVÃO, 2009). According to Haddad and Di Pierro (2000, p. 114, our translation), during the period between 1964 and 1985,

This sector of education - the basic schooling of young people and adults - could not be abandoned by the State apparatus, as it represented one of the most important channels of mediation with society. It would be difficult to reconcile the maintenance of low literacy levels in the population with the proposal of a great country, as the military aimed to build, in the eyes of the national and international communities. There was also a need to respond to citizenship right increasingly seen as legitimate through strategies that also served the hegemonic interests of the socioeconomic model implemented by the military regime. [...] The responses came with the establishment of MOBREAL - Brazilian Literacy Movement - in 1967, and later with the implementation of Supplementary Education in 1971, with the promulgation of Federal Law 5.692, which reformed the guidelines for primary and secondary education.

Starting from the process of redemocratization and with the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution, in Article 208, which was amended by Constitutional Amendment No. 59 of 2009, the constitutional text establishes that "The State's duty with education shall be fulfilled by guaranteeing: I - compulsory and free basic education from the age of 4 (four) to 17 (seventeen) years old, ensuring its free provision to all who did not have access to it at the appropriate age" (BRAZIL, 1988, our translation).

Furthermore, subsequent legislations follow the movement to guarantee the right to education for young people and adults, although they face constant challenges. According to Paiva (2009, p. 136, our translation),

Analyzing the text of Constitutional Amendment n.º 14/96, as well as the original formulation in the interpretation, it is observed that, as the State must provide education, demand is not necessary for the systems to be organized regardless of whether there is demand or not. It should be noted that, under governmental logic, demand would be scarce (as it effectively happened) because historically, the demand for youth and adult education, especially at the literacy level, has never been significant due to the stigmas associated with being illiterate, which often prevents individuals from acknowledging their condition. The stigma victimizes illiterate individuals twice, as it not only brings shame but also blames them for their lack of knowledge, ingrains a lack of awareness of their rights, and when the opportunity arises again, it is perceived as a reward, a blessing. For the logic of power that rejects and denies the rights of these young people and adults, it is convenient for this to be the case because demand remains constrained by the oppression of the stigma itself, without beneficiaries of the right demanding public policies that translate this right into provision.

In 1996, with the approval of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB) n.º 9394/1996, youth and adult education became officially recognized as a modality of basic education. In 2000, the National Council of Education approved Opinion CNE 11/2000, which established the National Curriculum Guidelines for Youth and Adult Education, with the work and text elaborated by the rapporteur and councilor Carlos Roberto Jamil Cury. In this opinion, in addition to advocating the right to education for youth and adults, three functions that EJA must fulfill were highlighted: remedial, equalizing, and qualifying (PAIVA, 2009).

In recent years, there has been a reduction in the number of EJA classes, even though the number of individuals who potentially fall within the target audience of this modality has remained high. In the words of Ventura and Oliveira,

As governmental certification instruments progress and, intertwined with them, government actions to close EJA classes - an intentional process of de-schooling the modality - a vast market develops, expands, and becomes more sophisticated to meet the demands for certification (VENTURA; OLIVEIRA, 2020, p. 92, our translation)

Throughout the more than five hundred years of Brazilian education history, we understand that actions and practices related to youth and adult education have been marked by the pursuit of the effective right of adolescents, young adults, adults, and older people to literacy and schooling through public policies and mobilizations that recognize the importance of social participation and the role of education in their lives. However, we have also faced moments of

denial of these rights, whether through isolated and welfare-oriented actions or a lack of initiatives. As we enter the third decade of the 21st century, we resist attacks manifested through the closure of classrooms and schools or the inefficiency of public policies. In this context, we reaffirm the need to effectively fulfill the basic right to education for young and adult individuals in Brazil.

Environmental education in dialogues of understanding

Environmental education has been evolving throughout history as a field that both provokes and is provoked by reflecting upon educational dialogue and ethics in the relationships between living beings and their artifacts, the world and its diversity of materials, manifestations, and abstractions, as well as the productions of nature and culture and their interactions and dialogues. However, the reflective and practical emergence of the environmental field has mainly occurred due to humans' unrestrained and destructive actions on the environment, driven by economic production and the multiplying consumer needs over the years. This has also accompanied our multiplication as a species and the intensified changes in cultural habits, technological productions, and innovations. In the words of Lima (2011, p. 27, our translation):

In a simplified manner, the environment has become problematic because the impacts and individual and social discomfort resulting from the relationship between society and the environment have intensified. Conflicts over the ownership and use of environmental goods have become more pronounced, and the predatory potential of the Western lifestyle and development has become visible. Furthermore, the observation, reflection, research, and dissemination of present and future socio-environmental problems have deepened.

As a response to this accelerated movement of degradation, throughout the 20th century and particularly in its last decades, many governments, international organizations, social movements, non-governmental organizations, and other entities started engaging in more intense and active dialogues regarding the desired and projected paths for Planet Earth and life on it. They organized meetings and activities that fostered debates and new causes for struggle and action. In the words of Dias (2004, p. 78, our translation), it is essential to highlight that "While governments were unable to define the paths of understanding, civil society was moving worldwide. In March 1965, during the Conference on Education at Keele University, Great Britain, the term Environmental Education emerged."

Even with previous records, it is noticeable that internationally the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, and the Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education in Tbilisi, Georgia, in 1977, were important milestones for strengthening the debate on environmental education worldwide.

In Brazil, the emergence of environmental education occurred "[...] long before its institutionalization by the Federal Government, marked in the early 1970s by the emergence of an environmentalism that combined the struggles for democratic freedoms" (BRASIL, 2018b, p. 15, our translation). Dias (2004, p. 78) states that the country "[...] immersed in a dictatorial regime, going against the international trend of environmental concern, showed the world the Carajás Project and the Tucuruí Hydroelectric Power Plant, initiatives with high potential for environmental degradation." However, despite this clear government reluctance to engage in environmental debates, the 'Association for the Protection of Natural Environment in Rio Grande do Sul' - Agapan - was born, a precursor to environmental movements in our country, at a time when we did not even have environmental legislation like most nations" (DIAS, 2004, p. 78). According to the publication by the Ministry of the Environment titled Environmental Education for a Sustainable Brazil: ProNEA, legal and normative milestones,

In the educational field, this movement was manifested through isolated actions by teachers, students, and schools, in small initiatives by civil society organizations, or by municipal governments and state governments, with educational activities related to environmental recovery, conservation, and improvement (BRASIL, 2018b, p. 15, our translation).

Later, in 1981, the National Environmental Policy (PNMA) was approved through Law 6.938, which included environmental education in the curriculum at all educational levels. Subsequently, in the Federal Constitution of 1988, environmental education was mentioned again to be promoted at all levels of education in Article 225, Clause VI (BRASIL, 2018b).

In this textual context, however, we mainly highlight the contributions and reflections presented in the Treaty on Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Responsibility (Tratado de Educação Ambiental para Sociedades Sustentáveis e Responsabilidade Global), a document produced in 1992, recognized for its importance "[...] as it was elaborated by the international civil society and for recognizing environmental education as a dynamic process, in constant construction, guided by values based on mobilization and social transformation" (BRASIL, 2018b, p. 16, our translation). In its opening text, an announcement reveals plurality and the desire to listen and acknowledge hope in its intentionality.

This Treaty, like education itself, is a dynamic process in constant construction. Therefore, it should promote reflection, debate, and modification. We, the signatories, individuals from all parts of the world committed to protecting life on Earth, recognize the central role of education in shaping values and social action. We commit ourselves to the transformative educational process through personal involvement in our communities and nations to create sustainable and equitable societies. Thus, we strive to bring new hopes and life to our small, tumultuous, yet still beautiful planet (TRATADO DE EDUCAÇÃO AMBIENTAL PARA SOCIEDADES SUSTENTÁVEIS E RESPONSABILIDADE GLOBAL, 1992, our translation).

In the continuation of the text from the Treaty and the projection of the discussed reflections and aspirations, 16 principles were established that expanded the vision of environmental education, not only focused on the protection of the natural environment but also recognizing the human being as part of this environment and valuing culture as a component of the world and livelihoods. Nature and culture are perceived as constituent elements of the environment, therefore, integral parts of a pedagogical praxis of environmental education. Undoubtedly, the principles highlighted by the Treaty remain extremely relevant today. They address issues of great importance to environmental education in its diversity of understandings and actions, and they also apply to educational dialogues in various contexts, including the education of youth and adults.

In addition to the foundations mentioned in the Environmental Education Treaty, to which we will still refer in this text, we engage in dialogue and agree with Loureiro (2006) in his definition as a starting point for reflecting on environmental education.

We address Environmental Education as defined in Brazil based on a framework that sees education as an element of social transformation inspired by dialogue, the exercise of citizenship, the empowerment of individuals, the overcoming of capitalist forms of domination, and the understanding of the world in its complexity and life in its totality. Dialogue is understood in its original sense of exchange and reciprocity, stemming from the Greek prefix *dia*, becoming the foundation of education. In a transformative and popular perspective of Environmental Education, we educate ourselves by engaging in dialogue with ourselves, with those we identify as part of our community, with humanity, with other living beings, with the winds, tides, rivers, and ultimately, with the world, transforming the set of relationships through which we define ourselves as social and planetary beings (LOUREIRO, 2006, p. 23-24, our translation).

Considering the construction of environmental education in dialogue with this perspective, we acknowledge that the reference to the natural environment occurs in conjunction with understanding the cultural, social, and political environment. We are learners and are constantly learning, as Brandão (2007, p. 108, our translation) reminds us: "[...] an old

and beautiful lesson, but a lesson of wisdom often forgotten. We are rediscovering that among Us, on planet Earth, and throughout the Universe, everything that exists is part of the same whole, and the whole interacts and relates to everything." In this inevitable and continuous process of interactions, all spaces where knowledge is produced, that is, all educational spaces, intertwine as possibilities to learn how to interact and relate to the whole.

Political-pedagogical links between environmental education and adult education in educational praxis

Adult education in the contemporary context is shaped by the debate and emerging conceptualization of education and lifelong learning, as well as the modifications present in the text of the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB) 1996. Thus, its pedagogical constitution also undergoes a set of resignifications and postulations that engage with historical demands and current tensions that comprise Adult Education's configuration. Among the historical issues that continue to problematize this modality, we highlight: the defense and action to guarantee the right to education, the construction of an educational practice that meets the three functions defined in Opinion CNE 11/2000, the promotion of respect for age, gender, cultural, religious, social, and learning conditions diversity among adolescent, young, adult, and elderly subjects in Adult Education, the ongoing reduction in the number of Adult Education classes associated with school dropout by numerous students who enter this modality, among other concerns that permeate their daily educational life. Political-pedagogical links between environmental education and adult education in educational praxis.

When we think about the convergence between EJA in its contemporary context and the movements of Environmental Education, as presented earlier, we are challenged by both positions in federal public policies in recent years. Often, these policies have marginalized, made invisible, or even stifled these areas. In the context of the actions of the government of Jair Messias Bolsonaro, Silva (2021, p. 721, our translation) asserts that

The absence of EJA in educational policies highlights a process of de-schooling, manifested by marginalization within the Ministry of Education (MEC) structure, where there is currently no department responsible for this modality. Thus, EJA is once again relegated to philanthropy, relying on goodwill and voluntarism from groups with little training and no guarantee of educational continuity. While in the past, EJA was seen as a tool for the job market, now it is limited solely to certification, with the option of taking a supplementary exam or offering distance learning as sufficient alternatives for students.

In turn, within the scope of environmental policies, Layrargues (2020, p. 22, our translation) allows us to understand that in the most critical period of ecological safeguarding in Brazil, we witness a contrary action: "[...] with the Bolsonaro regime inaugurating a new phase, marked by a dizzying radicalization of environmental dismantling, to the point of giving rise to a profound ecocide to accompany the necropolitics of social inequality". These governmental positions towards EJA and Environmental Education raise many questions. For example, why did Adult Education and Environmental Education need/need to be disconnected? What can EJA and Environmental Education produce that confronts the interests of conservative capitalist politics?

We recall a statement by Sauvé and Orellana (2001, 2003, 2006, our translation) indicating, "The object of environmental education is not the environment as such, but our relationship with it." Similarly, the centrality of Environmental Education is "the network of relationships between people, their social group, and the environment" (SAUVÉ; ORELLANA, 2001, 2003, 2006, p. 275-276, our translation). In this understanding, we question whether developing a pedagogical practice aimed at young and adult audiences can occur without recognizing this network of relationships between individuals, their social groups, and the environment. Additionally, in continuing the dialogue with the authors, they affirm that "First, the environment is not a topic but a daily and vital reality. Second, environmental education is at the heart of a human development project" (SAUVÉ; ORELLANA, 2001, 2003, 2006, p. 277, our translation). By presenting itself as a daily reality, the environment is an occurrence and a possible experience for constructing knowledge and actions for all individuals who experience it, making it vital content for the educational practice of EJA.

For this to happen, key questions arise: how can we promote a formative, participatory, and reflective dialogue without exclude the young and adults who have been and continue to be excluded from the right to education? How can we strengthen an understanding of environmental issues that affect us all without ensuring the right to educational experience and schooling? With this in mind, we turn to the first two principles presented in the Treaty on Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Responsibility (Tratado de Educação Ambiental para Sociedades Sustentáveis e Responsabilidade Global) (1992), which urge us to reflect on this matter:

1. Education is a right for all; we are all learners and educators.
2. Environmental education should be based on critical and innovative thinking at any time or place, in its formal, non-formal, and informal modes, promoting transformation and the construction of society

(TRATADO DE EDUCAÇÃO AMBIENTAL PARA SOCIEDADES SUSTENTÁVEIS E RESPONSABILIDADE GLOBAL, 1992, our translation).

The environmental education that drives us towards this critical understanding and the transformation and construction of society in the hands of women and men around the world also invites us to recognize that we all learn and teach, as Freire asserted: "Teaching does not exist without learning, and vice versa, and it was through social learning that women and men historically discovered that it was possible to teach" (FREIRE, 2001, p. 26, our translation). From a philosophical perspective on education that materializes in the practice of Popular Education, initially associated with EJA and currently with Environmental Education as well, Freire (2011) urged us towards a formative mobilization: "No one educates anyone, no one educates themselves; human beings educate each other, mediated by the world."

Another possible learning from environmental education, especially through the principles presented in the Treaty on Environmental Education (1992), which also contributes to our understanding of EJA in its contemporary discourse, lies in need for mediation between our individual and collective spheres, respecting them in their constructions, as well as our local and global realities. It involves seeking and deepening relationships of reciprocity and respect for all forms of human and non-human life. What is the importance of recognizing in each student, and educator of Adult Education, their relevant social and political participation in the construction of society, from the local to the global, encompassing the universe in its entirety, in personal and collective relationships?

According to the text of the Treaty, in its fourth principle, "Environmental education is not neutral, but ideological. It is a political act" (TRATADO DE EDUCAÇÃO AMBIENTAL PARA SOCIEDADES SUSTENTÁVEIS E RESPONSABILIDADE GLOBAL, 1992, our translation). The dialogue between Environmental Education (EE) and Adult Education (EJA) intensifies when we consider them not as neutral but rather as forms of education that involve individuals who experience the world, interpret it, transform it, and, based on their experiences, readings, and creations, can better understand it and find the necessary means for a fulfilling and high-quality life for all, including the necessary transformations that need to be made for this construction. In this movement, EE also challenges EJA, as change is not only based on the right to access education but primarily on the reinvention of how we produce existence through educational processes. In this sense, education is not limited to providing access to established knowledge but rather to the constant reinvention of being, acting, living, and coexisting with oneself, others, and the planet in all its manifestations of life.

Therefore, it is also important to revisit Freire's understanding (2001, p. 110, our translation) that "[...] education is a form of intervention in the world." Recognizing education as a political act means acknowledging that women and men, young and adult individuals, are participants in the collective experience of life, both in their immediate environment, such as their home and neighborhood, and in a planetary sense. In this way, they are authors of their own stories and builders of the world rather than mere social spectators.

Still in dialogue with this sense of formation in the context of EJA, principles 7 and 8 of the Treaty of Environmental Education lead us to question: How do we see ourselves, listen to ourselves, and feel in the life contexts we share? Are our perspectives on others always directed towards those who share life with us, or are they solely focused on the individual self? This question, which remains unanswered, reveals much about the relationships we build in our individual and collective spheres. For example, to whom do the problems, disasters, and environmental crimes that plague the world day after day belong? Who suffers the impacts of climate change, intensive productive exploitation, or the devastation of life on the planet? The multiple and diverse wars, growing hunger, uncertainties about the future, human rights violations, and different forms of exploitation of human and non-human life, among other issues, also manifest as part of the daily life of a school that works with individuals, women, men, young people, and adults who live and question their existence. In this sense, environmental education not only holds us responsible for sharing these issues as mobilizations of a whole but also calls us to reflect on our capacity for reflection, cooperation, decision-making, and intervention, understood as daily processes in school and social life.

One of the most complex and, at the same time, powerful questions for pedagogical practice in EJA is the understanding of respect for the knowledge of the learners, as pointed out by Paulo Freire (2001). Just as knowledge demands this respect, the plurality of this knowledge and the recognition and valorization of diverse forms of knowledge, learning, and teaching, along with the empowerment of actions based on this learning, become essential for pedagogical practice in this modality. Principles 9, 10, and 11 of the Treaty of Environmental Education (1992) address some of these issues, also instigating the necessary understanding of indigenous and local histories and cultures, as expressed in the text of principle 9:

Environmental education must recover, recognize, respect, reflect upon, and utilize indigenous history and local cultures and promote cultural, linguistic, and ecological diversity. This implies a view of the history of native peoples to modify ethnocentric approaches and encourage bilingual education (TREATY OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES AND GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY, 1992, our translation).

Another important challenge in the formative experience of youth and adult education, based on environmental education, involves the necessary dialogue as a mobilization for the collective construction of life. Freire stated that he felt "[...] secure because there is no reason for me to be ashamed of not knowing something. Bearing witness to openness to others, a curious availability for life and its challenges are necessary knowledge for educational practice" (Freire, 2001, p. 153, our translation). In the author's view, by valuing the importance of dialogue as an essential element of education and culture, we find the idea of unfinishedness present in this dialogue exercise. "It is impossible to recognize oneself as an unfinished being and not open oneself to the world and others in search of explanations and answers to multiple questions. Closing oneself off from the world and others would go against the natural impulse of incompleteness" (FREIRE, 2001, p. 153, our translation).

We learn from Freire (2001) and reaffirm the value of dialogue in the everyday practice of education at all levels and modalities and in our formative processes in different spheres and places. Dialogue positions us as active participants, as presences that listen and speak, that engage in conversation, and, through this conversation, allow ourselves to be projected in constructing understandings and interventions in the world alongside others. Living and coexisting, and the learning that this implies, are exercises that have been part of human invention throughout the centuries and continue to be relevant in the face of the needs that arise in our journey through life. Youth and Adult Education also present themselves as potential spaces for dialogue about learning to live and coexist through exchanging and sharing experiences and revitalizing knowledge in encounters. Brandão (2007, p. 101, our translation) invites us to reflect, "We always live a plural, collective, and solitary life. Over many thousands of years, we have learned how to become human because, for better or worse, we have learned to coexist, to live together, to share among ourselves a life that would be impossible without it." However, the author also problematizes the "promises of individualism" (BRANDÃO, 2007, p. 101, our translation) and urges us to reflect on the importance of:

[...] relearn that human happiness is the everyday courage to move away from oneself towards the other, towards other people. It is the quest and adventure of knowing how to create together and of learning every day to share not only the joys of life but also the collaborative work that makes and will make this very human life we are given to live somewhere on Earth, during some time in its history, more and more fulfilling and happy (BRANDÃO, 2007, p. 101-102, our translation).

Final considerations

In constructive dialogues along this reflective journey, we have been reconstructing understandings from the field of adult and youth education and environmental education, propelled by the guiding question: what are the contributions of environmental education to pedagogical practices in adult and youth education? Throughout this journey, we have realized that dialogues involving environmental themes are intrinsically linked to the debates within EJA, and together, they can foster an educational action that problematizes urgent environmental issues in our century. Many of these issues are directly related to the everyday lives of young and adult individuals coming from diverse contexts.

It is essential to highlight that both Environmental Education and Adult and Youth Education have faced a pandemic context where prioritized social issues such as public health, access to food, housing, and even basic schooling for children took center stage, while these educational modalities were put on hold and sidelined. Furthermore, even before Jair Bolsonaro's government, these modalities were already facing neglect from educational policies, being marginalized, and having their minimal demands unmet. The approval of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) also contributed to placing EJA and EE in the background, with little visibility and recognition in a document that became essential for educational systems, further emphasizing the marginalized position of these two areas in national education.

The search to understand EJA through the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) "clearly states that there is no curriculum guiding document based on the knowledge, experiences, and culture of AYE learners, leaving it up to the States and Municipalities to construct such a document" (CARVALHO *et al.*, 2020, p. 61). Similarly, EE also faces challenges, as mentioned in the reflections of Nepomuceno *et al.* (2021, p. 8, our translation),

[...] we observe that the text of the BNCC does not ignore the curriculum frameworks and guidelines; however, it minimizes socio-environmental issues, focusing on the non-place of environmental education in Basic Education (EB), which is essential to teaching and learning in the pursuit of emancipation and environmental justice.

This invitation to approach also raises the possibility of a common foundation that does not directly relate to the diversity and potential of educational fields. However, it is precisely for this reason that it allows us to continuously reconstruct our capacity to read and reinterpret the EJA and EE modalities as we read and reinterpret the world. Through these reflective and

critical readings, constructed in dialogue with others and with the world of educational spheres and beyond, we can discover the conditions for necessary transformations and the persistence in the reality of both areas, mainly through the collective work of educators.

As in Freire's writings (2001, p. 85-86, our translation), "In the world of History, culture, politics, I *observe* not to *adapt*, but to *change*." Recognizing the connections of EE in the EJA movement inspires us to envision a possible reconnection with the historical heritage of popular education, present in the fields discussed in this article, which invite reflection and emancipatory social practice. Could a gradual return to the studies and understandings of Popular Education be a viable point for rewriting the history of EE and EJA in contemporary Brazilian education? Could EE, revitalize by the resistance of different social groups in protecting the environment, also reactivate struggles and resistance in favor of open and fully functional schools, ensuring the inclusion of non-schooled youth and adults? A dignified life for all and full access to education is essential to environmental issues, like forest preservation, combating hunger, and promoting peace?

Another important learning for EJA stems from environmental education being based on recognized interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological approaches in its history and legislation. Despite difficulties and contradictions, there is a continuous effort towards cross-cutting and paradigmatic questioning, particularly from a critical perspective on socio-environmental debates. Similarly, EJA has evolved amidst intense class dialogue and significant popular mobilization, aligning with the very construction of Popular Education principles. Therefore, we can understand that EJA and EE can create new times and spaces for education, expanding existing boundaries and prompting a conceptual and practical reorientation for both.

Furthermore, as EJA is increasingly considered an "instrument for education and lifelong learning," as indicated by the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB) 9394 of 1996, it becomes essential to reflect on the paths to be followed to understand this new orientation and how it will be effectively implemented in the practice of this modality. Gadotti (2016, p. 61, our translation) asserts, "We do not need to seek models from 'Northern' countries, with their hegemonic and neo-colonizing discourses. Therefore, Brazil needs to discuss the topic of Lifelong Education based on the reference to Popular Education."

Finally, through these interpretations, it was possible to reflect upon and comprehend the importance of the contributions from the field of environmental education in the construction of praxis in youth and adult education that recognizes and reaffirms the

foundations of problematizing and emancipatory popular education. This praxis should be conscious of the shared responsibility for caring for the planetary life of all human and non-human beings.

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