

## Contextualizing education in rural spanish 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries<sup>i</sup>

*Contextualizando a educação rural espanhola nos séculos XX e XXI*

*Contextualizando la educación rural española en los siglos XX y XXI*

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**Abstract:** This paper has aims for study of the environment and education offered to the Spanish rural populations and the objective of proposing possible definitions that can express the understanding about the rural education conceived historically from the capitalist economic transformations between the twentieth and twentieth-first. The analyzes sought to recognize the realities and educational needs of rural populations, as well as pointing out the urban and rural environments as spaces that make up the same universe. In the development of the research we focus the discussions on the changes that occurred with the rural school and the rural education in Spain, through analysis, interpretation and reflection of research carried out by the spanish and brazilian scholars with the objective of harmonizing conceptions of rural education in the contemporary society. We seek not to restrict our understanding of rural education to a pedagogical conception of mere permanence of man on earth, considering that it is necessary to outsource the defense of a broad and universalizing schooling to the farmers from the economic question.

**Keywords:** Rural education. Rural school. Spain.

**Resumo:** Este escrito que tem por objeto de estudo o meio e a educação oferecida para as populações rurais espanholas e como objetivo a proposição de definições possíveis, que possam expressar o entendimento sobre a educação rural concebida historicamente a partir das transformações econômicas capitalistas entre os séculos XX e XXI. As análises buscaram reconhecer as realidades e necessidades educacionais das populações rurais, bem como apontar os meios urbano e rural como espaços que compõem o mesmo universo. No desenvolvimento da investigação focalizamos as discussões nas mudanças ocorridas com a escola e a educação rurais na Espanha, mediante análise, interpretação e reflexão de pesquisas realizadas por estudiosos espanhóis e brasileiros com o objetivo de harmonizar concepções de educação rural na sociedade contemporânea. Procuramos não restringir a nossa compreensão sobre a educação rural a uma concepção pedagógica de mera permanência do homem na terra, considerando que é preciso exteriorizar a defesa de uma formação escolar ampla e universalizante para os rurícolas a partir da questão econômica.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação rural. Escola rural. Espanha.

**Resumen:** Este escrito tiene como objeto de estudio el medio y la educación ofrecidos a las poblaciones rurales españolas y su objetivo es la propuesta de posibles definiciones que puedan expresar la comprensión de la educación rural concebida históricamente a partir de las transformaciones económicas capitalistas entre los siglos XX y XXI. Las análisis buscaron reconocer las realidades y necesidades educativas de las poblaciones rurales, así como señalar los entornos urbanos y rurales como espacios que conforman el mismo universo. En el desarrollo de la investigación enfocamos las discusiones sobre los cambios que ocurrieron con la escuela y la educación rurales en España, a través del análisis, interpretación y reflexión de la investigación realizada por académicos españoles y brasileños con el objetivo de armonizar las concepciones de la educación rural en la sociedad contemporánea. Buscamos no restringir nuestra comprensión de la educación rural a una concepción pedagógica de la mera permanencia del hombre en la tierra, considerando que es necesario externalizar la defensa de una escolarización amplia y universalizadora para los agricultores de la cuestión económica.

**Palabras clave:** Educación rural. Escuela rural. España.

<sup>1</sup> **Submitted:** 20 Aug. 2019 - **Accepted:** 01 Oct. 2019 - **Published:** 03 Sept. 2020

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## Introduction

Considering the diversity of productive activities carried out in different territorial spaces and the need for schooling, we analyze some historical particularities to point out aspects that may contribute to the specification of education for the populations that live in rural Spain. We clarify that the finding, demarcation and appreciation of the environment, customs, traditions and rural cultures vary from continent to continent, from country to country, from region to region due to the forms of occupation of the territories, the historical development processes of the communities. conceptions of world and existence.

However, it is possible to affirm that the definition of rural environment was linked to a determined space occupied by a small agglomeration of people and residences, in which the natural landscapes predominate, which extends its considerations by explaining that between urban and rural environments there is a discontinuities that make rural a space marked by low demographic density, lower participation of wage labor in the set of productive activities of small properties, in contrast to the current predominance of machining and technologization of the production process in large properties, facing the foreign market (WANDERLEY, 2000).

The transformations that rearranged capitalist society in the transposition from the twentieth to the twenty-first century deepened the phenomenon of globalization, which pulverized any and all impediments to the impetuous capitalist expansionism, thus producing a process of “acculturation” of traditional populations around the world. The particularities that distinguished rural cultures are gradually giving way to a hegemonic urban-centric model nourished by the needs and uncertainties of rurality subdued by urbanity.

The homogenization of increasingly similar living standards combined with stereotypes that move from the urban to the rural universe makes us gradually contemplate the non-recognition, or even the indefinición of habits and customs once linked to the rural universe. In this intense transformation, we focus on education for people living in the spanish country side and the implications conceived for the construction/maintenance of rural communities that represent elements that the school can observe, analyze and reflect on the difficulties and impossibilities to glimpse the advantages and disadvantages of changes brought about by capitalism for rural populations (JIMÉNEZ, 2009).

Our initial surveys indicated that research on rural education in Spain in recent decades has focused its analysis on rural school, associated with broader questions concerning education for rural populations themselves, taken from the elements that constitute the structure of services provided, of human, physical, material and main local needs. We seek in the research process to focus the discussions on the changes that occurred with the rural school in Spain through the reading, analysis, interpretation and reflection of studies conducted by spanish and brazilian researchers with the objective of harmonizing concepts of rural education in contemporary society.

We understand that beyond the limits of technical aspects, considerations on the historical aspects of the relationship between urban and rural universes are still relatively

incipient; We explain the importance of considering class relations, the historical contexts that involved and safeguarded in capitalist society the exploitation imposed by the dominant to the dominated, the safeguarding of the new over the old, the valorization and predominance of the urban over the rural (BEZERRA NETO; SANTOS, 2016).

## Limits and potentiality of rural education in Spain

The schooling model used in Spain until the 1970s was characterized by the so called “unitary school”, in which students were grouped into three distinct categories (basic, middle and higher), classified by consideration of your reading, writing and calculating skills under the responsibility and guidance of a single teacher. We are referring to the teaching in which only one (multipurpose) teacher unfolds to teach different groups of students at different levels of learning and in situations where they have to multiply their efforts to perform teaching in order to achieve results positive (HINOJO; RASO; HINOJO, 2010).

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This model is very familiar to us, since it was and is widely practiced in the most varied rural areas of Brazil; model we know as the “multigrade class” or “multigrade school” and that we discern well about their realities, needs and needs (MOURA; SANTOS, 2012; LOPES; BEZERRA NETO, 2013; JANATA; ANHAIA, 2015; HAGE; REIS, 2018). In addition to being responsible for the schooling of children and adolescents of different ages classified at different levels of learning – different grades – teachers end up due to the need and lack of resources of the most diverse orders, assuming innumerable functions that totally deviate from their activities. teachers, such as janitor, janitor, janitor, porter etc., a situation that evidences the overload, the devaluation and precariousness of the teacher's work (FAGUNDES; MARTINI, 2003).

Luna (2010) clarifies that in Spain there were unitary schools for boys, girls and, especially, mixed classes when there were a small number of boys or girls for the composition of the classes. In general terms, the basic model for the education of rural populations – farms, villages, small villages – was the “mixed unitary school”, which did not necessarily house the different classes of a given locality or region in the same building/physical building.

Feu Gelis (2004, p. 2), for her part, infers that rural schools functioned in unimaginable spaces, in precarious conditions and without economic, material and human resources within the spanish territory, namely: “in the courtyard of a church, in the basement of a public office, in the room of an abandoned house and at worst in any space converted into a ‘classroom’, which despite all efforts remained inadequate for instruction”.

The changes in the conditions of existence of rural schools in Spain occurred simultaneously with the transition from the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco Bahamonde (1936-1975) to the parliamentary monarchy of Juan Carlos I (1975-2014). Luna (2010) explains that the spanish government's attempt to transform the reality of rural schools and, therefore, education for rural populations, with the introduction of the General Law on Education and Financing of Educational Reform n. 14 (ESPAÑA, 1970)<sup>ii</sup>, in fact, initiated a

process of closing rural schools. This fact is reiterated by Sánchez (1983), who pointed out Spanish governmental intentions to extinguish the rural schools of farms, villages and small villages:

School concentrations<sup>iii</sup> have their precedent in school groups in the early 1960s, but it is from the Law. General of Education [1970] and more specifically with the Ministerial Orders for the Transformation and Classification of Centers of 1971 (30-XII) and 1972 (14-I) that the fever of the creation of regional centers of education becomes effective and consequently the closure of the unitary mixed schools (SÁNCHEZ, 1983, p. 29).

The process of school concentration brought with it a significant increase in school transportation, student food expenses, and the construction of schools, generating a public expenditure on education of 16.5% in the year 1972. The gradual increase with investments in Education opposed to the closure of rural unitary schools, according to Luna (2010) analysis, may lead to the misconception that the quality of spanish rural education has increased substantially, but this has not happened because:

[...] both the quality education as well as the quality of life in rural areas did not improve, on the contrary, the level dropped much, since the quality model used was the urban-industrial, not applicable to many Spanish rural areas, where there were no nearby public administrative districts and nor facilities for communication (LUNA, 2010, p. 2).

The political measures undertaken by the spanish government expressed the discrimination characterized by the contradiction between the valorization of the city and the detachment from rural issues, as they emphasized the satisfaction of the needs of urban areas regarding infrastructure, urbanization, industrialization, services and equipment. “The transfer of this contradiction to the educational field highlights the state's priority given to urban centers against the provision and maintenance of minimum services to small rural populations” (LUNA, 2010, p. 4). Heredero, González and Nozu (2014, p. 145) reaffirm the conditions of existence of rural schools in twentieth century Spain by pointing out that this institution, due to its location in areas of difficult access, low economic, social and cultural levels. “I had a conception of inferiority in relation to the urban school”.

Analyzing the brazilian reality, we reach conclusions similar to those highlighted by Luna (2010) and Heredero, González and Nozu (2014), since “the rural environment was (is) systematically associated with a deterministic and discriminatory conception of delay and regression, while the city expresses the aegis of developmentism and economic modernity in capitalist society” (SANTOS; BEZERRA NETO, 2015, p. 179). In the same direction, Leite (2002, p. 14), when analyzing rural education in Brazil, argues that:

[...] for sociocultural reasons [rural education], it has always been relegated to lower levels, and its ideological backing was the accentuated elitism of the process. The Jesuit educational system and the political-ideological interpretation of the agrarian oligarchy popularly known in the expression: people from the country do not need studies. This is a city thing.

Feu Gelis (2004, p. 2) reinforces this context by stating that the rural school in Spain received little attention from the state, which classified it as a fourth category school, a

village school, a village school. Such derogatory terms would not have much importance if they did not stem directly from the “comparative nonsense that rural schools are inferior to urban schools, have smaller resources, their curricula are reduced, they do not offer all levels of education and the most important are in the list of the educational needs of the country”.

Hernández Díaz (2000), in turn, points out that the ideals of life, society, values disseminated by textbooks and school contents for rural children were (are) predominantly those practiced and characteristic in and of the urban environment. This conception is unquestionably evidenced from the late 1960s, when the Spanish government set in motion the accelerated plan to empty the countryside, especially the rural school – as noted earlier Hernández Díaz (2000, p. 125) argues “that the school, through textbooks, invited children to the adventure of the city, as opposed to the abandonment of the rural to its fullest extent, in view of a more open and dynamic society for children. represent the closure of rural schools”.

We draw the reader’s attention to the world economic context in which the reordering of the capitalist system was installed, which resulted in the dismantling of the welfare state<sup>iv</sup> and the restoration of the classical liberal foundations of non-state intervention in free and free market relations. total competition, inviolability of private ownership of the means of production, maximization of labor force exploitation, productivity and profits, directly interfering with national policies in all parts of the world, requiring their adjustment to the new economic order.

Inevitably, the spanish educational system required changes in the general framework, the primary school and the rural school needed adjustments and reorganization in their structure, in order to adapt to the new demands of the capitalist system emanating from the World Bank (WB). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Seeking to meet external pressures, the spanish government published in 1969 the White Book on Education and, in 1970, the General Education Act (LGE). Hernández Díaz (2000) comments that even before the pressures of the multilateral international organizations, the staff technocratico the spanish government:

[...] already defended a discourse that he saw as irremediable (but passively) about what was happening in the rural world. and in their schools. It even favored the dismantling of the [mixed unitary] rural society and school model and other models similar to school concentrations and home schools. Technocratism imposed itself easily and strictly through the economic field, without taking into account the social and cultural dimension that school represents in rural areas, without considering other ways out and about the subject, without being able to distinguish why, in fact, it was not. interested in a quality unitary school, in a school for the formation of farmers (HERNÁNDEZ DÍAZ, 2000, p. 129).

The General Education Act of 1970 misunderstood hundreds and hundreds of Spanish rural schools by defining technical criteria to promote their suppression, closure, and extinction by implementing school concentrations. Rural unitary school is now considered in the residual Spanish educational system, practically extinct, even with the effort of the Compensatory Education Program of 1983 (ESPAÑA, 1983). The spanish state technocracy was well concerned with the dismantling of schools that supposedly had low demands,



transferring children to the city's schools, without evaluating any positive or negative social and economic consequences, either for the rural communities or for the possible pedagogical effects favorable or not to the school formation process (HERNÁNDEZ DÍAZ, 2000; LUNA, 2010).

Only in 1986 were rural populations taken into consideration by the Spanish government, which was a direct result of the demands and initial pressures of groups linked to education in Ávila<sup>v</sup>, who proposed innovative ways to resist and fight the disappearance of school as the only cultural reference point for rural communities. Resulting in the publication of Royal Decree n. 2.731 of December 24, 1986 (ESPAÑA, 1986), which established the creation of the Grouped Rural Colleges of Basic General Education (CRAs).

The grouped rural colleges faced the closure of rural schools and the transfer of their students to the city's schools, expressing an innovative perspective of school and education to and from farms, villages and small villages. However, some aspects that characterized the conditions of existence and functioning of rural unitary schools were replicated as the lack of economic and financial resources to maintain the units, physical, material and human disabilities, especially those related to teacher training.

In any case, the CRAs represent the permanence of the school for the educational formation of the rural dwellers, as well as an education that has as support pillars the territory and the rural culture and has:

[...] a structure didactic-pedagogical approach based on the heterogeneity and multilevelty of groups of different ages, abilities, curricular competences and educational levels, and with a unique organizational and administrative structure, adapted to the characteristics and necessity inherent to the context in which it is inserted (TOMÁS, 2004, p. 13).

The educational model practiced in the Spanish rural schools was characterized by its specific and specific organization, with a view to adapting itself “to the uniqueness and idiosyncrasy of the environment to guarantee a quality education respecting the identity of each one”; this allows us to “appreciate different organizational structures, such as clustered rural schools, incomplete centers and unitary schools” (RUIZ; GIL, 2011, p. 142). Certainly, the number of students constitutes a fundamental factor in the “organization of the institution regarding the maintenance of its existence and functioning, or the closure of its activities by the educational administration” (RUIZ; GIL, 2011, p. 142).

Nor can we fail to consider education from the conditions, situations and circumstances in which teaching and learning processes take place, nor can we separate the environment, school and education for rural communities from the larger totalities, Spanish society, European society, world society and thus the globalized capitalist system. The rural can no longer be dissociated from the globalized world and its technologies of production, information and communication, because in reality it is directly connected with the transformations produced by the technical and scientific development moved and intertwined with the capitalist economic system.

The rural universe, the rural education, the rural school and all that they represent, in the set of values of the current digital age, requires a new look at the urban universe and the

world society itself, as it has been redefined, reorganized, reordered. and adequate to the demands and determinations of economic globalization, which reflects a new rurality, characterized by the intensification of access and use of technological innovations in constant transformation.

The insertion of the rural environment and the rural school in a globalized society enables it, through access to information and communication, to get out of the characteristic isolation of past centuries, to know other cultures and customs. As well as urban populations have greater access and knowledge of the true realities experienced by different rural communities not only from Spain, Brazil, Europe or America, but from around the world, which results in the approximation of living conditions made available both in urban and rural areas. Obviously, we cannot fail to consider the differences between lifestyles that are immanent to the distinct urban and rural social groups, which house subcultures located at specific times and spaces, so the differences between them make the overall scenario certainly unequal.

However, various cultural differences between rural and urban no longer exist. The significance of this new reality and what tradition has conceived to build rural communities constitute important aspects for analysis of the educational field, since “it is impossible to visualize the advantages and disadvantages of changes for people and rural societies” (JIMÉNEZ, 2009, p. 1). In short, we are “witnessing the emergence of a new rural society that, without forgetting agrarian development, is projected for greater economic diversification within the new opportunities offered by the secondary and tertiary sectors” (JIMÉNEZ, 2009, p. 2). This new rurality consists of several categories that, according to Márquez (2002), *apud* Jiménez (2009, p. 3-4) can be specified as follows:

- 1) Politics: rural communities must act as a constituent part of public life through the exercise of participatory and innovative democracy, with to achieve a quality of life for the integral development of the human person and the resources available to him;
- 2) Institutional: the rule of law with autonomy for territorial management must prevail;
- 3) Economic: rural communities must be governed by democratic economic principles that impose strong social responsibilities on the market;
- 4) Cultural: the new rurality is based on the recognition and appreciation of its cultural diversity;
- 5) Environmental: Rural communities need to conform to the principles of sustainable development and incorporate environmental wealth in order to improve the quality of life;
- 6) Territorial: rural communities should represent the association of local and regional projects with full autonomy to carry out their propositions, which implies a planned territorial articulation.

It is in the direction of the rescue and preservation of rural culture that countless initiatives by both social movements and the state itself gained expression in Spanish lands, as it did in Brazil, with emphasis on the role played by the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST in Brazil), that in addition to the struggle for land and in defense of the customs, traditions and cultural diversity that characterize the rural populations of Brazil, it has also been very keen to fight for a quality education for the populations camped and settled in the most diverse localities of the territory. Brazil, through the I National Meeting of Educators in Agrarian Reform (1997), I National Conference for Basic Education of the Field (1998), I Seminar of the National Program of Education in Agrarian Reform (2003), I

National Conference for a Basic Rural Education: for a Public Rural Education Policy (2004)<sup>vi</sup>.

Jiménez (2009, p. 4) stresses the importance of social movements in Spain seeking to revalue the environment and rural culture with the state and society, on the grounds that it constitutes fact and reaffirms the manifestations contrary to the crisis, which has characterized the current urban-industrial reality, “against which the rural is proposed as a way of life linked to nature and desirable for its quality as the scope of the development of work, leisure, tourism etc”.

## Spanish rural education in the light of the 21<sup>st</sup> century

It should be considered, according to Jiménez (2009), that the image of the rural linked to the past, to the old, to the backwardness has been gradually and relatively overcome, considering the transformations that the strictly traditional rural environment, homogeneous and restricted to locality does not fit in the globalized world, is not and is not isolated, because the information society does not allow its invisibility. According to Hernández Díaz (2000, p. 127) analysis, what must be taken into account cannot be restricted to:

[...] the enchantment of the values of nature, the manageable systems of economic production and transformation, of creation and transmission of cultural, school and religious values and models of traditional rural society that have survived the history of Spain over the centuries; definitively escapes a model of society, school and Spain of the past, as other types of culture, mechanisms of production, transmission of knowledge and also of school emerge with frantic and uncontrollable vigor.

The rural school, the village school, the rural school, unitary, mixed or grouped, as well as the traditional rural society itself, which has historically been forgotten and undervalued in the past, currently faces transformations of model and orientation, inaugurated at from the educational reforms of the last quarter of the twentieth century 21<sup>st</sup> century Spain no longer rests on a strictly rural social structure, is not guided by a predominantly peasant mentality, nor is it the primary sector most important in the country's entire productive system, so the spanish rural universe does not have any situation, the same meaning it had forty, fifty or a hundred years ago. Therefore, all aspects, elements, issues, needs and needs that constitute the so-called rural school cannot be considered in isolation, much less detached from globalized society (HERNÁNDEZ DÍAZ, 2010).

The realization of rural education in the current spanish context needs to consider that recognition of the right to a level playing field and quality education are indispensable for the development of rural populations. The state needs to commit to these populations to implement affirmative policies aimed at reducing economic and social inequalities by providing effective economic-financial, physical, material and human resources for the provision, maintenance and development of education that contemplates the training needs



for the insertion and permanence of the rural dwellers to the rural labor market (ÁLVAREZ; SÁNCHEZ; HINOJO LUCENA, 2013).

Hernández Díaz (2000) reiterates our notes by inferring that one of the main transformations that occurred in the Spanish educational system in the last years of the twentieth century, resulted directly from the process of reordering the capitalist economic system, the globalization of the economy, the predominant capitalist society industrial and urban. In this context, both education and school are not oblivious to such economic and social processes, “which can never be explained linearly in time and form, as they lead to the majority replacement of one rural educational structure by another with an urban domain” (HERNÁNDEZ DÍAZ, 2000, p. 114-115).

Spanish society is completely involved in a model of organization of life and work in rural areas, that there is no possibility of return to the traditional past, in spite of the organization and technocratic action in globalized capitalism, “of agrarian production and intense commodification never seen in Spanish history”, adds Hernández Díaz (2000, p. 127). However, in this controversial political process about education and school for the rural population:

[...] which reached its peak in the late 1980s with the intervention of public opinion, the Pedagogical Renewal Movements, Cooperative Popular School Movement, education unions, all political groups, autonomous administrations with or without transferred educational competences, many municipal corporations and citizens in particular, debates were fueled and a broad movement in defense of the rural school was organized in the most diverse parts of Spain, which has led to some technical and political solutions to the issue and better and greater pedagogical consideration for what it means, or should represent, school in the countryside (HERNÁNDEZ DÍAZ, 2000, p. 131).

Hernández Díaz (2000) agrees with the postulates of Tomás (2004) in inferring that much of the improvement in education conditions for rural communities today derives directly from the main proposals of the rural school movement, such as for example, the creation of CRAs and their incorporation into the Organic Law of the General Organization of the Educational System (1990)<sup>vii</sup>. Different measures are directly or indirectly associated with compensatory education programs, center and classroom installation systems for compulsory secondary education, building new schools and upgrading existing facilities in the most attractive settlements and timid approach to the process vocational training oriented to rural productive activities (HERNÁNDEZ DÍAS, 2000).

It cannot be denied that significant advances have materialized in the Spanish educational system, a substantial qualitative leap has been made, especially with regard to rural education, school for rural communities, educational centers in rural areas, but they are still insufficient. It is a long way to go, considering that countless demands from civil society, class organizations and associations, movements in defense of rural schools, researchers who focus on the subject and citizens in a broad sense have not been met. Therefore, permanent attention is needed to the maintenance and improvement of the conditions of existence of the rural school with good quality education that considers it in its particularities and needs, as

well as in the total impossibility of its urban apartment, of the spanish society, of the society globalized capitalist.

The theoretical foundations contained in the writings of Márquez (2002), Feu Gelis (2004), Jiménez (2009), Álvarez, Sánchez e Hinojo Lucena (2013) renew Hernández Díaz (2000) considerations that both rural education and rural schools in Spain have historically not received sufficient attention, concern, specific and differentiated treatment to meet the different educational levels, needs, needs and particularities in the places in which they are located<sup>viii</sup>. The nonconcern of the spanish political authorities for education and the rural school, which lasted until the last quarter of the twentieth century, produced substantial deterioration of the educational public service for rural communities and, beyond these limits, systematically disrespected the educational rights of children, adolescents, youth and adults; disrespected the spanish citizen (HERNÁNDEZ DÍAZ, 2000).

At present we can point with conviction to the existence of two types of schools made available to rural communities in Spain: on the one hand they are grouped together and constitute legally and administratively a kind of unified center of education, but in practice it brings together several schools from different locations that have the same denomination, the same pedagogical project, the same school council, the teachers board and the management team; on the other hand, there are isolated centers which, due to territorial distances, are unable to constitute a clustered rural center (HEREDERO; GONZÁLEZ; NOZU, 2014).

Thinking and reflecting on the future of education for rural dwellers is an extremely dynamic, complex issue, and relatively restricted to public education policies embedded in the broader social and economic policies that must and need to be implemented in such contexts. It is not possible to point out what can happen to the provision of education for rural communities without first considering its direct link with the productive, demographic, territorial, relational, environmental and cultural spheres.

It is necessary to distinguish rural education in the context of the innumerable interactions and relationships that move the different processes in the capitalist society in its entirety and that can contemplate the full, balanced and sustainable development of both the space and the populations that make up the rural environment, with a view to improving the quality of life and promoting equal opportunities for all (HEREDERO; GONZÁLEZ; NOZU, 2014).

Ruiz and Gil (2011) argue that we cannot think and/or reflect on a future for the rural environment and inexorably for rural education without taking into account the global and local development of the environment. “In this global development, school education is a fundamental axis for the social transformation of the environment”, that is, an indispensable resource “to open new job prospects to get out of the assistential culture in which they are sometimes immersed, to improve qualifications access to other jobs”, as well as to eliminate “the lack of social initiatives” (RUIZ; GIL, 2011, p. 144).

We believe it is pertinent to point out that our search for some conceptual definitions of rural education constructed by the intellectuals analyzed in the present study, has always sought to consider the difficulties and complexities that involve and characterize both school,

education and, above all, rural terminology since it retains within itself an intricate and multidimensional vision that encompasses numerous elements and considerations, which undoubtedly does not allow us to present only a “universal and permanently valid definition of [rural education], without having an overall vision so as not to end in a dichotomy simplistic because [rural and urban] are in permanent transformation” (BERLANGA QUINTERO, 2003, p. 27).

We should not and cannot limit ourselves to considering only agricultural or non-agricultural productive activities as parameters for differentiating whether a particular environment is rural or urban, since the increase in non-agricultural activities in rural areas has been an unquestionable reality since the 1990s, “both in developed countries, such as the United States of America (USA), as well as in Latin America in general, and in Brazil in private” (SILVA, 2002, p. 61). In our apprehension the rural environment can and should be contemplated both as a producer of culture and as a product, as a creative as a space for the construction of the new, therefore:

[...] it should not be reduced to the space of economic production, but recognized and considered as and as a space of economic production, not as a space of the old, the past, the ancient and non-culture, but as part of a larger universe, associated and imbricated with urban space, the peripheries, rivers, to the seas to the world and society in all its extension and heterogeneity (SANTOS; BEZERRA NETO, 2017a, p. 455).

As we can see, there are several conceptual indications about rural and rural education that, according to Álvarez (2000), even question the very existence of rurality in relation to urbanity in the socioeconomic and cultural context of the 21st century. We have found an education in which rural classification may even constitute inconvenience rather than a solution to their problems and needs. However, we should not stick to such terminological inconveniences, we need to move toward “understanding education from the particular circumstances in which its teaching task is carried out; circumstances that cannot and should not be dissociated from the context in which they occur: the rural context” (RUIZ; GIL, 2011, p. 142-143).

Fernandes (2002), in turn, argues that education is a fundamental resource for human development and points to a new trajectory of those who believe that rural and urban environments complement each other and:

[...] need to be understood as singular and plural, autonomous and interactive geographical spaces, with their different cultural identities and modes of organization, which cannot be thought of as a relationship of eternal dependence or by the 'urbanoid' and totalitarian vision, which foresees the intensification of urbanization as a model of a modern country. Modernity is broad and includes everyone from the countryside and the city (FERNANDES, 2002, p. 62-63).

The social and formative role played by education and schools in rural areas is unique, as expressed by Ruiz and Gil (2011). In other words, the educational/educational formation developed by education contributes to:

- 1) giving voice to the silenced rural cultures and to affirm its value and potentiality in the context of globalization;
- 2) defend and ensure the collective and cultural

identity of rural areas, as well as to conserve the natural and historical heritage; 3) the constitution of a center for educational, cultural, social, relationship and participation activities; 4) an alternative model to the development of strategies of resistance and to confront the hegemonic organization of educational centers and a particular model of culture imposed and legitimized from the urban environment through the educational system; 5) a mechanism for meeting the educational needs of the general population and guaranteeing the principle of equal opportunities; 6) a contribution to the reconstruction of the concept of rurality as an autonomous, integral life project that addresses its own needs and values (CARIDE, 1998 *apud* RUIZ; GIL, 2011, p. 143-144).

In the conception of Tomás (2004, p. 13), as we pointed out earlier, rural education can be defined as one that has its inseparable support from both the rural environment and culture, with a didactic-pedagogical organizational structure based on attending to “heterogeneity and multilevelty of groups of pupils with different ages, abilities, skills and educational attainment, adapted to the characteristics and needs inherent in the context in which they operate”, without, however, departing from the totality, that is, from society itself.

## Final considerations

Intertwined with the structural transformations of the capitalist economic system of the late twentieth century, the thinking, identity and social and cultural activities of rural populations have also changed, developed, evolved and enabled the creation of new elements for educational and educational organization within schools, as new teaching methods and tools, working materials more appropriate to meet local needs closely related to the European context and particularly to the southern continent where the school has recognized spaces and characteristics.

In 21st century Spain there are, insist and persist different institutional models of education with distinct forms, dynamics, rhythms and peculiarities such as rural school centers, complete individual, incomplete individual and clustered rural centers. Reforms in recent decades in practice express the quest for the continuing pedagogical reassessment of rural education and rural schools for their value and importance to local communities, even the isolated and multi-grade unitary school of farms, small villages and villages, “besides other repercussions of social, territorial, demographic or maintenance of the population in rural areas for political and economic reasons” (HERNÁNDEZ DÍAZ, 2000, p. 134).

Spanish rural education needs to consider the circumstances and conditions under which teaching and learning processes take place, the universe, education and the school institution need to be recognized as constituent parts of spanish society, European society, world society and therefore, of the capitalist system in times of globalization. Therefore, the rural environment cannot be dissociated from economic globalization with its advantages and disadvantages, despite its production, information and communication technologies, since in materialized it is inseparable from the set of transformations produced by the technical and scientific development driven by capitalist system of production.

In the direction of the findings and propositions of the Spanish specialists, the arguments of the Brazilian specialists converge by pointing out that: education for the Brazilian rural populations can be understood by its link to issues inherent to singularities, particularities, local realities, anchored in temporality, “in the collective memory that signals futures, in the network of science and technology available today and in social movements in defense of projects that associate the solutions required by these questions with the social quality of collective life in the country”, but never apart from the capitalist society in question permanent globalization (BRASIL, 2002).

Regardless of realities and territories, rural education needs to be grasped within the set of immeasurable interactions and relationships that express the dynamism and complexity of oppositions and contrary characteristics of capitalist society, with a view to achieving the maximum human, social, economic, political development cultural and environmental protection of both rural and rural areas, as well as ensuring the improvement of the quality of life and the promotion of equal opportunities without class distinction, or rather without privileging one class over the other. Therefore, permanent attention is indispensable for the improvement of the conditions of existence of education and rural schools with good quality education to materialize effectively; that the rural universe be considered inseparable from the urban universe, subjected to the consequences of the movements and transformations of the economic system and, therefore, constituent spaces of the same society.

We reiterate that the processes of change in contemporary times have been moving simultaneously in the most diverse regions and provinces of both the heterogeneous Spanish rural society and the realities lived within the Brazilian territory, where we can find differentiated and segmented educational, educational and school concepts as diverse rural cultural practices, which translate their pluralities and cultural and pedagogical riches. It is noteworthy here – borrowing the words of Ruiz and Gil (2011, p. 144) – that education, school, rural education will remain alive as long as there is a need for livelihoods, because “agricultural and livestock production continue to be the foundation for the socioeconomic development and satisfaction of the population’s food needs, as well as for territorial balance, valorization and revitalization of rural areas” and maintenance of global society.

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> Translated by José Henrique Rodrigues Machado – Email: jhenrique\_20@hotmail.com.

<sup>ii</sup> Ley General de Educación y Financiamiento de la Reforma Educativa n. 14 (ESPAÑA, 1970).

<sup>iii</sup> Under the assumption of improving the quality of the education system, the spanish government promoted the creation of national colleges with groups of 30 students in the same age group and, in return, the closure of educational activities in schools with low demand. Many village schools and small villages had their doors closed and pupils were clustered in central units in the cities (LUNA, 2010).

<sup>iv</sup> Consult: Chapter 3. “Tecnocracia e Utilitarismo” e Chapter 4. “Liberalismo e Tecnocracia” (SANTOS, 2015). SANTOS, Flávio Reis. **Capitalismo, tecnocracia e educação**: da utopia social saintsimoniana à economia (neo)liberal friedmaniana. Jundiaí: Paco Editorial, 2015.

<sup>v</sup> Spanish province of the Community of Leon and Castile. The walls surrounding the city have been declared a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

<sup>vi</sup> “The first achievement resulting from the trajectory of mobilization and struggles undertaken by social movements can be expressed by the National Program for Education in Agrarian Reform, as it represents a substantial milestone in the pursuit of the right to education for individuals living in rural areas and, for example play a role of great importance to contribute to the reduction of brazilian school, social and economic inequalities, as it sought to enable the implementation of public policies to ensure access to basic and higher education, vocational training, educator training and defense of public schools in rural areas” (SANTOS; BEZERRA NETO, 2017b, p. 20).

<sup>vii</sup> Organic Law of General Planning of the Educational System of Spain (BOE of October 4, 1990).

<sup>viii</sup> Occurrence also found in the historical contexts that marked and demarcated education for rural populations in Brazil and which led the organic intelligentsia of the Landless Rural Workers Movement to define, from education, the target populations, namely: family farmers, extractivists, artisanal fishermen, river dwellers, land reform settlers and campers, rural salaried workers, quilombolas, caçaras, forest peoples, caboclos and others who produce their material conditions of existence from work in rural areas (BRASIL, 2010).

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