

Forty Years of Environmental Education in the Portuguese Democracy

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1970's, education is internationally recognized as the main path to tackle the growing environmental crisis. In Portugal, forty years after engaging in Democracy and, at the same time, in Environmental Education, it still a matter of discussion and calls for an analysis on the path that have been followed. Despite a reality since the very beginning of Democracy in Portugal, after the 25th April 1974, it was only in 1986, with the accession to the European Economic Community and the publication of the Portuguese Education System Law, that Environmental Education started to be included in the goals of Public School. However, since then, the course of Environmental Education has been driven mostly by external forces, from outside the education system, and has been more dependent on the involvement of teachers, individually, than on the school institution as an all.

In a time in which Portuguese Public School, as many other State public services, is deeply affected by an ongoing process of "slimming" due to the financial and economic crisis, we need to understand the Environmental Education past decade's route and analyze the most probable consequences due to the current situation.

Keywords:

INTRODUCTION

Despite deeply associated with the industrial revolution, started in the end of the 18th century in England, the present environmental crisis has roots that trace back from the 16th century, when a world capitalist economy born and started the globalizing process of the European environmental problems germinated on the womb of the feudalistic system (Moore, 2000). On the 15th and 16th centuries, Portugal opened new sea routs across the coast of Africa, establishing connections to India and Brazil, and assuming its pioneer role on the globalization process (Rodrigues and Devezas, 2009). Although this pioneering contribution on the path that brought us to the actual global ecological crisis, Portugal has never been a leader on the industrialization process, limiting himself to follow its wake at distance. However, like in other countries peripheral to the global economy, Portugal didn't stayed apart of the ecological problems and, as soon or as late as its neighboring European countries, the environmental questions emerged on its society. One of the most premature landmarks of the environmentalist tendencies in Portugal was the foundation, in 1948, of the first social movement for nature conservation, the League for Nature Protection (LPN in its Portuguese original name), a step that soon pointed to the dominance of nature conservation upon all other environmental concerns, a situation that persisted until the 1990's (Ramos Pinto, 2004). Already dominated by the strong influence of the conservationist movement, in 1985 was founded the National Association for Nature Conservation- Quercus, but, despite its name, this environmental non-governmental organization soon will abandon an exclusive dedication to the biodiversity and diversify its actions in subjects such as climate change, recycling, renewable energies or water resources management, following the expansion of the environmental problematic along the 1990's (Spínola, 2005).

It was after the end of the Dictatorship, and with the Democratic system implanted with the Carnation Revolution on 25th April 1974, that environmental concerns in Portuguese society began to achieve some relevance, gaining marked importance when Portugal accessed the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1986. Portugal was one of the rare countries on the world that soon, in the year of 1976, added in its Constitution the right to live in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment, and also the duty of defending him (Article 66th of the Portuguese Republic Constitution, published on the Diary of the Republic, nº86, series I, 10th April 1976) (Sharma, 2010). However, it was only in 1987 that, in fulfillment on what is stipulated on the article 66th of its Constitution and driven by the EEC accession, that Portugal published its Law on the Environment (Law nº11/1987, 7th April), despite a

Secretary of State for the Environment already existed since 1975 in the scope of the Ministry for Social Equipment and Environment (Decree-Law nº550/1975, 30th September), which, later, in 1990, evolved to its own Ministry, the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources (Ramos Pinto, 2004).

On the course of this growing concern about ecological balance and with the boost of the international conferences that established the education as the main path to achieve solutions to environmental problems, Portugal started on the 1970's a route in which the Environmental Education, firstly timidly and then in a most ostensive manner, has become integrated on the curricula of the compulsory education and acquired some dynamism on the non-formal education, through media, environmental non-governmental organizations and public institutions. Four decades after the implantation of a Democratic system in Portugal, which opened its doors to the international influence and to the turbulence of social movements around the ecological cause, and in a moment when a reduction on the State's role take place in several areas, especially in education, is of great interest evaluate the Portuguese path on the Environmental Education and analyze the consequences deriving from the most recent transformations that have been made on its education system.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ON THE PORTUGUESE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Even after an international recognition of the Environmental Education, with the first United Nations world conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, and, through the Belgrade Charter, in 1975, and the Tbilisi Conference, in 1977, with its objectives clearly defined, the Portuguese effort to integrate it on the education system started very shy and slow (UNESCO, 1980; Hungerford e Peyton, 1976). The education system reform of 1973 (Law nº5/1973, 25th July), quickly abandoned with the end of the Dictatorship regime after the 25th April 1974 Revolution, chose the "nature observation" as one of the activities of the newly created preschool as also to the already existing primary education. In 1975, after the Democratic Revolution, Portugal includes, on the first cycle of the primary education, a new curricular area named Physical and Social Environment with which pretended to encourage the development of a responsible attitude that could promote the respect for life and promote conservation, protection and improvement of the environment (Teixeira, 2003). However, only after the Education System Law, published in 1986 (Law nº46/1986, 14th October), and despite with no formal existence and most dependent on the circumstances than in the Law itself, the Environmental Education starts to gain some curricular space (Carapeto, 1998). Although this Law leaves out the Environmental Education of its objectives for primary and secondary schools, and even don't mention it for extra-school education (Article 23th) and leisure times activities (Article 48th), it assumes for pre-school education the goal of "favoring the observation and the comprehension of the human and natural environment" (Article 5th, point 1, paragraph c) and defines the "ecological education" as one of the several components of a new curricular area, the "personal and social education", to be created in all cycles of primary education (Article 47th). Curiously, it was in the Environmental Associations Law (Law nº10/1987, 4th April), published 6 months after the Education System Law, the place chosen by Portuguese policy makers to directly obligate the Ministry of Education on the Environmental Education tasks, mentioning that "it should manage study plans and programs in order to sensitize and educate youth to preserve the environment (...), to which should make use of the cooperation with the associations for the protection of the environment" (Article 10th).

The Education System Law was followed by a curricular revision in 1989 (Decree-Law nº286/1989, 29th August) that, to accomplish the "ecological education" and other subjects considered in the personal and social education, created the discipline of "Personal and Social Development" (Article 7th) directed to all students of primary and secondary education. Maybe because it presented itself as an optional choice against Moral and Religious Education, a discipline, that time, already solid on the schools of Portugal, a country markedly Catholic, the discipline of Personal and Social Development has never been able to assert itself and the intention soon was abandoned. Curiously again, it was a non-disciplinary curricular area, created by the same curricular revision, the School-Area (Article 6th), which, without objectives defined accordingly but searching for a "development of knowledge through multidisciplinary projects and activities, articulation between the school and its surrounding community, and also the personal and social education of students", becomes the fertile landscape for the Environmental Education along the 1990's.

Flexibility, autonomy, multidisciplinary and connection to the surrounding community should have been the School-Area intrinsic characteristics that allowed its permeability to the environmental growing concerns that flourished on the Portuguese society along the 1990's. This non-disciplinary curricular space, moored in projects, had the ability to absorb, from outside the school, what, that time, was called an "environmental fashion", smoothing the curricula and legislative structural fails in what it concerns to the Environmental Education. Despite constraints due to some deficiencies on teacher training for Environmental Education and also to some resistance to participate, the School-Area revealed itself as an important contribution for changing attitudes and behaviors among students and teachers involved (Mateus, 1995).

In 1996, in a rare and exemplar moment of horizontal governance, the ministries of Education and Environment signed a protocol in order to build conditions needed to promote the Environmental Education on the

Portuguese schools, forecasting its integration on primary and secondary curriculum, promoting projects on schools, fomenting training teachers, integrating in networks the schools and its projects and permanently allocating human resources in the projects. However, this protocol, reformulated in 2005, didn't reach its goals and resulted only, as a benefit to schools, in a better training to a restrict number of teachers and in the availability of some equipments to support Environmental Education (APA, 2014).

Although its success, with a curricular revision on 2001 (Decree-Law nº6/2001, 18th January, and Decree-Law nº2009/2002, 18th October) the School-Area was extinct and substituted with three new non-disciplinary curricular areas on the scope of Personal and Social Education, which were: Project Area, Accompanied Study, and Civics. However, the hope that the Environmental Education would win expression on these new areas, particularly in Project Area, following the work developed on School-Area, fell through (Ramos-Pinto, 2004). Whilst School-Area, along the 1990's, had the merit to open the school outside and involve the community, the Project Area, despite maintaining a multidisciplinary approach but without objectives of articulation with the surrounding community, gathered the school to the inside of its gates. Because this new curricular structure didn't specify neither formalize the Environmental Education in the non-disciplinary areas, the dynamics of the environmental thematic remained bound to the initiative of students and teachers, which, on the other hand, is deeply associated with the influences from outside the school, namely from the media and environmental organizations. In this way, and besides the return of school to inside its gates, another reason to explain why the Project Area wasn't able to keep the dynamic reached by the School-Area, may have been because, on the beginning of 21th century, the environmental challenge had really lost importance in the Portuguese society, overwhelmed by financial and economic problems that took over the country.

From 2011, following a new political orientation that gives priority to core disciplines, the curricular structure of the education system is changed again and the Project Area is extinct, first on the second and third cycles of primary education (Decree-Law nº94/2011, 3th August, and Decree-Law nº139/2012, 5th July) and then also in the first cycle of primary education (Decree-Law nº91/2013, 10th July). Thus, the place where, in lack of its own space, the Environmental Education made its nest was completely eliminated with no alternative within the non-disciplinary curriculum to where its dynamic could migrate. Yet, this curricular revision considers a "Complementary Offer" (Article 12th on the Decree-Law nº139/2012, 5th July) where, among others, citizenship subjects could be worked out. However, in the second and third cycles of the primary education, the schedule for the "Complementary Offer" is at the discretion of the school board and only if credits remain from other disciplines. On the first cycle these curricular complements are mandatory but only with one hour per week on schedule.

With the intention to open space to promote core disciplines, the curricular structure reform operated by the 19th Constitutional Government of the Portuguese Republic made vanish almost completely the curricular non-disciplinary area which, along more than two decades, was the womb of Personal and Social Education and, by adoption, of the Environmental Education. In this way, without its natural habitat, the Environmental Education is threatened of extinction on Portuguese schools or, at least, of surviving only by the effort of a clandestine resistance supported by some rebellious teachers that disagree with the present education system.

Presently strongly limited in its natural place, the transversality and multidisciplinary, it's worth to evaluate the contribution to the Environmental Education made by the, now reinforced, vertical and disciplinary component of the education system. The analysis of programs and text books from the last two decades reveals the presence of environmental subjects cantoned in a specific group of disciplines along the three cycles of primary education (1th cycle: Study of the Environment; 2th cycle: Nature Sciences; 3th cycle: Natural Sciences and Geography) and on the secondary education (Geography and Biology), with a tendency of reinforcing these subjects in the last decade if compared with the 1990's (Tracana et al., 2012). However, the Environmental Education couldn't be limited to the approach of disciplinary subjects on the traditional sciences, being necessary knowledge from other areas, namely Economy, Sociology and even Psychology, to allow the comprehension of the present environmental crisis causes, as also to promote the needed attitudes and behaviors to fight against this crisis (Almeida, 2007). In this context, and taking in account that its main objectives go through the rise of the environmental problems awareness (Belgrade Charter - 1975) and, specially, to the promotion of environmental literacy (Tbilisi Conference - 1977) in its three structural components: knowledge, attitude and behavior; the merely cognitive approach that is predominant in the disciplinary education, even with items related to the environment, hardly could be, in its own, considered Environmental Education.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN EXTRA-SCHOOL CONTEXT

Although educational approach makes us think immediately on school institution, in the environmental field, in Portugal, it wasn't there where it started. As we saw, the formal framework of the Environmental Education on the Portuguese educational system is sloppy, missing a direct integration in the Education System Law and even on the curriculum itself. In practice, the Environmental Education in Portuguese schools assumes an optional condition and

survives mostly by the influences of society on schools, especially through the interest and initiatives of students and teachers and not because of any intrinsic reason that could come from the formal structure of the curriculum or the education system. Accordingly, the first move to the Environmental Education in Portugal happens with organizations connected to the environment itself and not with the education system. The already referred foundation of the LPN (League for Nature Protection), in 1948, was an example of anticipation of citizenship in relation to the governments action in the environmental concerns and, particularly, with the Environmental Education, despite, that time, the concept wasn't yet established. When LPN was created, ready after the end of the World War II, the environmental non-governmental organizations all over the world were scarce, and the few existent, like LPN, were focused on wild life protection (McCormick, 2004). Even so, the first objective of LPN, registered in its foundational statutes of 1948, was "raise interest in Nature (...) through an adequate education of the public opinion" (article 2th, paragraph a). From the government, only much later, but even so before the beginning of the democratization process of the country, started the first environmental interventions, namely with the Third Plan of Foment (1968), with the creation of protected areas (National Park of Peneda Gerês, in 8th May 1971, and Natural Reserve of the Ilhas Selvagens, in 29th October 1971) and with the constitution of the National Commission for the Environment (1971), this commission with responsibilities in the domains of information and sensitization to the environment and responsible for the first commemoration of the Environment World Day, in 5th June 1973 (Ramos Pinto, 2004; Evangelista, 1992).

A most consistent governmental structure for the environmental area was initiated after the Democratic Revolution of 25th April 1974, with the creation in 1975, in the scope of the Ministry of Social Equipment and Environment, the State Secretary of the Environment (Decree-Law nº550/1975, 30th September). It was inside this State Secretary that were created or organized the governmental structures responsible for the development and implementation of national environmental policies, in the scope of which Environmental Education concerns arises to "encourage the collaboration and participation of the population in the enhancement of the environment" through the implementation of "campaigns of disclosure, participation, and training" , in the responsibility of the National Commission for the Environment, of the National Service for Population Participation and of the regional commissions for the environment. An important impulse to the Environmental Education in Portugal was given at this point by the National Service for Population Participation with the launch of the "Man and Environment" educational program, directed to teachers and, in a multidisciplinary perspective, articulating the ecological, social and historic-cultural perspectives. Until 1983, time when it was extinct, it was this National Commission for the Environment who was formally in charge of promoting the Environmental Education in Portugal, an institution from the environment area and not from education, as will be for long time. After this, in 1987, these competencies were transmitted to a new organization, the National Service of Parks, Reserves and Nature Conservation which, by its own nature, will keep the Environmental Education under the conservationist domain (Ramos Pinto, 2006). That year, with the publication of the Environment Law (Lei nº11/1987, 7th April) a new organization emerges to be responsible for the Environmental Education, the National Institute for the Environment, which has as its challenges, among others, promote that area in cooperation with the "municipalities, public administration services, public, private and cooperative institutions, and schools and universities" (Article 39th). This new organization, that, curiously, assumes itself as non executive, underline, "with a special emphasis", to be destined to promote actions of "training and information for citizens" (Article 4th, point 2).

This Environment Law assumes, despite not directly committing itself with its implementation, that "the existence of an environment propitious to health and (...) to a better quality of life, presupposes the adoption of measures that (...) includes the environmental component and the inherited values into primary education and vocational training, as well as its promotion through the media, being the government liable to produce learning resources to support teachers (books, brochures, etc.)" (Article 4th, point 3). And it is this framework that will increment in a significant way, along the 1990's, the Environmental Education practices in Portugal, to which the Environmental Associations will contribute much, especially after 1987 when they also see their specific statute recognized and its cooperation on this subject underlined (Articles 10th and 11th of the Law nº10/1987, 4th April). It is also in this Law that "the central, regional and local entities from the administration, in the scope of its competences, (and) in cooperation with the environmental associations", are responsible to "promote to the entire population, and particularly children of preschool age, awareness and knowledge of nature" (Article 11th).

With the accession of Portugal to the European Economic Community, in 1986, which opens immediately with the celebration of the European Year of the Environment (1987), and with the dynamism inputted by several national environmental associations, besides LPN, from here also Quercus- National Association for Nature Conservation, and GEOTA- Study Group for Planning and Environment (1986), the Portuguese society begins to awake to the environment concerns (Soromenho-Marques, 2005). The creation of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resource in 1990 and, in the same year, of ASPEA, the Portuguese Association for Environmental Education, reveals the level of importance that the environmental concern was reaching in the Portuguese society. When, in 1992, the Earth Summit organized by the United Nations follows in Rio de Janeiro, in Portugal there is already an important

dynamic in which interact several actors and that is particularly noticeable in the push that affects Environmental Education. In 1993, the National Institute for the Environment is substituted by a new organization, the Institute for Environmental Promotion (Decree-Law nº 194/1993, 24th May), which keep the same responsibilities in what concern to the Environmental Education but wins a new dynamism, financing, with European community funds, environmental projects developed by environmental associations and schools, editing some journals (Environment Report, Journal of Environment and Notebooks Environmental Education) and producing several pedagogical resources in the environmental area (Ramos Pinto, 2004).

After its public discussion, in 1995, the National Plan of Environmental Policies was approved (RCM nº 38/1995, 21th April) and dedicates a specific chapter to the Environmental Education, recognizing the need for an articulation between educational and environmental policies. Just after, in 1996, as a result of a cooperation protocol between the Ministries of Environment and Education, a mobility program for teachers was created and allowed gather professionals from both areas, environment and education, in Environmental Education projects that were developed not only from school context but also, several times, through the activities of the environmental associations and municipalities. This protocol, reformulated in 2005 to engage expressly the environmental non-governmental organizations, created a network of coordination teacher for environmental education projects that, today, is constituted by only four professionals, a number obviously too small to the needs of the country. These teachers developed a national work through the environmental associations Quercus, ABAE, ASPEA and GEOTA, in which several emblematic projects have been developed such as the Eco-School Program (ABAE), the National Journeys of Environmental Education (ASPEA) and the Coastwatch project (GEOTA) (APA, 2014). In this context of a growing enhancement of the Environmental Education practices, in which arose, together with environmental NGOs, municipalities and protected areas, important equipments to help in the Environmental Education (environmental education centers, wild life recovering centers, environmental interpretation centers, among others), the Environmental Education begins to be a constitutional right in Portugal. In fact, in 1997, with the 4th revision of the Portuguese Constitution, becomes an incumbency of the "State, by the means of its own organizations and with the implication and participation of citizens", the promotion of the Environmental Education and the respect by the environment values (Constitutional Law nº1/1997, 20th September, point 2, paragraph g).

However, with the financial resources getting reduced, with the disinvestment in teacher training and with a disconnection between environmental and educational policies, the Environmental Education optimistic expectations suddenly vanished (Schmidt et al., 2011). In 2001, nine years after its creation, and with the purpose of reducing costs, the Institute for Environmental Promotion, that becomes the visible face of the State's constitutional obligations in what concerns to the Environmental Education, and that marked the country's best moment in this area, is extinct by aggregation with the Environment General Directorate to become the Institute of the Environment (Decree-Law nº8/2002, 9th January), which will also disappear in 2006 by aggregation with the Institute of Wastes to be created the Portuguese Agency for the Environment (Decree-Law nº207/2006, 27th October). The disappearance of the Institute for Environmental Promotion defines the moment when the Environmental Education in Portugal starts follow a descendent pathway with great instability. In fact, since then, the Environmental Education actors, particularly Environmental NGO, schools and municipalities, started losing the support for their activities once former financial resources were diverted to other purposes; as also because the National Strategy for Environmental Education never comes out of a simple promise (Ramos Pinto, 2006). Presently, despite some national projects still keep a good activity level, as the Eco-School Program (ABAE), most of the Environmental Education in Portugal is in decay, it's fragmented and lost its visibility and the dynamism reached in the past.

Since Portugal owns two autonomous regions, in which regional governments exercise State's responsibilities on environment and education, is worth mentioning that only the Autonomous Region of Azores includes in the structure of its present government an organism with expressed competencies in Environmental Education, the Direction of Services for Nature Conservation and Environmental Awareness of the Regional Environment Directorate, which is responsible for propose, "coordinate and execute the environmental education programs" (Regional Regulate Decree nº11/2013/A, 2th August, Article 37th). In the structure of the present government of the Autonomous Region of Madeira there is no mention to Environmental Education, neither in the structure of the Regional Secretariat for the Environment and Natural Resources (Regional Regulate Decree nº20/2012/M, 22th August) or in its Regional Directorate for Planning and Environment (Regional Regulate Decree nº30/2012/M, 5th November), and neither in the Regional Secretariat for Education (Regional Regulate Decree nº5/2012/M, 16th May) or in its Regional Directorate for Education (Regional Regulate Decree nº8/2012/M, 18th June) exist any mention on this important area enshrined on the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN PORTUGAL IN THE LIGHT OF TBILISI AND BELGRADE

The purpose of the Environmental Education is, accordingly to Belgrade Charter (1975), to alert and awareness to the environment and its problems through a lifelong education, and, in the light of the Tbilisi conference (1977), to

promote the environmental literacy (UNESCO, 1980; Hungerford and Peyton, 1976). Along the past decades, despite a common basis, several authors considered a wide spectrum of components to include in the environmental literacy concept, making its definition a dynamic process (Hollweg et al., 2011). For example, Simmons (1995) identified seven components of the environmental literacy: 1. Affect (e.g., environmental sensitivity, attitudes, and moral reasoning); 2. Ecological knowledge; 3. Socio-political knowledge (e.g., the relationship of cultural, political, economic, and other social factors to ecology and environment); 4. Knowledge of environmental issues; 5. Skills pertaining to environmental problems/issues and action strategies, systemic thinking, and forecasting; 6. Determinants of environmentally responsible behavior (i.e., locus of control and assumption of personal responsibility); 7. Behavior (i.e., various forms of active participation aimed at solving problems and resolving issues). Another framework example, created by Wilke (1995), defined four clusters of environmental literacy components: cognitive dimensions (knowledge and skill), affective dimensions, additional determinants of environmentally responsible behavior, and personal and/or group involvement in environmentally responsible behavior. Previously, Disinger and Roth (1992) suggested that environmental literacy was essentially the ability to perceive and interpret the relative health of environmental systems and take appropriate action to maintain, restore, or improve the health of those systems. In that time, Roth (1992) considered that people should be able to demonstrate in some observable form what they have learned, namely their knowledge on key concepts, skills acquired, disposition toward issues, and the like, and emphasized that environmental literacy should be defined in terms of observable behaviors.

Nowadays, is of common understanding that environmental literacy must include knowledge and understanding of environmental concepts, problems, and issues, a set of cognitive and affective dispositions, and a set of cognitive skills and abilities, together with the appropriate behavioral strategies to apply such knowledge and understanding in order to make sound and effective decisions in a range of environmental contexts (Hollweg et al., 2011).

As a simple definition, environmental literacy could be seen as a domain of four interrelated components: knowledge, dispositions, competencies, and environmentally responsible behavior (Cook e Berrenberg, 1981; Hungerford e Volk, 1990; Stern, 2000; Hollweg et al., 2011). Despite this simplification, each of the above four components hold a complex structure that needs to be taken in consideration in environmental education practices, namely the fact that, among others, knowledge should include physical, ecological, social, cultural and political systems, that dispositions involves sensitivity, attitudes, personal responsibility and motivation, that competencies implies identify, analyze, investigate, evaluate and resolve environmental issues, and that environmentally responsible behavior includes practices in eco-management, persuasion, consumer/economic action, political action and legal action (Hollweg et al., 2011).

Being stated that Environmental Education should be a continuum process, lifelong, and including its cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions, the question is whether the practices in Portugal are in accordance with these objectives. The Environmental Education in Portugal, inside or outside schools, misses evaluation, and prefers to feel comfortable with what is done, closing the eyes to the possibility of its effort being inadequate to the pursued goals. From the few studies that characterized the Environmental Education in Portugal, the key idea that comes up is that it has been confined to the school context since, besides its enormous difficulties to involve the surrounding community, even the majority of projects led by organizations from outside the education system are orientated to the school population (Schmidt et al., 2010). It is also evident an "infantilization" of the Environmental Education in Portugal since it is mostly directed to the youngest students and assumes a marked propensity to be recreative or playful, as also because it is based in a restrictive set of environmental themes, particularly nature conservation and waste management, forgetting important aspects to enlighten the true dimension of sustainability and its relationship with the economic activities, as is water or energy management. The mismatch between the Ministries of the Environment and of Education is also evident, keeping the Environmental Education isolated and, largely, outside the curriculum, being marked by the frailty of projects, mostly dependent on the teacher's initiatives and, as such, sensitive to the professional instability that affects them in Portugal (Schmidt et al., 2011). In this way, Environmental Education in Portugal tends to be punctual and most vertical than cross-cut, whether in topics addressed or in the targeted audience, being little integrative, strange to the sustainability concept and away from a civic approach that could lead to a highest participation (Guerra et al., 2008).

Despite the fragilities of the Environmental Education in Portugal, at least the national inquiries from the end of 1990's show that the youngest population was strongly increasing their environmental awareness, although with a deficit of information and almost none civic participation in its protection (Nave, 2004; Lima e Guerra, 2004; Ferreira de Almeida, 2004; Freitas, 2007). On other way, even with a worrying disinvestment on the Environmental Education on past decade, some studies reveal that it was sufficient to, at least at the rhetoric and cognitive level, avoid an environmental amnesia (Santos, 2010).

However, taking in account the concept of environmental literacy, it is evident that the Environmental Education practices in Portugal have strayed from the right path to a balanced and integrative development of cognitive, affective and behavioral components. The present education system doesn't formally recognize the Environmental Education as one of its objectives, leaving that constitutional obligation to the organizations responsible for the environmental management. The Environmental Education that occurs on the Portuguese schools is an informal practice not supported by the curricular structure and most dependent on the teacher's initiatives than in the system itself, besides it is profoundly affected by the sociopolitical tides of the environmental concern. Its awful curricular integration, the lack of performance evaluation, its infantilization and no integration in a lifelong education, its strong circumscription in the study of sciences, its mostly technical than educational approach (evident in the nature of the State's organizations that holds this constitutional obligation), its informative inclination and the absence of a national strategy, among others, make of the Environmental Education in Portugal an ineffective effort in the fulfillment of the Belgrade and Tbilisi objectives.

WHAT FUTURE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN A MINIMIZED STATE?

Having reached a point where it is evident the lack of linearity on the Portuguese Environmental Education route, with a clearly descendent tendency in the last decade, it is of interest to analyze the consequences of the minimizing State's process presently in place in the scope of the Program for Economic and Financial Adjustment, to which Portugal is bonded since 2011. If on one hand the results of the Environmental Education in Portugal reveal the huge effort that we still need to do, in the other hand, the actual context and the dismantlement of the State's structure in the education and environment areas, make us fear something even worst. As we saw, the curricular reforms from recent years eliminated the non-disciplinary areas and verticalized the education, centering it in the nuclear disciplines. As we know, the privileged place to develop the Environmental Education is, precisely, the non-disciplinary curriculum and, besides that, this is a multidisciplinary area that needs to be addressed horizontally, through several disciplines. In this context, reduce the Environmental Education to a cognitive approach of a set of knowledge, limited by the frontiers of some sciences, constitute a strong threat to the effort that have been done to change attitudes and behaviors toward the environment.

Nevertheless, having in consideration that the development of Environmental Education practices in schools are mostly dependent on the initiatives of teachers, and considering the reduction on the number of teacher and the devaluation and demotivation to which they has been subject, namely because of the unemployment threat and with the effective loss of their income, the most probable scenario for the next future is the stagnation, or even paralysis, of the school activity as a contribution to the environmental literacy of coming generations. The new curricular structure slaughter the development of transversal projects and the involvement between school and the community, gathering students inside the classroom and consummating a regression in the educational practices that affect much the performance of any effort in Environmental Education.

With the school return to the dictatorial, inflexible and anachronistic borders of the disciplinary structure, centered again in cognitive knowledge and forgetting competencies, what tends to happen now, the Environmental Education in the Portuguese education system return back to the time when the myth "knowing to preserve" had reigned. In the way curriculum and education system are being structured in Portugal, the Environmental Education is no longer possible and comes down to the merely transmission of knowledge in the environmental field. In present situation, the Environmental Education developed in schools will be only the one emerged in the margins of the education system, being, therefore, voluntary and optional, and dependent on the rebelliousness that, perhaps, could subsist in some teachers.

Outside the education system is not expected a better scenario since, so far, its dynamic has been also directed to the school population and always proportional to the public resources available, that are presently increasingly scarce. In addition, if on the past the Environmental Educational coming from outside the school always communed of the same errors, namely being also infantilized, punctual, based only in knowledge and not integrative, it is not expected to be in this hard context that those errors will be spontaneously corrected.

Therefore, an Environmental Education that doesn't contributed much to the environmental literacy, because it wasn't based in a continuous improvement but mostly in the persistence of error, is in an enormous risk of let itself fall asleep waiting for another conjuncture. However, considering the gravity reached by the environmental problems, globally and locally, wait is a luxury that Portugal cannot afford and, as such, it must overtake, as soon as possible, the fragilities inherited from the past and overthrow, or go around, the walls erected lately. Portugal, in its present scarcity scenario, cannot put aside the contribution that only the Environmental Education could give to improve sustainability and increase resource efficiency. To that, is not worth to keep running away from its goals only to keep the feeling that it's not just standing. It is essential to draw a new plan and define a strategy. To that, is not worth to keep running away from its goals only to feel that it's not just standing. It is essential to draw a new plan and define a strategy. The Environmental Education needs to be done with the environmental literacy, its goal, in mind. It is

mandatory that the Portuguese State, at once for all, assumes its constitutional compromise of, by its one means and with the involvement and participation of citizens, promote the Environmental Education and the respect for the environment values. To finally follow that way, it cannot take longer to define its national strategy for the Environmental Education and start immediately with its implementation, being understood that one of the problems to solve immediately is the lack of human resources adequately trained to that specific purpose and the need for an articulation with the society.

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