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History of youth work and youth policies in Portugal

Introduction

Shortly after the landmark 1st European Youth Work Convention held in Ghent in 2010, which interrogated and transformed many perspectives on the concept of “youth work”, I was invited to contribute to the translation of the concept into Portuguese. We, at the Portuguese Youth Institute, were asked by the Portuguese language interpretation services from the European Commission to say what we understood by “youth work”, in order to start using the expression in the official translation/interpretation of documents.

In the Portuguese version of official EU documents and in the national legal order itself, the concept of “youth work” is not referred to. Rather, the reference is to “*animação sócio-educativa de jovens*” (socio-educational animation of young people or juvenile socio-education). Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union refers to “socio-educational animators”.

In the English version of the treaty, the term that is used is “exchanges of socio-educational instructors”, and there is nothing about “youth work” in line with

the concept debated in Ghent in 2010 (both at the 1st European Conference on the History of Youth Work and the 1st European Youth Work Convention). Both the conference and the convention were based on work supported by scientific research, seminars and the testimony of youth workers themselves, with reference to the Blankenberge seminars organised by the Flemish Community of Belgium and the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth.

In the text of the Council of the European Union's Resolution of 27 November 2009, the Portuguese translation is, in my opinion, very narrow, since it refers to work for, with and about youth as "juvenile animation". This terminology certainly needs to be updated, in line with changes to the youth sector that have taken place under national governments, at the EU, the Council of Europe, the Ibero-American Youth Organisation and the United Nations, particularly after the last decade of the last century.

In this regard, and following the views expressed at the Conference on the History of Youth Work and the Youth Work Convention, the activity of the Portuguese Youth Institute and the work of many youth organisations in Portugal is more closely identified with the concept of "youth work" or "work in the youth field" than the concept of "youth animator". Furthermore, when discussing the professionalisation of "youth work", we are going much further than "youth animation", with all due respect to "youth animators".

On the other hand, when we became aware of the request for co-operation to interpret the concept of youth work into Portuguese, with a view to its inclusion in the official documents of the EU, we contacted Spanish and French colleagues who are in this situation too (due to Latin language relations) and concluded that the preference was in Castilian for "*trabajo de juventud*" and in French for "*travail de jeunesse*".

Reporting to the Council Resolution of 27 November 2009, the translations into Portuguese, French and Castilian corresponding to "youth work" and "youth workers" vary:

- Portuguese: "*animação de jovens*", "*animação de juventude*" and "*animadores juvenis*";
- French: "*l'animation socio-éducative*", "*animateurs professionnels*";
- Castilian: "*trabajo en materia de juventud*", "*personas que trabajan en el ámbito de la juventud*", "*profesionales en el ámbito de la juventud*", "*trabajadores en el ámbito de la juventud*".

It is not my goal here to get into a debate about nuances and techniques in translation/interpretation. But the concept itself is certainly important, as well as the dimensions it touches and the range of its applications. Languages, like societies, are live and dynamic entities that evolve with time. Then why not the terms we use when referring to certain realities?

This episode suggested that little is known about youth work in Portugal but, at the same time, that there is a lot yet to be done in this regard, namely when we enter the field of recognition of the activity, which implies a clear definition of the concept, the activity it applies to, its methodologies, the training that underpins it, and so on.

In 2010, at the 1.º Congresso Nacional de Animação Sociocultural (1st Socio-Cultural Animation National Congress), a definition was agreed upon:

Socio-cultural animation is a set of practices developed from the knowledge of a certain reality, which aims to encourage individuals to participate in order to become agents of their own development process and of their communities. Socio-cultural animation is a key instrument for the development of an integrated multidisciplinary approach towards individuals and groups. The socio-cultural animator is one who, with adequate training, can develop and implement an intervention plan, in a community, institution or body, using cultural, social, educational, sports, recreation and leisure techniques. (Free translation)

It would certainly be interesting to analyse and compare the results of the 1st National Congress and the conclusions of the Ghent events, though that is not the purpose of this chapter.

Youth work and history: from the 1st Republic to the 1974 Carnation Revolution

The origins of what is called in Portugal Animação Sociocultural goes back to the 19th century, and the creation of the Associação de Escolas Móveis pelo Método de João de Deus (Mobile Schools by the João de Deus Method) in 1882, by Casimiro Freire. In 1908 this Association would be renamed Associação de Jardins-Escola João de Deus (Association of Nursery Schools João de Deus), and it is still in existence. Basically, the project used the new methods proposed by João de Deus in his *Cartilha Maternal*, published in 1876, to train teachers and send them out to teach the working classes how to read, according to a “system deeply practical”, that would rescue children “from the scourge of the traditional textbook.” We see here elements and attitudes that also characterise youth work nowadays, particularly regarding the sense of mobility (do not wait for young people come to you, but go and meet them in their own environment), the priority given to the most marginalised groups, and a reaction to the formal and traditional ways of teaching and outreach.

The 1908 assassination of King D. Carlos I and his son and heir, Prince D. Luís Filipe, opened the gates to the revolution that, in 1910, would make Portugal a republic. The new ideas that spread all over the country made it possible for society to start looking at itself in a totally different way and recognise that there was no point looking to the monarchy, or the state, to solve all its problems, namely those related to the education of the people.

Based on the principle that “culture can and must be a tool of the individual and collective emancipation of man”, several initiatives within community interventions focused on increasing the culture level and literacy of the working classes. But it is with men like Jaime Cortesão, and the *Homens da Renascença* (Renaissance Men) or the *Renascença Portuguesa* (Portuguese Renaissance),¹⁸ that

18. *Renascença Portuguesa* was an intellectual movement emerged in Portugal shortly after the establishment of the republic (1910), which aimed to promote the “reconstruction of Portuguese society” through cultural intervention. Gained expression with the appearance of magazines such as *Águia* (1910), and *Vida Portuguesa* (1912), influenced, among others, by Jaime Cortesão.

the Universidade Livre (Free University) and the Universidade Popular Portuguesa (Portuguese Popular University) came to light, as a result of the assumption that the political revolution is not enough and that room must be given to a cultural revolution through the education of the people:

Instruction was not only defended in the most progressive thoughts that considered it as one way to create a civic conscience. In some conservative circles that purpose was also to fight against illiteracy to unite all Portuguese both patriotically and orderly.

Apart from his intense cultural activity, which put him at the centre of intellectual life in the first quarter of the 20th century in Portugal, Jaime Cortesão was a man of strong political convictions. He took part in the republican conspiracy that would lead to establishment of the republic (1910), and was also in the very heart of the political turmoil that followed and ended with the arrival into power of Salazar, in 1926. He was forced into exile in Spain, France and Brazil. He returned to Portugal only in 1957, but even then he contributed to the Programa para a Democratização da República (Programme for the Democratisation of the Republic), re-assuming his opposition to the regime. This was meant to be a political guiding document to the opposition to the regime and was finally made public in 1961. He died in 1960.

Alongside these movements, and in line with the international phenomenon that had begun a few years earlier in England, in 1911 the scouts showed up in Portugal, with the creation of the Associação dos Escuteiros de Portugal in 1913. The founders were a group of people who had initiated the first scouting activities in Macau, 1911 (then under Portuguese administration). In 1923, the Corpo Nacional de Escutas, of Catholic inspiration, was set up in the city of Braga.

The Salazar regime, too, saw itself as modern. Therefore it was inspired by what it considered as avant-garde practices in “friendly” countries like Mussolini’s Italy and Hitler’s Germany. The creation of FNAT, the Federação Nacional para a Alegria no Trabalho (National Federation for Joy at Work), drew on the principles behind Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro, in Italy (1925) and Kraft durch Freude (1933), in Germany. FNAT was founded in 1935 with the intention of helping workers make good use of their free time, by organising recreational activities.

These references are made in order to illustrate just how much the regime, and civil society, became increasingly influenced by external ideas and experiences. This sent a misleading message of openness to the world, because the regime’s motivation was only to find the most appropriate means and tools to ensure full control of society at all levels.

→ What to do with young people?

Once again finding inspiration in friendly states like Germany, Italy and Franco’s Spain, the state created Mocidade Portuguesa (Portuguese Youth) in 1936, which was open to all males, in or out of school. Membership was mandatory between the ages 7 to 14 and voluntary up to the limit of 18 years of age. This organisation was meant to promote the moral, civic and political education of all young people through physical and pre-military education that was meant to instil respect for authority, order, discipline and military value.

Mocidade Portuguesa Feminina (Female Portuguese Youth) was founded in 1937 as the female counterpart to Mocidade Portuguesa, and sought to develop in young women “wisdom, collective work, a taste for domestic life and various forms of the gender social spirit, guiding the full performance of women’s role in the family, in their communities and in the life of the state.”

The trinity of *Deus, Pátria e Família* (God, Motherland and Family) loomed over those living under the Salazar regime. There was a strong connection to the Church, formalised in the *Concordata*,¹⁹ the family was seen as the core unit of society, and the celebration of national heroes and past glories was at the centre of nationalistic propaganda, creating the Portuguese version of contemporary fascist systems in Germany, Italy, Spain and, to a certain extent, Brazil.²⁰

The state assumed the responsibility for guiding and controlling all youth empowerment, namely by positioning all NGOs in a dependent relationship with Mocidade Portuguesa. To that end, it became mandatory that NGO statutes be approved by the Alto Comissário para a Mocidade Portuguesa (High Commissioner for Portuguese Youth). The first two high commissioners, Francisco José Nobre Guedes (1936-40), and Marcello Caetano (1940-44), had a very important role in shaping the organisation. If Nobre Guedes sympathised with the Third Reich in Germany and the Hitler Youth, Marcello Caetano made major reforms, turning the organisation away from its initial militaristic tendencies and forming closer links with the Catholic Church and the scouts.

Prior to that, however, and especially before 1940, the relationship with the scouts (and among themselves) was far from peaceful. In fact, some factions within the system tried to discredit the (Catholic) Corpo Nacional de Escutas, accusing them, for instance, of having a military purpose and for pursuing “ends a little dark”. The (Republican and secular) Associação dos Escuteiros de Portugal joined the chorus, stating that no confessional scouts movement should be allowed to exist. This situation created some discomfort, to say the least, between the Church and the government, because at a given moment even within the Corpo Nacional de Escutas membership doubts were raised regarding the viability of the organisation. There were growing numbers of defections to Mocidade Portuguesa, although some declared that this organisation might not have the most “morally equipped educators”. The Catholic Church engaged in a confrontation with government officials, identifying contradictions between what Mocidade Portuguesa was meant to be, and what it was in fact. At one moment it was noted that it was not acceptable for Portugal to be strengthening its relationships with the Hitler Youth, who considered the Portuguese an inferior people, and, at another moment, it criticised the fact that at some instruction sites, young people were obliged to take part in military trainings on Sundays (Kuin 1993:555-58).

19. Although the constitution allowed for freedom of worship and religion while claiming that Catholicism was the religion of the Portuguese people, in 1940 the Portuguese state signed a treaty (*Concordata*) with the Holy See giving the Catholic Church a set of rights not allowed to other religions, like the right to teach its religion at schools and tax exemptions.

20. For example the Movimento Integralista (Integralist Movement), founded by Plínio Salgado, in 1932.

From 1936 to 1974: between colonial war and the revolution

From the end of the 1950s, the colonial wars began, affecting mainly Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and India, where Portugal still had the Goa, Damão and Diu possessions. Troops were mobilised, the regime had to face fighting on the ground, and also struggled with growing hostility from states and international organisations like the United Nations.

The Portuguese regime was not ready for the changing times. Humberto Delgado dared to run for president in 1958, and during an interview he was asked what he would do with Salazar once he was elected. He replied with the famous “*Óbviamente demito-o!*” (“Obviously I will dismiss him!”), which led people to see him as the person who could change the situation. However, the “*General sem medo*” (“Fearless General”), was assassinated in 1965.

Internal discontent was manifested in some bold acts of resistance, like the hijacking of the Santa Maria cruise liner; the first commercial flight hijacking, co-ordinated by Palma Inácio, which took over a plane that was flying from Casablanca to Lisbon and scattered leaflets over the city; and students demonstrating at universities.

Concluding that the model of government as applied in Portugal was not working, the regime initiated a process of reform in 1966: pre-military instruction was abandoned and educational programmes no longer relied only on sports activities. Special attention was given to the school population, mainly by supporting extra-curricular initiatives, particularly for leisure time occupation.

Following Salazar’s death in 1970, Mocidade Portuguesa was abolished and the Secretariado para Juventude (Secretariat for Youth) was created. The perspective adopted was that youth empowerment could be achieved both by the state and organisations from civil society; “pluralism in intervention” was the key rather than “concentration”; youth centres were created; and all efforts were made to establish appropriate contacts and to give proper support to private youth movements and organisations.

The regime itself entered a process of reform, with youth policies becoming more cultural, and less political; the state assumed a more administrative/promotional role and the Acção Nacional de Juventude (Youth National Action), linked to the main political party, União Nacional/Acção Nacional Popular, was created. In March 1974 the head of the government, Marcelo Caetano, became an “honorary member” of the Acção Nacional de Juventude. On April 25 the following year, the Revolução dos Cravos (Carnation Revolution) took place. This heralded the end of an era – the end of the longest dictatorial regime western Europe experienced in the 20th century.

From 1974 to today: the notion of youth work (socio-cultural animation) emerges

Right after the revolution, the youth sector was given priority by the new government, with the formation of the Movimento das Forças Armadas²¹ (Movement of the Armed Forces). On the very day of the revolution, 25 April 1974, the Secretariado para a Juventude was abolished. Only a few days later, on 30 April, the Fundo de Apoio aos Organismos Juvenis (FAOJ, the Support Fund for Youth Organisations) was created. The revolution made it possible for the new ideas related to “socio-cultural animation” (SCA), strongly influenced by the “May 68” movement in France, to emerge in Portugal, in six distinct phases (Lopes 2006).

→ Phase 1 – The revolutionary period (1974-76)

Starting with the revolution, SCA was assumed by those in power to be an efficient method of intervention in communities. Therefore the Comissão Interministerial para a Animação Sociocultural (Inter-ministerial Commission for Socio-cultural Animation) was created. Special attention was dedicated to women, through the creation of the Socio-cultural Project for Rural Women.

Youth rights were defined in a particular article in the 1976 constitution, Article 70, by which:

1. Young people enjoy special protection in their economic, social and cultural rights, including:
 - a) In education, vocational training and culture;
 - b) Access to a first job, work and social security;
 - c) To have access to housing;
 - d) Physical education and sport;
 - e) Use of leisure time.
 2. Youth policy should have as its primary objectives the development of the personality of young people, the taste for free creativity and the notion of community service.
 3. The State, in collaboration with schools, businesses, grassroots organisations and culture and recreation communities, encourages and assists youth organisations in pursuit of those objectives, as well as all forms of international youth exchange.
- (Constitution of the Republic of Portugal, Article 70, 1976)

As mentioned above, FAOJ was created only a few days after the revolution (through the Decreto-Lei n.º 179/74 de 30 de Abril), in order to “adjust the youth initiative support structures to the new realities in the domain of leisure time occupation.” Through the publication of the Decreto-Lei n.º 106/76 de 6 de Fevereiro, FAOJ was reformulated, and one of its missions was “to promote the training of animators, monitors and other technical staff” – of, arguably, youth workers. This very same competence would be maintained in the 1986 reform of FAOJ and in the creation of the Instituto da Juventude (Youth Institute), in 1988. Efforts were made to develop better knowledge about the reality of SCA in Portugal, and the first measures were taken to create the *estatuto do animador* (animator status).

21. The Movimento das Forças Armadas was the organisation of the lower-ranked, left-leaning military officers responsible for the revolution, who retained political power through the Junta de Salvação Nacional until 1976.

In order to bring these activities closer to the public, FAOJ Regional Delegations and Municipal Houses of Culture were created.

→ Phase 2 – The constitutional period (1977-80)

All activities related to youth continued to be determined by institutions in a very centralised way. The notion of a “youth organisation” was defined in order to allow a positive differentiation of youth associations as such from other organisations. Youth organisations had to have, for instance, a majority of members between 15 and 24 years old; the managing bodies had to incorporate members under 30 years of age; no commercial purposes could be pursued; and the promotion of socio-cultural and/or socio-educational animation had to take place from the perspective of leisure time occupation.

→ Phase 3 – The patrimonial period (1981-85)

Priority was given during this period to the preservation and recovery of cultural heritage.

In 1983, the 1st Inter-Ministerial Commission for Youth was created to follow the evolution of young people’s aspirations and needs; to produce cross-sectoral projects; to give advice on all youth-related issues; and to develop an integrated youth policy. In 1984, the first National Registration of Youth Organisations was implemented, with the intention of better knowing the actors in the field and better managing support for the activities of youth organisations.

For many reasons, 1985 could be seen as the year that youth, and youth policies, were repositioned within the political and societal framework.

The United Nations declared 1985 the International Year of Youth. This event triggered a major dynamic around youth issues in the country, with several bodies, even at government level, willing to play a leading role. The National Youth Council was created, as a non-governmental youth association/platform representing youth organisations in their relations with the official bodies. The government created the Secretary of State for Youth, no longer as a body inside the structure of the Ministry of Education, but reporting to the Portuguese Prime Minister.

In Europe, in 1985, the Council of Europe organised its 1st Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, under the theme “Participation of young people in society”. Youth became global, no longer associated with only an educational/cultural dimension. This social globalisation of youth policies inspired, amongst others, by the Council of Europe, led to the creation of ministries/youth services and national youth councils in many other countries.

→ Phase 4 – Transfer of SCA from central to local bodies (1986-90)

This period was marked by the decentralisation of SCA. It had not been really been recognised by the state, but a new impulse came from local authorities, who began to take a leading role in cultural initiatives at local level. Moreover, the first higher education courses were finally implemented, and many professional animators’ training courses were created.

With the establishment of the Instituto da Juventude, in 1988, several programmes aimed at the training of young youth leaders and youth workers were created. The Programa de Animadores Juvenis (Young Animators Programme) and the Plano Nacional de Formação (National Training Programme), are examples of the government's responses to the needs expressed by a system tending to support and promote the creation of youth organisations and local development agents (Gabinete do Ministros Adjunto e da Juventude 1990):

- the Programa de Animadores Juvenis aimed at providing young people with basic training for them to become youth workers in socio-cultural and educational areas. From 1987 to 1989, 551 young people participated in the training;
- the Plano Nacional de Formação aimed at making available to youth leaders and youth workers training in specific areas such as communication techniques and leisure time occupations. From 1986 to 1989, 7983 young people attended these training sessions.

→ Phase 5 – The multicultural and intercultural period (1991-95)

This period is marked by efforts to demonstrate the value of SCA in multicultural societies. In the case of Portugal, the intervention of SCA organisations in African Portuguese-speaking countries assumed a prominent role, not only through aid projects but also in the training of local youth workers.

At the same time, marking recognition of SCA, the 1.º Congresso Internacional de Animação Sociocultural (1st International Congress of Socio-Cultural Animation) took place at the city of Vila Real, Portugal, in 1995.

→ Phase 6 – The globalisation period (1996 onwards)

From 1996, SCA was seen as a means of promoting participation as well as social and personal development. SCA reinforced its connection to local development, earning social and institutional recognition.

This is where we now stand, not only in Portugal, but also at European level. Although SCA is getting more and more institutional recognition, in practical terms not so much has been achieved, for instance in terms of the professionalisation of youth work, a core aspiration of many youth workers. Questions remain to be answered: what might be the implications of such a professionalisation regarding the role and relationship of persons voluntarily involved in the activities of NGOs, namely youth associations, and in not-for-profit projects? Will not these people, and those who develop such projects, start being “accused” of using people other than professionals in such projects? This is a central debate for SCA and therefore for “youth work”.

Challenges for youth work in Portugal

Youth work is so far a discipline within the broader field of SCA. In fact, youth work shows up as a discipline or sub-area of intervention in the diverse courses provided at Portuguese universities

The investment in bringing SCA into higher education has produced results. The number of higher education institutions offering this kind of training has increased

the opportunities for young people to assume SCA as an option for their careers, creating professionals who are of utmost importance for organisations, public or private, active in social affairs.

Moreover, many other organisations are now influenced by these young professionals in SCA, who have been active themselves in pursuing their careers through local project development, international exchanges, non-formal education training, and so on. As far as it is known, however, there are no data available on the impact of the professionalisation of SCA on youth movements/associations, voluntary-based projects, and others.

In 2010, socio-cultural animators gathered at the Aveiro Professionalising Social-Animation Workers' Congress, and approved proposals for statutes and a code of ethics, which were sent to the appropriate authorities with the objective of getting official recognition of their profession. They are still waiting for a decision.

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Associação Portuguesa para o Desenvolvimento da Animação Sócio-Cultural (Portuguese Association for the Development of Socio-Cultural Animation), in www.apdasc.com.