

Noemy Rudolfer and the organization of school and of the world of labor in the 1920s/1930s

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Abstract

The 1920s/1930s are important to understand and perceive the organization of the State and the relations between capital and labor, as well as to construct a liberal educational thought. At the time, education was beginning to appear as a concern of the elites and of those in government, both in the discussions taking place within the Brazilian Education Association (ABE) and through the educational reforms of the States. Psychology, striving to consolidate itself within the scientific arena, offered proposals in the field of education and labor for the orientation and formation of future leaders and followers. It was within this scenario that Noemy Rudolfer played an important role by thinking and acting in defense of educational psychology and its variants, such as professional orientation, targeted at the school environment. In both domains, she intended to put *the right man at the right place*. The expansion of control in the realm of labor and career choice within the educational field aimed at establishing psychology as a science that would skillfully avoid social conflict. Rudolfer contributed to that project by strengthening and expanding the field through her activities in divulging and applying educational psychology and professional orientation in the country, thereby helping to shape a conservative modernization. Based on her production and trajectory, we seek here to reveal Rudolfer's contribution to the construction of such thinking in Brazil in the 1920s/1930s, when a modernizing discourse was being adopted.

Keywords

Educational psychology – New School – Conservative modernization – Noemy Rudolfer.

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Noemy Rudolfer e a organização da escola e do mundo do trabalho nos anos 1920 e 1930

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Resumo

Os anos 1920 e 1930 são importantes para compreendermos e percebermos a organização do Estado e das relações entre capital e trabalho, bem como a construção de um pensamento educacional liberal. Na época, a educação despontava como uma preocupação das elites e dos governantes, seja nas discussões ocorridas no âmbito da Associação Brasileira de Educação (ABE), seja por meio das reformas educacionais dos Estados. A psicologia que se buscava consolidar no campo científico apresentava propostas para o campo da educação e do trabalho com a orientação e a formação dos futuros dirigentes e dirigidos. Foi nesse campo que Noemy Rudolfer teve relevante destaque ao pensar e agir em defesa da psicologia educacional e de suas variantes destinadas ao ambiente escolar, como a orientação profissional. Em ambos os domínios, ela pretendia colocar o homem certo no lugar certo. A ampliação do controle na esfera do trabalho e na escolha das carreiras no campo educacional objetivava instaurar a psicologia como ciência que habilmente evitaria os conflitos sociais. Rudolfer contribuiu para isso ao fortalecer e ampliar o campo a partir de sua atuação na divulgação e na aplicação da psicologia educacional e da orientação profissional no país, configurando uma modernização conservadora. A partir de sua produção e de sua trajetória, buscamos desvelar a colaboração de Rudolfer para a construção de tal pensamento no Brasil dos anos 1920/1930, quando se assumia um discurso modernizador.

Palavras-chave

Psicologia educacional – Escola Nova – Modernização conservadora – Noemy Rudolfer.

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Noemy Marques da Silveira was born on August 8, 1902, in Santa Rosa do Viterbo, in Sao Paulo state, and died on December 16, 1980 in the capital of Sao Paulo. She took the surname Rudolfer after her marriage to Bruno Rudolfer, a Czech engineer, in 1933¹. She studied at *Brás Normal School* from 1914 to 1918. When she graduated, she began working as a substitute teacher and in 1921, by tender of tests and titles, she took over as primary associate teacher in the primary school Prudente de Moraes, in the state capital, and remained there until 1927. From 1927 to 1930, she was Lourenço Filho's assistant in psychology and pedagogy fields at *Praça Normal School*, and she participated in the implementation of *ABC Tests*, one of the jobs in which she was directly involved. During this period, according to Miriam Jorge Warde (2002),

With Noemy, Lourenço Filho developed a private plan of studies about the most advanced European and North American psychological theories on which he had been working as Chair of Psychology and Pedagogy of *Praça Normal School* [...]. During this time, relations with the new master were intense: he invited her to be a Chair preparer and charged her with the task of applying tests (including direct collaboration in the standardization of the *ABC tests*) and of developing experiments at the Experimental Psychology Laboratory, attached to the Chair of Psychology and Pedagogy. (p. 860)

In 1928, Noemy Rudolfer traveled with a group of educators to the United States with grants from the Brazilian Association of Education (BAE) and the International Institute of Education in New York. The purpose of such visit was to study the American education. Later she returned to the U.S. in 1930, to deepen her knowledge of psychology at the Teacher's College at Columbia University, New York, and attended

1- In this article, I have chosen to use the surname Rudolfer to identify the texts referred to in the study.

classes with Kilpatrick, Dewey, Thorndike, Gates and others (RUDOLFER, 1942?).

In 1931, Rudolfer assumed the coordination of the Applied Psychology Service, which was attached to the General Directorate of Education of Sao Paulo and was managed by Lourenço Filho (1930/1931). When Sud Mennucci substituted Lourenço Filho due to the troubled policy of changing interveners in Sao Paulo, Noemy resigned². After Lourenço Filho went to Rio de Janeiro, Rudolfer assumed the Chair of Educational Psychology, and since the enforcement of the Code of Education of Sao Paulo in 1933, the Applied Psychology Service left the premises of the Department of Education and became part of the newly established Institute of Education.

In 1934, when the University of São Paulo (USP) was founded, the Applied Psychology Service changed its name to Psychology Laboratory and remained linked to the Institute of Education. However, it did not report to the chair of psychology, but to a chief. On July 27, 1936, Noemy submitted a proposal to the Congregation of the Institute of Education. Such proposal reorganized the Psychology Laboratory "as an organ of research and studies attached to the chair of Educational Psychology at the Institute of Education, abolishing the position of laboratory's chief" (SÃO PAULO, 1936). This modification centralized and increased the power of the professor in the academic field of research and in her concerns with professional guidance. That same year, she defended her thesis called *The evolution of educational psychology through a history of modern psychology*. Such thesis was published in 1938 in a book with the same title³.

Also in 1938, the college courses that had been taught at the Institute of Education were incorporated by USP when the Pedagogy Section of the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters

2- Noemy Rudolfer did not return to the Applied Psychology Service until 1933, when Fernando de Azevedo assumed the General Directorate of Education.

3- In 1960, for the second edition of the book, its title was changed to *Introduction to Educational Psychology* (BAPTISTA, 2001, p. 338). Normal Schools used the book a lot until the 1980s.

was established. In this movement, the Laboratory and Chair of Psychology had substantial involvement in the process of educational renewal at the time (ANGELINI, 2002).

In the unraveling of the threads in which Noemy Rudolfer was involved, we sought to understand her trajectory in the intertwinement of the education renewal movement, highlighting her commitment to educational psychology and professional guidance. Therefore, we sought to highlight the construction and strengthening of a specific field for her performance, which is indicative of her options for that historic moment. Thus, in the construction of this professor's trajectory, one can not fully ensure the "sufficiency and completeness of the explanation of reality," but I would like "a historical situation to be intelligible as a whole, in which in any case, one must also distinguish historical subjects" (ARÓSTEGUI, 2006, p. 386). Thus, my objective is to reveal Rudolfer's contradictions and class commitments, as well as her role in education and in the period itself.

Psychology and professional guidance: organization of work and school

A former Normal School student, Noemy Rudolfer embraced psychology and the possibilities of relating it to the New School ideas, especially with regard to the personality of students and the development of their individual capabilities. This is evident in her paper presented at the Education Society of Sao Paulo in 1927, when Rudolfer was an associate teacher at Prudente de Morais School, in the state capital. On that occasion, under the heading *Preparation of written language*, she showed her concern with students' essays based on their study of the work *Composition Book*, by Olavo Bilac and Manoel Bonfim.

Rudolfer (1927) criticized how that book was used in high school because according to her, what was to be used as a model turned into

copy of themes and plans, leading students to perform "a mechanized essay due to the lack of use of their own ideas and of their logical arrangement" (p. 59). For her, such a stance undermined the children's individuality at an important moment of their self-assertion regarding creation and writing. In her condemnation of such teaching, she stated that "is not learning, because it does not take place in the active domain" (p. 59), which for her meant the absence of children in the process of construction and mastery of knowledge.

In the same text we find a critique of the educational process developed at the time, as well as evidence of the practice and theory advocated by the teacher, who was linked to the principles of the New School. For example, she argued that exercises should be student-centered, who, stimulated by the teacher, would try to solve problems independently. Thus, creativity and simplicity could emerge if children were kept away from digressions and the use of unfamiliar words (RUDOLFER, 1927).

This document is also about professional guidance, another Noemy Rudolfer's area of concern and intervention at the time. It is noteworthy that this issue draw the attention of many intellectuals linked to the elite of the period, such as Roberto Simonsen and Roberto Mange.

In the field of industrial psychology, Swiss engineer Roberto Mange advised the oldest and most important Brazilian group. In 1926, this intellectual conducted pioneering studies of professional selection, which were systematized in the Services of Selection and Guidance of Sao Paulo Railways from 1930 onwards and in the National Service of Industrial Learning (SENAI) in 1942 (CABRAL, 1950; CUNHA, 1991). In the book *Introduction to the study of New School*, referring to the professional guidance services, Professor Lourenço Filho (1978) said:

Everyone agreed that the end of schooling is the integral education and expression of personality. But no personality is formed without considering concrete conditions.

In the past, based on their own resources families could decide on the guidance to be given to the young, and that is because the ways of professional life were relatively few, and the choice between them was made especially in function of their social and economic position. Now with such diverse types of occupation, it is essential to provide students and their families with elements for a more enlightened and satisfactory decision. (p. 258)

Lourenco Filho, however, does not say explicitly what the benefits of professional guidance to society are. It fell to Noemy to continue the theme and present indications of such benefits in her thesis *Professional guidance and its purpose: the role of elementary school as a professional pre-advisor* to the Committee of Primary and Secondary Education (CPSE) during the Second National Conference on Education of BAE held in Belo Horizonte (1928).

In this work, Rudolfer argued that professional guidance was closely linked to social stability and the maintenance of political order, hence its importance. Her thesis was supported by the principle of better use of human values in the industrial expansion and productivity. Thus, the field of professional guidance should expand its work with social classes and penetrate all “manifestations of activity by preventive and curative means, with a – positive or negative – action that is philanthropy and dedication” (RUDOLFER, 1929, p. 87).

For Rudolfer (1929), the function of professional guidance is to guide “individuals to the profession suited to their aptitudes.” In her view, guidance would make the “love of work” come back, leading to intense performance and more economy. Thus one would avoid “wasting precious forces”, “blue collar worker instability and work accidents involving professionals and those reached by their actions.” As a more integrated social adjustment plan, such action aimed at young people who, when leaving school, would be conducted “to the activity

in the equation of their tendencies – this is its fundamental work” (p. 87).

The objective pursued was to make the workplace an apolitical place which, supported by science and rational organization, establishes a cordial relationship between employers and workers. According to Rudolfer (1929), professional guidance would fulfill the role of discovering the place of each individual and tailoring him to the production process based on the principles of Taylorism. Thus, one would achieve another purpose of guidance, which was related to the procedures of rational and scientific organization of work. In other words, it was about making “workers produce more with minimal fatigue” (p. 88).

Allied to these ideas, we find a concern with maintaining social order, the primary motive for the period, understood as *the highest end* of professional guidance. According to the professor, errors in the choice of profession and social problems were closely linked, because they were due to professional inaptitude “motivated by a lack of emotional or intellectual capacity”. This crowd of social misfits were the fruits of a wrong decision, conducive “to the outbreak of anarchist ideas, of hatred, of class struggle” disturbing social stability⁴. Based on this argument, Rudolfer (1929) questioned: “But would it not be illicit to imagine that these agents would be less dynamic if these individuals devoted themselves to occupations that matched their need for development and adaptation?” (p. 89).

The educator believed that frustration fertilizes the soil for those who threaten the social order. In contrast, professional guidance would be an important tool in social preservation, because it deviated

Individuals from the professions contrary to their aptitudes, *leading them* to other more

4- Marked by riots and strong repression, the 1920s forced President Arthur Bernardes (1922-1926) to declare a state of siege (SAMIS, 2002; ROMANI, 2003). Such context provided elements for the discourse of social control sought by Noemy Rudolfer.

modest but more appropriate professions, assuring them compensation proportional to their capability, avoiding the evils of inaptitude; it would establish – economic benefits – equitable sharing of salaries *in function of a certain equivalence of income resulting from the same capability.* (RUDOLFER, 1929, p. 90, emphasis added)

It is reasonable to assume that professional guidance would centralize the power to *rationalize* the value of salaries by organizing an equivalence between subjects, capabilities and income, reducing costs and increasing production. Moreover, it would also institutionalize a process of discrimination (classification) controlled by tests, which would induce people to choose the most *suitable* professions.

Rudolfer argued that national prosperity and collective peace would only be guaranteed through the investment in professional guidance. The organization of such a service would benefit various sectors of society: for the capital, it would reduce by 25% the percentage of poorly adapted workers; for labor unions, it would enhance professional training; for employers and workers, it would facilitate the training of apprentices and the distribution of jobs for everyone; for parents, it would prevent children and young people from contradicting their professional aptitudes; and ultimately it would benefit public and private education, as well as those who worked in projects for the protection of children and the youth. Finally, the professor urged and requested the cooperation of everyone to divulge the ideals of professional guidance, because the beginning of the solution to the country's problems would depend on this. Her goal was to end riots, strikes, class struggle and anarchism, elements considered wrong choices of individuals in the professional field.

To support her thesis, the professor used the results of a survey carried out in schools of São Paulo, involving 1350 children (696

girls and 654 boys) aged 11 to 14. Considering the answers to the questions *What are you going to be when you grow up?* and *Why?* she strengthened her belief in the need for professional guidance.

In the analysis of female responses, Rudolfer (1929) noted that the choices followed the desire of parents “very natural; weak, unable to decide for herself, the girl yields” (p. 91). In her interpretation, boys tried to escape family influence and, desirous of wealth, indicated the highest paid activities. That meant, she said, “love for freedom and the assertion of personality, under the *empire of fashion*” (p. 91, emphasis added). However, she asked: “will these fair and timely decisions be the pledge of the benefits of collectivity by the expansion of aptitudes?”. And she answered flatly: “no” (p. 91).

The same survey was answered by 412 students from the State Middle School, attended by children from the upper classes. 393 out of these 412 students chose liberal professions (doctors, engineers, lawyers). In her analysis, Rudolfer (1929) considers these choices negative, after all, “beings endowed with mediocre qualities enter brilliant professions “ (p. 92). Thus, she asserts: “It is necessary to create a professional mentality that removes the weeds that are rife among us beforehand, revealing the narrow-mindedness: private interest outweighing public interest” (p. 93).

In her considerations, the professor claimed that neither children nor families had conditions to guide the career choice, a task that should be assigned to a specialized guidance service, which would be linked to psychology.

When presenting her thesis to the Commission for the Primary Education of the Second Education Conference, she received significant accolades, statement of praise and applause for “her intelligent effort,” and her conclusions were approved (SILVA, 2004, p. 154).

The same text was published in two media of the time: *Page of History*, which contained the resolutions of the Conference of 1928, and the Education journal, in 1929. In the latter, we note

the deletion of an item of the thesis, namely, “the youth, whose predilection for liberal or administrative professions diverts precious energy from the production of the Country” (SILVA, 2004, p. 155). It is legitimate to attribute importance to this absence when we consider the critiques Rudolfer made explicitly in the analysis of the choice of liberal professions (doctors, engineers, lawyers) by students.

This fact is revealing in the face of the extent of the control desired by professional guidance (and therefore by psychology). The presence of this control should begin in primary school, selecting, classifying and directing individuals to their appropriate occupations in society. As summarized in the epigraph of the publication of 1929, it was about allocating *the right man in right place*. However, such controlling authority was intended only to the working class, not to the elite and middle classes, which should continue choosing *brilliant professions* even when some of their individuals could be described as mediocre. This signals that, by keeping consistent with the liberal-elitist model, the process of conservative modernization would not be compromised and the maintenance of the structures of domination would be guaranteed.

Education and psychology: *guarantee of social stability*

Thus, for the sake of control and adjustment of the worker, the Institute for Rational Organization of Work (IDORT) was founded in July 1931, under the patronage of the Federation of Industries of Sao Paulo State (FIESP) and the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*. Entrepreneurs and educators participated in IDORT and Noemy Rudolfer was a founding partner (category A) and contributed actively to its activities. In addition to publishing articles in the journal of the Institute (*IDORT: Journal of Scientific Organization*), she was responsible for the Drafting Committee and, along with Victor da Silva Freire, for the Professional Guidance

section. The first issue of the journal, published in January 1932, reveals that beside the professor were: Armando de Sales Oliveira, in the section of General Affairs; Aldo de Azevedo and Roberto Simonsen, in the section on General Organization of Administrative Labor; Roberto Mange and Monteiro de Camargo, in the section of Professional Selection and Education; Roberto Mange and Julio Genta in the section of Work Technology; Geraldo de Paula Souza and Antonio Carlos Pacheco e Silva, in the section of Occupational Hygiene. Lourenço Filho (1946), another member, says the Institute was born with the “desire to serve the progress of work in our land,” and that

the Institute of Hygiene, attached to the Faculty of Medicine, had been trying to propagate the ideas of mental hygiene, including hygiene applied to work since 1924. [...] Roberto Mange and Benjamin Ribeiro perform concrete work of professional selection in the School of Arts and Crafts. Professor of Psychology at *Escola Normal da Praça* experiments with Professional Guidance in this school and at *Lyceum Rio Branco*. (p. 140)

About this history, the New School educator talked about the coming of Henri Pierón and Leon Walther, who taught a course on tecnopsychology of industrial work⁵. That fact gave body and direction to the idea of establishing a society of psychotechnics and later a center for studies of scientific organization, realized at the Institute (LOURENÇO FILHO, 1946)⁶.

IDORT, set up in a moment of “redefinition of social domination practices” (ANTONACCI, 1993, p. 17), was the result of a historical movement:

5- In 1929, the Commercial Association of Sao Paulo hired Leon Walther, an expert in industrial psychology (ANTONACCI, 1993).

6- Carlos Monarcha (2001) discussed Lourenço Filho's relation with psychotechnics. (2001).

In Sao Paulo, the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s were one of the historical moments when practices of expansion of employer power hitherto exercised without accurate grounding, clarifications and links, in an empirical, discontinuous and disorderly way, started being discussed and systematized, theoretically grounded and scientifically applied, in the midst of clashes of workers' counter-power. And such practices gained strength because they were backed by science and reason. (p. 36)

The Institute aimed to “promote ideal types of workers and entrepreneurs, with model and abstract behaviors, habits and attitudes in the sense of unrelated to any social context” (p. 16). With the intention of breaking the control and autonomy exercised by employees in their duties, it pleaded that such a goal would be plausible thanks to the standardization of *what* and *how* one produced. Thus, a division should be deepened: “the division of labor, restricting the autonomy of employees as to how they dispose of their times, modes and workspaces, reconstructing structures and power relations in the productive process” (p. 42).

Evoking its intentions in the name of science and reason, IDORT sought to reorganize and give new content to work. It created labor concepts and new teaching and professionalization practices in order to meet the requirements of performing repetitive and accurate actions. It also sought to “train workers for this type of work and build instruments for the operationalization of these goals” (p. 66). The aim was to attain, in the mental universe, “the image of *efficient, competent labor which defined individual capabilities and appeased conflicts.*” Armed with these principles and linked to other instances, the Institute “promoted campaigns for the real *reeducation of the senses*” (p. 16, emphasis added).

According to Maria Antonieta Martinez Antonacci (1993), rationalization had to do “not only with productivity and business

efficiency, but essentially with the *reason of power and social discipline*” (p. 18, emphasis added). In pursuing this goal, the movement of scientific organization of work disqualifies workers in their action to organize work. It also disqualifies their claims and, as a result, the political life, political action and the politician. All authority to technicians, based on a new structuring of power in public and private life, laid the foundations of the new order since the late 1920s (ANTONACCI, 1993).

Thus, the achievement of the objectives of IDORT depended on some factors that were gradually overcome. With the disruption of power and control of trade unions over the labor market, with its official regulation by the state and the absence of channels of expression and representation of the working class, the principles and norms of scientific management were imposed (ANTONACCI, 1993).

In tune with these purposes, Rudolfer presented the communication Homogenization of *classrooms* at the V National Conference on Education of BAE in 1932. Published in the IDORT journal in April 1933, this text called into question *individual differences* and the reason for school failure. The theme developed by Rudolfer (1933a) argued for the centrality of the educational process in the student by means of the teacher's interest in what each child is like, how each child learns, what his or her aspirations, habits and deficiencies are in order to set the method, the technique and the process to be employed. Based on this, such control should begin at school and remain when workers were adults.

As a signatory of the *Letter of the Pioneers* of 1932, Rudolfer presented renovating ideas, but marked by a liberal-conservative bias. She said that it was the psychologist's job – under the double influence of educational psychology and the new philosophy of education – “to determine individual differences and evaluate them in light of additional information provided by the teacher and parents, for better education of children and for safer progress in their adjustment to school “(RUDOLFER,

1933a, p. 93). In pursuing her goals, she saw tests as a way of predicting and classifying the students into more or less homogeneous groups, “precisely because there seems to be a high correlation between school success and the function that they intend to measure” (p. 96).

The certainty of the success of student classification and the organization of homogeneous groups originated in the work of Lourenço Filho in Sao Paulo (in which *ABC Tests* were used) with the distribution of 15,605 students from elementary and middle school in fast, normal and slow progress classes. For Rudolfer (1933b), the results “speak louder than any argument” (p. 113). There was a 20% increase in promotion in comparison to the previous years, and 1,038 students were promoted to high school six months after classification. This meant that the procedure also generated savings for the state coffers.

In the conclusions of her work, Rudolfer (1933b) lamented that the general concern of the time converged to “*exposing the problem of education in terms of teaching, not of learning,*” and she continued: “they speak to our teachers about programs, schedules, materials, exams – and forget the child’s interests, abilities” (p. 116, emphasis added). For the educator, this meant that the school revolved around the teacher. She also pointed that, to tackle these problems of education – one being the failure – in the first place, it would be necessary to know the child. For this, she suggested three measures: teacher preparation, preparation of school psychologists and the establishment of an educational psychology service. With these measures, she hoped to centralize the process of education in psychology, which was seen by her as a science capable of solving the problem.

Regarding the training of teachers, Rudolfer (1933b) did not doubt that the inclusion of disciplines such as psychology (of education, children and adolescents), measures and statistics applied to education in the curriculum of Normal Schools would fulfill an important and fundamental role.”

As for the training of school psychologists, she suggested specialization courses and the establishment of a graduation course. In the curriculum, she recommended the following disciplines: psychology (of education, of children, of adolescents, of abnormals, social, of elementary and secondary subjects), statistics applied to education, mental adjustments, construction of programs, diagnosis and curative measures in primary and secondary schools (RUDOLFER, 1933b).

When referring to an applied psychology service, Rudolfer (1933b) hoped that such service had the functions of: studying and determining individual differences; being responsible for measures of learning and teaching; researching and disseminating the psychological principles of learning. Such work would be done to assist schools: to provide all children with the most suitable environment to develop their skills, to enable children to make the best use of their educational opportunities; and to provide teachers with objective bases to measure their own work, so that they could realize the flaws and shortcomings of their own teaching and fix them themselves.

When exposing her proposal, the intellectual stated flatly:

with the system that we propose there is no failure. If the student were unable to follow the normal pace of progress, he would be placed in a group whose qualities were similar to his, where he would not be the ‘exception’ and in which individual teaching methods would allow him to enjoy proper care. (p. 117)

Here we find some approach to the New School, devised and organized “according to the intention of learning of the child and not according to the teaching intention of the teacher.” This represented the fulfillment of democratic principles: “equal educational opportunities and differentiation of individuals, so that each of them has the

appropriate treatment to enable him to reach the maximum of his possibilities to live effectively within the social group” (p. 117.)

Due to her trips to the U.S. (1928 and 1930), Rudolfer built and strengthened sound arguments for the inclusion of psychology in the school. Such a move met the purpose of giving such discipline the scientific nature that other fields of knowledge already had. Her trip reports contain the concepts of *change* and *adaptation*, used to justify the “predominant role of psychology in the American educational work” (RUDOLFER, 1930, p. 154). Given this, she assessed that

the basic principle of this educational work is the following: times are changing. If education aims at adapting individuals to life, it should prepare them to cope with change, not through the transmission of dogma and principles of a past civilization, but allowing them to live their own experience to create their own principles. (p.154)

Based on the example of American schools, Rudolfer (1930) argued that every school in Brazil should host a psychology department, in which psychologists would be considered “*indispensable elements* of a good school organization. The distribution of students depends on their work” (p. 154, emphasis added). What mattered in that education, seen and acclaimed by her, was that its scientific basis was the “*accurate knowledge* of facts and laws of individual development” (p. 156, emphasis added).

In her texts, the educator did not produce trip reports only. Between the lines, there is the defense of the American model as beneficial to the Brazilian society, as well as the proposition of psychology with a status of science, understood as a fundamental tool to operate the desired change, whether in schools or in the professional guidance service. After all,

the community’s interest is to put the man in the right place, to *guarantee social stability*. [...] Today we seek to guide the person more in his whole life than only in his profession. In other words, [...] one should feel happy, and being happy at work is just part of it. (RUDOLFER, 1942?, P. 153-154, emphasis added)

Thus, psychology and professional guidance would have a central position in society, allocating people in their *proper place*, and especially not limiting itself to the scope of work, but acting on the whole of life. Thus, it would ensure the control of the whole social organization, avoiding conflicts and maintaining the structure of domination.

Considerations

In her trajectory, Noemy Rudolfer sought to move towards decidedly narrowing the contribution of psychology to the improvement of the Brazilian society. Her actions aimed to construct a modernity that can be described as conservative. In this regard, her role in educational psychology and professional guidance was configured in a field that became central in the discussions of that historical moment, helping to realize the basics of scientific support for the process of domination.

According to Rudolfer, in society, psychologists, supported by the scientific knowledge provided by tests, play the technical roles of classifying individuals and determining, from schools, which group individuals should belong to until they enter the world of work. The professor supported her argument with supposedly scientific and technical neutrality that would serve the purposes of IDORT, of the emerging liberalism in Brazil and of the New School.

Her theoretical foundation was based on the preponderance of the technical doing over the philosophical or sociological one as well as on the separation of politics and educational processes. Politics converted into control,

order, and power to manage and organize society rationally. In turn, for its execution and objectives, education needed rational methods grounded in psychology.

Noemy Rudolfer's writings evidenced her defense of a matrix which urged the consolidation of liberalism within the educational field, through a conservative modernization. Such conceptual model coincided with the elite's interests in extending the control over the organization of work and society, without neglecting to keep the alleged egalitarian image obtained by the possibility of democracy in Brazil. The Revolution of 1930 pursued a similar path when it sought to modernize the Brazilian state breaking with the structures of the Old Republic.

This theoretical contribution materialized in the practices and research based on tests conducted at the Educational Psychology Service, and later at the Educational Psychology Laboratory at the Institute of Education of USP. The procedures coordinated by Noemy Rudolfer also helped IDORT create mechanisms for the selection and identification of individuals *unfit* for the society devised by the elite. Thus, IDORT sought to apply a control that used a *scientific* discourse and that was backed by psychology, so that individual interests would be subjected to the interests of production and the State. Thus, a conservative modernity was configured.

In other words, the opportunities existed and were the same for everyone, but

the aptitudes were different, so there was a need for adjustments and adaptations of individuals to the world of labor and therefore to society. These elements, however, were still contradictory, since the author thought that individuals should live their own experiences and create their own principles.

This thinking permeated the institutions of the period, in both the fields of work and education, classifying and identifying the *misfits*. Thus, it assured the success of some and justified the failure of others. Education played an elitist role by reserving the *best* places for those who were identified as *right* by *scientific* analysis, which did not guarantee the exclusion of individuals of *mediocre quality* from this process.

As a signatory of the *Letter of the Pioneers*, 1932, Noemy Rudolfer developed her thinking centered in the defense of a conservative proposal that bet on the selection and classification of individuals throughout their trajectory in society in order to prevent the *misfits* from threatening the social order and from questioning inequalities and the access to work and school. One can conclude that the trajectory of this professor helps understand and problematize a new liberal ordering of society with conservative and authoritarian features. Such features received the collaboration of psychology and reflected on educational concerns and the world of work.

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