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The Sociology of Education in Portugal: Towards a Renewed Critical Space

Mariana Gaio Alves, Leonor L. Torres, Bruno Dionísio

Abstract: This article aims to identify points from the past and present itinerary of the sociology of education in Portugal, through considering future horizons in three areas of activity: teaching, research and intervention. What state is the teaching of sociology in and what is the curricular space it occupies in teacher training? Which regularities can be identified in sociological research and which challenges can be seen in the production of knowledge regarding new phenomena, objects and approaches? Which constraints are faced in the public recognition of sociology and its intervention in socio-educational, school and non-school, formal and non-formal scenarios? The basis of these questions is a reflection which is being carried out through the coordination of the Sociology of Education Section of the Portuguese Sociology Association, especially through interviews with sociologists of education, a documental survey and organisation of symposia on these topics, which have been publicised in the Portuguese *Jornal de Sociologia da Educação* (Journal of the Sociology of Education). The aim of this portrait concerning Portugal is to broaden dialogue with other sociologists of education, particularly those from the South of Europe, to show common or diverging concerns, which challenge the communities of various countries, within a perspective which is both national and international.

Keywords: sociology of education, teaching, research, socio-educational intervention

Introduction

Moral education, as conceived by Durkheim, was not only a central topic for the recognition of sociology as an academic discipline. It was, at the same time, the pathology of a traditional world falling apart and the key to “organizing modernity” (Wagner, 1994), inculcating the “society in us” (Karsenti, 2005).

This “sociological revolution” (Joly, 2017), born within a French-German crib, disseminated Western rationalism which, through acquiring universal significance (Wagner, 2013), colonized the epistemological repertoire of the various national sociologies. However, European sociology, of a particular European modernity, did not reflect the specificities of the national sociologies that it endowed, as was the case with the South of Europe, Portugal included.

The de-synchronised periods of national sociologies correspond to the desynchronised periods of political and economic modernities. The *Trente Glorieuses*, to which Jean Fourastié alluded, did not coincide historically with the Portuguese reality. When the three golden decades of the *Welfare State* slowed and the “new spirit of capitalism” (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999) created a neoliberal shift, of which Thatcher and Reagan were the most emblematic faces, Portugal was taking its first democratic steps after the 1974 revolution which had (almost) everything to do with the *Welfare State*. Portugal thus shares historical periods and circumstances with other southern European countries, concerning the uniqueness of the *Welfare State* model which characterises it (Adão & Silva, 2002).

The “slow and delayed process of the schooling of the Portuguese population” (Almeida & Vieira, 2006) also corresponded to a delayed institutional consolidation of sociology, when compared with other European countries of so-called advanced modernity. This specificity impacted upon the agenda of the sociology of Portuguese education which had reached international sociological debate at a time when the school of heirs was challenged and theories of cultural reproduction were raging (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970).

Although the French matrix had a decisive influence, the Portuguese sociology of education extended its international references, maturing and becoming more eclectic, although its recognition and knowledge about other sociologies of the Global South remained rather limited. The complicity of Portuguese sociology of education with the modernity of northern countries was clear in the adoption of a critical sociological perspective based on the idea of structural backwardness and the “slow and delayed schooling process” (Almeida & Vieira, 2006). Perhaps this is why the sociology of education in Portugal has invested most of its energies in a sociology of the school and schooling, and less in a non-scholastic sociology of education, of informal

or non-formal education, the educational formats of which would, perhaps, be more associated to the idea of the delay of the traditional world (of illiteracy, of child labour in the fields or in factories, particular cultural features, etc.) and less to the ideas of progress, economic development and modern educational society. The integration of Portugal into major supranational bodies such as the EU in parallel with the growing influence of international organisations such as the OECD in each country's educational policies reinforce the idea of structural backwardness and the imperative of convergence. This allowed critical sociology to find a permanent thread of grievance in the monitoring of socio-educational asymmetries and, at the same time, to internalize the perception of an always unfinished educational modernity, generating an individual and collective feeling of guilt and shame, forged by the sensation of the permanent failure of the State and educational policies, the school and its professionals, of students and their families.

The emphasis given in recent decades to the problematic aspects of social reality has dragged educational phenomena into the realm of mediated controversies, with all the concomitant dramatised choreography within the public space associated with this. In this scenario, education is (nowadays) a world of friction rather than agreement, and such a sense of permanent educational crisis also produces a permanent sense of sociological crisis. The association between social crisis and sociological crisis is perhaps a fatal condemnation of sociology, which will accompany it from the cradle to the grave. However, it has been able to metamorphose itself, despite the internal tension between paradigms or the external turbulence caused by political cycles and social periods that have been more hostile to it. European sociology of education was consolidated in a phase of "organized modernity" (Wagner, 1994) represented by the society of great collectives, by a national, industrial and class society. In this context, criticism was directed at a school institution considered as socially unequal and which was oppressive to individual uniqueness, due to its standardized and homogeneous functioning. The current scenario of "extended liberal modernity" (Wagner, 2013) transposes the sociology of education to the challenges of a singularized school (Martuccelli, 2010), which, without abandoning the former desideratum, finds itself coping with the affirmation of identities and the tense (non) recognition of differences, shifting criticism to the sacrifices that the singularized individual has to make in order to become autonomous and be recognized.

If it is true that sociology is periodically haunted by political and economic circumstances which, feeling uncomfortable with sociological questioning or considering it useless, try to make it more vulnerable and diminish it, it is also no less true that sociology has managed to rejuvenate itself through constant reflection regarding its history, its epistemological conditions and parts to be followed for the renewal of the spaces in which

it intervenes. Which strengthens it, and does not diminish it, in this fight against devaluation. This characteristic, which cuts across the various international sociologies, has equally been present in Portuguese sociology since the beginning of its institutional affirmation, particularly in the field of the sociology of education, where the debate about its past, present and future has been constantly re-nourished, both inside and outside of associativism. This article is thereby an attempt to maintain this inheritance alive, identifying periods and webs of meaning that make it possible to grasp what is and what is not unique in the process of affirmation and of consolidation of the sociology of education in Portugal, adding to the debate about the renewal of the critical space of the sociology of education within the panorama of Southern Europe.

A proposal from cartography for the scientific field of the sociology of education

Let us accept the assumption that the sociology of education is a scientific field, insofar as it constitutes a space of social life with its own relatively autonomous structure which is organised around specific objectives and practices, presenting its own operational logic which structures relations between its internal agents, in accordance with Pierre Bourdieu's conceptualisation (2004). Therefore, the analysis of the challenges nowadays placed upon the sociology of education requires us to consider the objectives and practices which confer this singularity on the scientific field, examining the respective logic which structures the relations between the agents within it.

It is with the intention of contributing to this analysis that we have brought together a collection of previous works, both national and international in scope (see references in sections 2 and 3), which have sought to map chronological periods and rather salient aspects in the development of the sociology of education, as well as a set of 10 interviews with sociologists from Portuguese education which represent three generations in the evolution of this scientific area in Portugal. That is, a "generation which, by the mid-1980s, contributed to affirming itself politically and scientifically; the generation which, since then, that has established a patrimony; and, finally, a generation which was born from the revolution, and fruit of the LBSE itself (LBSE - Framework Law for the Educational System), which nowadays has rejuvenated the field" (Dionísio, 2017, p. 1).

Ensuring the representation of these three generations combined with the option to consider a diversity of institutional affiliations were the main criteria adopted by the current and previous members of the coordination board of the Sociology of Education Section of the Portuguese Sociology Associa-

tion to select the interviewed. As a result, some of the 10 interviewees have reached the top of their academic careers, and two younger researchers from different higher education institutions have also been interviewed. Those interviewed work in different universities (and one of them in a Polytechnic Institute) as they occupy various positions within the scientific field. Mostly male, their training and professional fields are varied, although all have post-graduate training in the area of Sociology of Education (See table 1).

Table 1. Empirical corpus and profile of those interviewed

Interviewed	Publication of the interview	Interviewer	Disciplinary specialization	Institutional affiliation and professional category (at the time of the interview)
Licínio Lima (Lima, E1)	Newsletter no. 5 – March 2011	José Augusto Palhares	Degree in Portuguese-English Teaching (1981) PhD in Education, area of knowledge in School Organization and Administration (1991)	Institute of Education of the University of Minho Senior professor
Sérgio Grácio (Grácio, E2)	Newsletter no. 6 – July 2011	Ana Matias Diogo	Degree in Sociology (1970) PhD in Sociology of Education (1992)	Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the NOVA University of Lisbon Retired Professor
Bruno Dionísio (Dionísio, E3)	Newsletter No. 7 – October 2011	Pedro Abrantes	Degree in Sociology (2001) PhD in Sociology (2010)	School of Education of Portalegre Adjunct Professor
Telmo Caria (Caria, E4)	Newsletter No. 8 – January 2012	José Augusto Palhares	Degree in Sociology (1984) PhD in Sociology of Education (1987)	University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro Senior professor
Sofia Marques da Silva (Silva, E5)	Newsletter No. 10 – October 2012	Pedro Abrantes	Degree in Educational Sciences (2001) PhD in Educational Sciences (2008)	Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Porto Assistant Professor
Carlos Alberto Gomes (Gomes, E6)	Newsletter No. 11 – January 2013	José Augusto Palhares	Degree in Sociology (1980) PhD in Sociology of Education (1998)	Institute of Education of the University of Minho Assistant Professor

Maria Manuel Vieira (Vieira, E7)	Newsletter No. 12 – June 2013	Ana Matias Diogo	Degree in Sociology (1982) PhD in Sociology (1998)	Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon Researcher
Almerindo Janela Afonso (Afonso, E8)	Newsletter No. 14 – January 2015	Leonor Lima Torres	Degree in Political and Social Sciences (1980) PhD in Sociology (1997)	Institute of Education of the University of Minho Associate Professor
Teresa Seabra (Seabra, E9)	Newsletter No. 15 – October 2015	Mariana Gaio Alves	Degree in Sociology (1989) PhD in Sociology (2008)	ISCTE- University Institute of Lisbon Assistant Professor
José Manuel Resende (Resende, E10)	Jornal de Sociologia da Educação, nº 0 – May 2017	Bruno Dionísio	Degree in Sociology (1983) PhD in Sociology (2001)	Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the NOVA University of Lisbon Associate Professor with Aggregation

All the interviews were semi-structured and included questions organized around four main topics: the past, present and future of the sociology of education; the relationship between sociology of education and the fields of education and sociology; main issues and methodological approaches within the sociology of education; the role of sociology (and sociologists) of education within social contexts, political debates and society in general.

Sharing the idea of Hissa (2013, p. 45) that researching is “to construct cartographies besides maps, to go beyond the places represented by the sketches, to make routes and mappings while on the trajectory”, the proposal from cartography that is presented next is guided by the general intentionality of characterizing and understanding the emergence and development of the scientific field of the sociology of education. Assuming that teaching and research are inseparable and fundamental components of any scientific field (Nóvoa, 2018), we will seek to map the main events and trends that have marked each of these two components, showing their interdependencies and their interconnection with changes in the political agenda for education which have taken place at national and global levels, as well as with the evolution of the education system itself.

Consequently, the 1970s represents the period of the institutionalization of sociology in Portugal, followed by its gradual social and political affirmation especially pertinent in the 1980s. From the 1990s, and especially in the 2000s, dynamics of both global and local valorisation of educational policies and realities were observed, with new challenges and reconfigurations in the field of educational sociology emerging (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Understanding the Past, Building the Present, and Projecting the Future

POLITICAL AGENDA	Revolution of April 1974 Model of “democratic management” Education as a political priority Law No. 46/86 (LBSE) - Global Reform of the Education System DL No. 43/89 (School Autonomy)	Desp. No 98-A / 92 (Student assessment) DL No. 115-A / 98 (School Autonomy regime) Expansion of higher education Educational Territories of Priority Intervention (TEIP) Development of adult education Expansion of school clusters and unipersonal management (DL n.º 75/2008) Implementation of external evaluation of schools Municipalization of education DL nº 79/2014 - Legal Regime of Teaching Enrollment DL nº 74/2006 of 24 March - Academic Degrees and Higher Education Degrees
	Creation and multiplying of Sociology HE degrees Creation and expansion of New Universities and Higher Education Schools Integrated model of teacher education Expansion of teacher training / Sociology Professionalization of teachers	Creation of degrees of interface with Sociology Multiplying and expansion postgraduate training Decline in the demand for teacher training degrees Implementation of Bologna Process New school teachers’ qualification rules Funded surveys and research projects
	1970-1980 Institutionalization and affirmation of the field of the sociology of education	1990-2019 Consolidation and reconfiguration of the field of the sociology of education
RESEARCH: APPROACHES AND TOPICS	MACRO LEVEL Educational system and educational policies Syndicalism, teacher professionalism, interaction in pedagogical contexts, academic (in) success and school curriculum, mass schooling Role of the State, educational policies (Sociology of educational policies)	MEGA-MACRO-MESO-MICRO LEVEL Global educational policies, organizations and actors Globalization, Europeanization, role of international organizations: educational evaluation, accountability systems Sociology of childhood Regulation of public policies, school autonomy, adult education, comparative analysis Sociology of educational organizations Higher education and transition to work Other educational places: non-formal and informal educational processes Issues of gender, social differences, cultural diversity, justice, excellence

Institutionalization and affirmation of the field of the sociology of education

Chronologically, the origins of the teaching of sociology of education can be located in the early twentieth century when the subject was included in

curricular plans of studies for teaching qualification courses at the Faculties of Arts of Lisbon and Coimbra University (Stoer, 1992). Mapping the initial studies of a sociological approach to education (Stoer, 1990; 1992; Stoer & Afonso, 1999; Afonso, 2001; 2005; 2009; Abrantes, 2004; 2010; Torres & Palhares, 2014), it is important to remember the work of scientific and institutional legitimization carried out at the Office for Social Research (later Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon) by the team led by professor Adérito Sedas Nunes in the mid-twentieth century, as well as the emphasis given in this team to educational issues, in particular those related to university at the time (Stoer, 1992; Afonso, 2005). Notwithstanding these inaugural chronological milestones, it was in the 1970s and 1980s that the sociology of education was unquestionably affirmed as a scientific field, which is associated with the fact that this period also corresponds to a stage of strong growth of the Portuguese educational system.

In other words, the institutionalization of educational sociology spaces within higher education is inseparable from the accelerated expansion of education and schooling in the period after the Second World War and “the growing centrality that education took on as a social and political priority” (Vieira, E7) in this socio-historical context. The political intention to expand access to schooling announced by the Portuguese government at the end of the 1960s became an unquestionable social and political priority in the period of political democratisation of the country which started with the Carnation Revolution on 25 April 1974, creating an environment conducive to the progressive social and political affirmation of the sociology of education throughout the 1980s.

Indeed, in Portugal it was the political change of 1974 that made the creation of University sociology degrees possible (Costa, 1992) and the return to the country of a large group of intellectuals, along which many sociologists (Pinto, 2007), resulting in the enrichment of the small national scientific community. In this sense, it was from the 1970s that the institutionalisation of the sociology (of education) in the country could be observed, which happened later than in other countries in which the dynamics of the expansion of schooling and education had assumed greater relevance in decades previously, that is, in the middle of the 20th century. In this respect, for example, a significant intellectual and political influence of this subject was recognized in England in the 1950s (Lauder, Brown & Halsey, 2011).

Similar to what had happened in the Anglo-Saxon context and also in France, the first stage of the development of the sociology of education clearly showed an interest in macrostructural approaches, focused on the dynamics of the functioning of the educational system (1970s) and, in a more accentuated manner, in educational policies (1980s). Driven by the democratic revolution, the affirmation of sociology in Portugal found a context

conducive to its expansion: the setting up of New Universities and Schools of Education, along with the creation of an integrated model of teacher training, which included the area of the sociology of education in its curricular plans, albeit under different names. In fact, the idea that an unmistakable characteristic trait in the development of the sociology of education in Portugal corresponded to the inseparability of the affirmation of this scientific field and expansion of teacher training courses became relatively consensual (Egreja, 2016; Silva & Alves, 2015; Vieira, 2004).

This being so, the circulation of sociological knowledge (Rayou, 2002) on education simultaneously materialised as an area of specialisation in the teaching of sociology in general, as well as through teacher training degrees. However in the Portuguese case, the ten interviewees stress, in a consensual manner, the importance of this close association between the affirmation of the sociology of education as an area of teaching in Portuguese universities and polytechnics and the expansion of teacher training degrees in these institutions, indicating that “our first interlocutors for the sociology of education from 1975/76, and throughout the 1980s, were teacher training students” (Lima, E1). Also at the international level, of note was that the sociology of education public became, in the 1960s and 1970s, mainly teachers (Lauder, Brown & Halsey, 2011), urging the need from then on to reflect on the place of the teaching of sociology of education in teacher training degrees (Trotter & Lessard, 2002).

In the 1980s, the gradual implementation of “democratic management” in schools became noticeable at the administrative and political level and the process of Global Reform of the Educational System, triggered by the publication of the Framework Law for the Educational System (Law No. 46/86), which were important milestones in the definition of research priorities. For example, the first sociological works produced in this period focused on issues that reflected the dominant concerns of teacher education, such as trade unionism and teacher professionalism, interaction and pedagogical context, lack of success and school curricula, and mass schooling. Also in the 1980s, interest in knowledge about the role of the State and educational policies laid the ground work for an approach focused on the “sociology of educational policies” (Afonso, 2009, p. 67), which in the following decades was strengthened by extending its horizons to international contexts.

At the same time, in addition to training courses for teachers and other educators, sociology of education from the 1980s also began to include study plans aimed not only at the training of sociologists, but also other professionals (for example, social workers), as mentioned by Teresa Seabra (E9). In this regard, Almerindo Afonso (E8) underlines that “the sociology of education in Portugal expanded greatly with degrees in teaching (...) but also accompanied the growth in postgraduate study (academic masters, pro-

fessional masters and PhDs) and the professionalisation of in-service teachers”. In any event, sociological knowledge was understood as a resource for thinking and acting within professional practice, which was also highlighted by the results of similar research in other countries (see for example, Baluteau, 2002).

To that end, it was crucial that the teaching of the sociology of education avoided deterministic perspectives on schooling which would not allow the identification of possible paths for the intervention of teachers and other professionals, especially as regards the alleviation of social inequalities (Trottier & Lessard, 2002). At the same time, this type of concern in the teaching of sociology of education became particularly important for qualitative research and analyses based on the pedagogic relationship and the internal dynamics of schools and classrooms (Lauder, Brown & Halsey, 2011; Baluteau, 2002).

Considering the evolution of the sociology of education in Portugal and underlining the importance of its “dual condition of being peripheral and initiatory”, Vieira (E7) spoke about the amplitude and plurality of approaches. The international synergies provided early on through contact with scientific works and authors from various latitudes certainly enhanced a certain versatility and theoretical and methodological openness in the field. Despite this background, there was relative consensus among the researchers interviewed concerning certain research regularities and limitations. Here we can highlight only two topics: i) Social inequalities have remained a dominant research object, a distinctive hallmark of this field, albeit with theoretical and methodological variations throughout time, with such studies themselves being conditioned by the political agenda: the study of equality, exclusion and democratisation, at the outset; more recently, issues of gender, equity, multiculturalism, justice; ii) furthermore, the well-known prevalence of a sociology of school (Silva E5) and formal educational processes (Afonso E8), as well as methodologies of a fundamentally qualitative nature.

Consolidation and reconfiguration of the field of the sociology of education

With more evidence from the 1990s onwards, the development of the sociology of education included two subject areas which both came together as well as distancing themselves: one forming part of sociology and the other that of education sciences (Abrantes, 2004). The creation of undergraduate courses interfacing with sociology (education sciences, sociocultural animation, among others) and the multiplication of postgraduate training offered in a period marked by the expansion of higher education, led to the opening of new research topics, both to address the challenges posed by the new

training profiles and also to follow the already visible influences of international political agendas.

The scope of research which opened allowed for the mobilisation of multiple disciplinary contributions that intersected within this panorama, some more closely related to sociology, others marked mainly by approaches coming from education sciences. Although there was a shift in the scale of observation to the mega level, focused on the analysis of global educational policies and globalisation, Europeanisation and the role of international organisations, at the same time, interest intensified for macro and meso approaches, now focused on issues of educational assessment and higher educational areas.

Within this diversity, it was still possible to identify a fundamental project within the teaching of the sociology of education, showing how the educational system is rooted within its cultural, social, economic and political context, as well as the way this system can have an impact on the society of which it forms part (Trottier & Lessard, 2002). Indeed, the teaching of the sociology of education is valued by the majority of our interviewees for enabling the “understanding” and/or “explaining”, sociologically, of school and educational dynamics, constituting an enrichment of the training of both teachers and other professionals who study the sociology of education. This fundamentally, from the perspective of the interviewees, involves promoting processes of interpretive deconstruction in order to destabilise common-sense beliefs and evidence, thus supporting the sociological problematisation of educational situations, as also suggested by teachers of the sociology of education interviewed by Baluteau (2002).

In addition, some of our interviewees attached great importance to the study of the sociology of education which also involves developing critical thinking about schools and the classroom, as well as educational practices within these contexts. In this sense, it is not only about contributing to a deepening of understanding, but also of fostering the critical questioning of educational realities in order to eventually lead to a change of perspectives, attitudes or even practices: “there is a certain hope of training or pedagogical order here that provokes critical reflection, which can reveal certain mechanisms of social reproduction, for example, an institution that is known by all and which tends to be naturalised, that is, the school!” (Lima, E1).

However, in multidisciplinary and professional degrees, with emphasis on those dedicated to teacher education, the place of teaching in the sociology of education has been the object of significant changes in recent decades. At the international level, Trottier & Lessard (2002) point out reforms of teacher training degrees in Québec, from the 1990s, which were strongly influenced by pressure from employees about what to include and how to organise curricula, resulting in a certain marginalisation of the sociology of

education and a growing emphasis on practice at the expense of theory. In the Anglophone context, Lauder, Brown & Halsey (2011) point to the emergence, at the end of the 20th century, of managerial perspectives concerned with the effectiveness of school and education that have coexisted with the decrease of the importance given to the subject of sociology of education in academic training.

These dynamics have similarities with trends which our interviewees affirm have been observable in Portugal more recently, that is, at the start of the 21st century. In particular, in connection with the implementation of the Bologna Process and the new legal norms on teaching qualifications established by the national government in the first decade of the 21st century, there has been in the specific case of teacher training the “tendency towards increasing psychologicalisation and didactisation of this training, which has occupied ever more space” (Afonso, E8). Also, within this sphere one can note the powerful influence of educational policies of a managerial nature (focused on competitiveness, rationalisation and performance levels) on teacher training projects, now more concerned with the mastery of new technologies, technical instruments measuring results and classroom management formulas (Lima, 2016). This technical and instrumental wave has removed from the framework of political and institutional concerns an academic training of an interdisciplinary nature, where the sociology of education could make an unquestionable contribution.

In parallel, there is evidence in the Portuguese case that the sociology of education as an area of specialisation within the field of sociology training remains “in considerable demand” (Seabra, E9), taking on “major importance at the level (...) of advanced training (Masters, PhDs, or post-doc projects)” (Vieira, E7). Indeed, decrease in the search for teacher training courses goes along with the continuance, or even slight increase, of students seeking sociology courses where the sociology of education is one of the possible areas of specialisation.

Considering the institutional spaces which have been predominant in terms of the teaching of the sociology of education, it is not surprising that the idea that the school takes on a clear centrality in the circulation of knowledge is a theme running through several of the interviews. In this regard, the words of Telmo Caria (E4) are illustrative “school and schooling are at the centre of all educational research and reflection of a sociological nature” and also those of Sérgio Grácio (E2) “probably the sociology of education linked to teacher training ended up predominantly directing research towards the issues of social inequalities with regard to education, multiculturalism and intercultural reality, of teachers themselves as a professional group, but above all perhaps their own educational practices and attitudes”.

However, that centrality (or hegemony, as it is also termed by the interviewees) of the school does not mean that themes related to non-school forms, processes and contexts are absent from the teaching of the sociology of education. Expressions such as “intersections between school and other educational institutions (...) and non-formal educational topics” (Silva, E5) or “the non-educational is a world to be discovered!” (Gomes, E6) or “the un-sticking of the sociology of education” (Seabra, E9) or also “looking at a way of raising individuals starting from school and the development of schooling, but also looking at integrating these categories into other spaces beyond schooling” (Resende, E10) show how, from the individual perspective of each of these interviewees, one can note the presence of school and non-school contexts and educational processes in the teaching of the sociology of education. Moreover, Lima (E1) notes that “nowadays, there is a certain development, to the point where the sociology of education is deployed in “sociology of education and educational politics”, in the “sociology of non-school education” and in the “sociology of education and training”.

The existence of the plurality of topics in the teaching of the sociology of education is closely related to the way in which an increase has been seen in the amount of sociological research developed along with the extension of the objects of study beyond the scholastic institution. The focus on “non-school” issues is, on the one hand, arising from the recognition that these are fundamental to understand what is happening inside schools and, on the other hand, it is intertwined with the development of adult education and the political debate on lifelong learning taking place in Portugal as well as at the European level, as the Lisbon Agenda induced an understanding of education as a process that takes place lifelong and life wide. Additionally, the expansion of new interface degrees with Sociology (Education, Social and Cultural Animation, Social Work, etc.) and the exploration of new areas of professional intervention, contributed to the enlarging of the objects of study and their displacement for non-school dimensions. Some interviewees emphasise that the option regarding the plurality of topics emerges “also from those which are contemporary educational concerns that affect the lives of the/our students” (Silva, E5), that is, “they are matters that enter, on the one hand, through theoretical, academic and conceptual sophistication (...) but also enter because of the political, social, cultural agenda, etc., through a society which is becoming very complex” (Lima, E1). In this sense, the plurality of institutional spaces and student publics of the sociology of education has contributed to the enlargement of research topics and to the reconfiguration of sociological knowledge, at the same time as this knowledge is disseminated in society through education.

In fact, in recent decades there has been a significant diversification of topics fostered not only by the increase in research and publications pro-

duced in the academic area but also through enlargement of the objects of study outside the school institution. The increase in adult education policies, the increase in compulsory schooling to 12 years, the implementation of the full-time school, the commitment to TEIP (Educational Areas involving Priority Intervention) and the transfer of competences to local power constitute only a few of the political measures that have had an influence constraining research effects. The fact that some of these programmes have stimulated an increase in research projects, sometimes on demand, sometimes couched in public and/or (national and international) private funding, has contributed to the expansion of approaches and to the actual social visibility of this area of knowledge. More recently, European funding programs have made a significant contribution to the development of new research areas, in line with European political priorities.

As Maria Manuel Vieira (E7) so well observed, along with the contraction seen in teacher training courses, which have a reduced sociological component in their study plans (Lima E1; Afonso E8), sociological approaches to education have taken on another life in the context of advanced training “where disciplinary specialisation” (in Masters and PhD theses, or post-doc projects) has been displaced, as well as the development of scientific research (in terms of the volume of projects submitted for national or international funding, the number of publications and communications at scientific events), as well as the carrying out of research on demand” (Vieira E7). This broader developmental movement has had effects on the very diversification of scales of analysis, now more focused on mega-macro plans, with special emphasis regarding the regulation of (supra) national public policies and comparative analyses, and on meso-micro plans, focusing on the study of the school’s organisational dynamics (autonomy, groupings, school culture, leadership, success and failure), as well as other places and educational agents (universities for senior citizens, companies, associations, tutoring centres).

Challenges and future directions for the sociology of education in Portugal

Mapping the course of development of the sociology of education in Portugal has allowed us to identify some regularities and singularities in this scientific field and, from these, reflect on future challenges and directions.

At the epistemological level, interdisciplinarity emerges in the testimonies of most of the interviewees as a practice to be valued, as a form of resistance to a certain propensity of “closure into rigid affiliations”, governed by the same “analytical compass” (Dionísio E3). Disciplinary fragmentation inside the field of the sociology of education and “asphyxiated stagnation in

a given specialisation carries with it the risk of establishment of theoretical and analytical automatisms” (Vieira E7). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, Lawn & Furlong (2011, p. 5) underline the difficulties in (critically) linking the analytical forces of the various educational disciplines: “critical mass appears to be replaced by micro-communities”. At a time when objects of study have diversified and have extended context beyond the school, interdisciplinary dialogue seems heuristically appropriate in the production of new questions and other perspectives on increasingly complex and multi-contextual problems. As Lauder, Brown & Halsey (2011, p. 26) argue, a multidisciplinary perspective fosters a “[...] disruptive but necessary voice in democratic debate at a time of economic and social crisis”.

From the theoretical point of view, the utilisation of an interdisciplinary matrix may open the field of the sociology of education to “other processes, contacts, times and spaces where forms of education and training occur which can be constituted as an object of sociological enquiry” (Afonso E8). What is more, this interdisciplinary perspective can challenge the very theoretical and conceptual devices of the sociology of education too focused on the “centre” and hardly on the “margins” of the school system, as Derouet (2005) warned more than a decade earlier. Likewise, the sociologists interviewed pointed out these concerns in highlighting the importance of considering the non-educational beyond educational horizons, through use of a “situational and contextual analysis” (Caria E4), or the need to interweave educational phenomena within the areas of family, work and life cycles, as highlighted by Dionísio (E3). Indeed, the political and organisational complexification of Portuguese schools has challenged conventional theoretical and methodological canons, the premises of which seem to be insufficient to account for new dynamics and educational phenomena, such as, for example, school groupings as an organisational configuration, relations between municipalities and schools, and the emergence of school marketing as a management strategy, among others.

At the methodological level, the diversification of objects of study and the complexification of contemporary educational reality call for the renewal of methods and devices for collecting information or, from the perspective of two interviewees, the creation of “more creative methodological devices” (Dionísio E3, Vieira E7). The exploration of new links between observation scales fostered by interdisciplinary dialogue will certainly constitute a heuristically pertinent strategy to deepen in the future. In particular, exploration of the potentialities of the meso-approach focused on the school establishment (Derouet, 1987) may cause a certain methodological renewal which could make it possible to capture dynamics from within (organisation, context) and, at the same time, the link between the macro (system) and micro (units of analysis) dimensions. In the same sense, Barrault-Stella & Goast-

ellec (2015) propose the development of a “political sociology of education” which comprises the combination of analyzes carried out on various scales from the international to the local and to the institution, as well as researching the emergence of new processes of political manufacturing and their effects at each of the scales concerned (of the largest at the smallest).

At the political and institutional level, we would highlight the need to (re) construct an institutional and academic culture based on “academic freedom, open to discovery, submitted to peer criticism, but unrelated to imposed paradigmatic loyalties” (Vieira E7), more in line with the movement for theoretical and methodological creativity assuaged by interdisciplinary approaches. A second challenge will be the ability of the scientific community to resist and counteract the commodification of science and its subordination to “criteria of commercial utility or pragmatic profitability logics” (Afonso E8), investing in a change in “dominant conceptions of utility and importance” (Afonso E8), as well as the clear definition of “limits of scientific reasonableness” (Vieira E7) in the acceptance and development of research. This is essentially combating the “disciplining of disciplines” (Apple, Ball & Gandin, 2013, p. 21) prompted by the pressure for productivity and subordination to the dictates of funding agencies.

Beyond the Academy: intervention scenarios of the sociologists of education

The institutional consolidation of Portuguese sociology has, inevitably, provoked an explosion in the number of graduates since the late 1980s. While it is true that an embryonic scientific system and the higher educational system in the process of massification lacked degrees in sociology, it is also true that teaching and research could not absorb such a constantly expanding corps. As a result, a professional group took shape, with professional areas of intervention which went far beyond the Academy. The Portuguese Sociology Association, founded in 1985, has contributed not only to stimulating internal debate about the evolution of the “state-of-the-art” in the scientific field but also to periodically monitoring the problems and challenges of the profession in terms of professional integration, conditions of employability and the exploration of new intervention possibilities (Carreiras, Freitas & Valente, 1999; Ramos, Capucha & Tavares, 2018).

Although the public recognition of sociology always seems to be at risk and the eternal question “what is the real use of a sociologist?” hangs over us like the sword of Damocles (Dubet, 2011), professional paths in multiple areas of activity have shown their ability to become part of the profession. In the educational field, sociologists have been integrated within schools and municipalities, in associations and non-governmental organizations,

in private companies and institutions, in public administration and in positions of governance, not forgetting the fact that three ministers of education were sociology graduates. As such, as educational phenomena have become a public problem increasingly central to the political agenda, the possible horizons for the professional intervention of sociologists have widened in some cases, but also suffered reversal and new constraints in other cases.

In secondary education, sociology is present as an elective course, but sociologists have for decades been fighting a constantly losing battle for its teaching. The non-existence of an actual recruitment group throws sociologists into the bizarre situation of being disadvantaged in the teaching of the subject, to the benefit of Economics, Law or Philosophy graduates. However, the entry into force in 2017 of the Student Profile upon Exit from Compulsory Schooling may provide a window of opportunity for the contribution of sociologists in the management of educational projects that operationalise the principles that such a reference framework advocates. Furthermore, in elementary education, the recent creation of the subject of Citizenship and Development offers unique characteristics for sociologists to legitimately claim its teaching, although current school demographics (both the student population and the teacher population) does not favour this scenario.

In addition to teaching, elementary and secondary schools nowadays face challenges that would justify the intervention of sociologists but, at the same time, they are experiencing times and dynamics that hinder this. As Grácio (E2) pointed out, “the main competitors of sociologists in schools are psychologists and social workers”. In fact, sociologists have not been able to integrate themselves, for example, in educational and professional guidance provisions which, established in 1991, have ended up being monopolised by psychologists. The psychologisation and the individualisation of school social intervention seems to generate an environment which is more favourable to the work of these professionals and, as a result, an added difficulty to sociologists in affirming themselves in a school represented by singular individuals (Martuccelli, 2010).

What is more, sociological intervention is especially sensitive to demands for effectiveness and utility. As Abrantes (2018, p. 3) states, “sociological analyses often involve long periods, while democracy increasingly seems to play itself out in short periods, with it being the case that not only solutions, but even the formulation of problems, appears to be guided by the immediate”. Whether at a local or international level, the pressure for measurable, effective and successful intervention has transformed the profession into project work, the voracity of time of which is not compatible with the “calm examination of the facts of society” (Quéré, 2002). If project-based work weakens intervention times, the volatility of public policies aggravates the uncertainty and precariousness of professional bonds. In this respect, the

Portuguese educational field is indeed paradoxical: at the same time as the Framework Law for the Educational System has remained stable and inviable since its publication in 1986 (the three updates, in 1997, 2005 and 2009, only contributed to the sophistication and not to the reversal of its modernising spirit), the succession of ministers, reforms and programmes has been one of dizzying instability. The ideological zigzags in adult educational policies and lifelong learning is one of the most striking examples.

Despite the somewhat inhospitable climate, sociologists of education have continued to provide unique professional intervention work on how to interpret and correct socio-educational inequalities (Seabra, E9), mediations between processes and educational stakeholders (Resende, E10) and the understanding of connections between global educational dynamics and their local impacts (Sebastião, 2017).

Final notes: towards a renewed critical space¹

Education has been a central topic for the affirmation and consolidation of sociological science both from an international perspective (as is the case with moral education, in Durkheim, or Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction, which is, above all, a theory of the educational system) as well as a national perspective (with the pioneering studies in the 1960s on the Portuguese university). It is true that the sociology of education no longer enjoys the status of a large subdisciplinary area which, together with the sociology of classes and labour, monopolized the panorama of the field to a certain extent up to the 1980s. Other sub-disciplinary areas were formed and became autonomous, such as the sociology of childhood. However, despite this sub-disciplinary pulverisation and the natural and inevitable plurality resulting therefrom, the sociology of education has reached maturity and the ability to rejuvenate itself generationally and scientifically, despite the theoretical, methodological, epistemological and political and institutional challenges which lie ahead.

The cartography proposal presented in this article has illustrated the close correspondence between the affirmation and consolidation of the scientific field and the periods of Portuguese educational modernity. The meanings and directions of educational policies opened horizons for the expansion of the field in the areas of education, research and a broader professional intervention of sociologists of education within Portuguese society. However,

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the field has been equally sensitive to the effects of reversal and instability, provoked by the rapid reconfiguration of public policies, at scales that are played out nowadays from the local to the transnational.

Affinities between the countries of Southern Europe, such as Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal, in terms of historical circumstances, educational modernisation processes and Welfare models, have not always been sufficient for a closer dialogue between the so-called sociologies of the Global South. However, recent efforts have been made to understand the different educational policy options taken by Southern countries in times of financial crisis and austerity measures (Capucha et al., 2016). Comparative statistical analysis has shown in recent decades a clear convergence of these southern European countries with European standards in several key indicators. But a more detailed comparative analysis, both quantitatively and qualitatively, about the effects of the financial crisis on the performance of educational systems remains unrealized. In addition, the authors point out that while sharing a path of convergence, the education and training systems of the four countries are plural and quite different. Therefore, “Southern Europe” as an aggregator label is questionable and should be sociologically problematized.

The denunciation of the structural backwardness of the Portuguese educational system fuelled sociological criticism on a national scale. However, European convergence, the globalisation of educational problems and the reinforced presence of national sociology in international scientific debates, have invited us to rethink spaces, movements and the directions of sociological criticism.

The current political and social conjuncture, in various European geographical areas, but also outside Europe, with for example Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, is not going particularly well, living up to Bourdieu’s expression that sociology is a combat sport. The attempts to disqualify the social sciences, accused of being ideologically engaged, to promote a culture of exoneration and victims (Lahire, 2016) or to de-naturalise and de-sacralise what must remain natural and sacralised, constitutes an environment unfavourable to the manufacture of a public sociology (Burawoy, 2005), which many of our interviewees do not ignore, as is the case with Lima (E1) when arguing that “a neutral, de-politicised sociology, without commitment, is an impossibility” or Afonso (E8) when underlining that “the belief in a supposed neutrality cannot allow us to forget Howard Becker’s question: which side are we on?”.

Sociological criticism also coexists nowadays within a space where other movements and centres of criticism have proliferated, pluralistic and contradictory, diffuse but highly visible to the public, where loves and hates fence, along with arguments emotionally inflamed in social media which, to a certain extent, short-circuit the possibility of a critical examination, care-

fully weighted and distanced from problems. How, within this environment, can we renew the critical space of sociology? The school continues to be an ideal laboratory for this undertaking. As Dubet (2016) points out, the critical tension we can see today between the principle of equality and the demand for recognition of identities, is producing an unsurmountable contradiction, the escape from which may lie in the search for what we have in common and what unites is, besides the differences which separate us. This kind of re-mastered Durkheim in the 21st century, within a prospect of re-establishing bonds of solidarity which are capable of remaking common life, appears to contain fertile ingredients for rethinking our educational malaise, in a society pierced by the resentment of individuals who, marked by experiences of inequality, injustice and discrimination, face each other.

In 1995, the Prime Minister of Portugal, currently secretary-general of the United Nations, chose education as his passion. Two years later, the sociologist João Teixeira Lopes entitled one of his books “Sad schools”, considering that schools are sad because students do not find happiness in them. In his most recent book, François Dubet starts his reflection by saying that we live in times of sad passions. If education as a sad passion is not a fatal destiny, and if the school is not hopelessly condemned to unhappiness, will sociology, in Southern Europe, be able to find ways which will help us think of happier passions?

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