



**ADULT EDUCATION IN BRAZIL:
BRIEF ANALYSIS OF LEGISLATION**

Sérgio Haddad

**This Paper was presented at the International Seminar on Policies
and Legislation in Adult Education, Barcelona - Spain**

17-20 November 1993

ADULT EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: BRIEF ANALYSIS OF LEGISLATION

*Sérgio Haddad **

After the 1964 military coup, popular culture and adult literacy movements led by progressive groups in the first half of the '60s were repressed; their leaders persecuted and their ideas censored. That was authoritarian government's response to educational practices that tried to bring into discussion the people's interests. The government exercised its coercive powers to ensure the "normalization" of social relations and the continued satisfaction of the elites' interests.

The truth is, however that this sector of education - basic schooling of adolescents and adults - could not be abandoned by the State apparatus because it is one of the most important channels for mediation with society. Moreover, the low rates of school attendance embarrassed the armed forces before the national and international communities; they were incompatible with the image of the great country the military claimed to be building. The government also needed to answer for citizens' rights that were increasingly accepted as legitimate. Finally, like other areas of education and in keeping with the new political discourse, adult education had to promote the hegemonic interests involved in the model of socio-economic development.

The answer was to found MOBRAL (the Brazilian Literacy Movement) in 1967 and, in 1971, implement *Ensino Supletivo* (Complementary Education) by Federal Law 5692, reformulating the guidelines for primary and secondary education.

The MOBRAL Foundation was created by Law 5379 of 15 December 1967. In 1986, under the first civilian government, MOBRAL became the Educar Foundation. In 1990 it was abolished by the Collor administration. The National Literacy and Citizenship Program (PNAC) was founded in 1990 and closed again the following year. Now there is no national education program for youth and adults.

Chapter IV of Law 5692 of 11 August 1971 regulated Complementary Education (see appendix 1). Articles 24 to 28 lay down the goals, scope and regulated its operations. Article 32 of chapter V deals with the need for adequate training of teachers for this kind of education. These six articles deal most directly with Complementary Education.

The main characteristics of Complementary Education established in law are explained and developed in two documents: Opinion #699 of the Federal Education Council, published on 28 July 1972 and written by Valnir Chagas, that deals specifically with Complementary Education; and the document on "Policy on Complementary Education" submitted to the Minister of Education on 20 September 1972 by a Working Group whose secretary was Valnir Chagas.

Opinion 699 considers Complementary Education to be "the greatest challenge put to Brazilian educators by Law 5692"; it seeks to constitute a "new concept of the

* Teacher of "Programa de Estudos de Pós-Graduação História e Filosofia da Educação" of "Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo".

Executive Secretary of "CEDI - Centro Ecumênico de Documentação e Informação".

time in Brazil and laid out in a special chapter of the law of national guidelines". According to Valmir Chagas, it could modernize Regular Schooling by its example and because of the interpenetration between the two systems.

In the Background Statement made by Minister Jarbas Passarinho to the President when the bill was presented on 30 March 1971, Complementary Education was given the following significant role: "to further regular schooling and promote an increasing supply of continuing education." On the one hand, a chance was to be given to catch up to those who had not been able to go to school at the right time, supplementing the "exciting success of MOBREAL which was rapidly overcoming illiteracy in Brazil". On the other, "the education of the future" was to be disseminated - an "education dominated by the media, in which the school will be mainly a community center for organizing knowledge rather than a place for its transmission." This dual goal was contained in the text of the law too.

Three principles laid down in these documents gave shape to Complementary Education.

The first was the definition of Complementary Education as an integrated system independent of Regular Education, though intimately related to it and part of the National System of Education and Culture. As they founded a new system, the legislators were alert to the fact that Complementary Education could create a duplicate by which there would be Regular Education for the rich and Complementary Education for the poor. It was therefore conceived as permanent education; gaps in regular schooling would only be covered until "everyone receives this schooling at the right age."

The second principle was that Complementary Education, as part of the entire educational reform be oriented to the national development effort, whether "integrating marginalized labor through literacy" or training the labor force.

The third principle was that Complementary Education should have a doctrine and methodology appropriate to the "large numbers that are characteristic of this kind of schooling".

To meet the objectives of replacing regular schooling, training labor and updating skills, Complementary Education had four functions: alternate education, complementation, apprenticeship and skills training.

The objective of alternate education was "to replace regular schooling for those adolescents and adults who have not had or concluded such schooling at the normal age" (Law 5692, article 22.a). It took up the idea of the old maturity exams, now called alternate exams, and broadened its scope. Besides giving evidence of general education, the exams could be taken to demonstrate professional skills of secondary school level. Furthermore, according to the new legislation, it would be possible to organize primary and secondary courses either to prepare for maturity exams or with evaluations during the process. In both cases they would be different from Regular Education courses.

Complementation was to "provide, through repeatedly returning to school, courses for the improvement and updating of skills of those who have had attended regular schools" (Law 5692, article 24.b). No doubt this function comes closest to the Permanent Education approach. This is evident in the words of Valmir Chagas: "... Complementation meets a demand that is becoming increasingly pressing in the

modern world. The increasing complexity of life and of work, changes in rapid succession, demand constant updating of skills and 'going back to school' (Opinion 699)." This is the broadest function and could be developed in tandem with courses at all levels of education.

Apprenticeship is methodical training for work, under the responsibility of companies and the institutions created and maintained by them. It is offered to students over 14 and under 18 who have a minimum of fourth-grade education. This function is basically the responsibility of industry.

Skills training, the function dedicated to professional skills without regard for general education, aims primarily at training labor.

These four modes were to be implemented on the basis of two intentions.

In the first place, clear priority was to be given to courses and exams that seek to train and retrain workers.

Secondly, the courses were to be organized freely and were to stimulate creativity, in order to avoid making "simulacra" of Regular Education. To stimulate and achieve this, the control of public authorities should concentrate on evaluation more than the learning process, ensuring freedom of organization. Support from private initiative should also be sought. "This way, greater margin of flexibility will be given to organizing and developing teaching in the various modalities" (document on Policies for Complementary Education).

Complementary Education was presented to society in the following terms: as a school of the future, oriented to a developing society that needed a system that could keep pace with modernization; not a school oriented to the interests of a specific class, as proposed by the popular culture movements, but a school that did not distinguish itself from its clientele, that served all in a constant process of modernization.

The discussion of methodology focused on the large numbers of students as challenge to the educator, mass solutions, rationalization of means to be used. Thus, Complementary Education was presented as a technical solution, removing from the agenda the political problem of exclusion from the school system of a large part of society. Defined as a continuation, Complementary Education "forgot" the educational experiences of youth and adults immediately prior to the 1964 coup, experiences oriented to the education of a specific kind of student in a specific historical context. It was to offer neutral schooling useful to all, demanding only effort and perseverance from those who used it, no matter what their social class.

This was what President Emílio G. Médici said to the National Congress when he submitted the new law for approval on 20 June 1971. The reform was an open door "so that anyone can, on the basis of their genetic givens, develop their personality and achieve the position they deserve in the social scale". The social position of each would be determined by genetics - not by living conditions - and by the effort made to take advantage of educational opportunities offered by the State.

In the field of teacher training, both the legislation (article 32) and support documents recommended specialized training for this kind of education, based on study and research as yet to be carried out. Until such research was done, teachers from the

Regular Educational System would be used, after retraining and adaptation to Complementary Education.

At the state level, diversity was the rule. Federal Law proposed that Complementary Education should be regulated by State Education Councils (article 22). This created a great national diversity in kind and name of programs offered by the state governments. Specific agencies for Complementary Education were founded in almost all state Secretariats of Education. The programs were at primary and secondary levels and rarely worked with adult literacy.

At the municipal level the opposite was true: specific agencies were practically only founded in the largest state capitals. As a rule, city governments had contracts with MOBREAL and then with the Educar Foundation for the development of literacy programs and their action in alternate education was limited to this. In some rare cases city governments had their own adult education programs and rarer still were those with programs for fifth to eighth grades.

Legislation on Complementary Education still stands today as the mainstay of Education of Youth and Adults. However, new prospects are in view. The 1988 Constitution extended the right to free basic education to youth and adults, increasing the responsibilities of public school systems to serve the educational needs of this age group. These duties were reiterated in Article 60 of the Provisions for Transition, in which the Constitution sets a deadline of 10 years for government and civil society to spend efforts and funds on making basic education universal and eradicating illiteracy.

Following approval of the new constitution, a new Law of Guidelines has been under discussion in Congress over the last four years. The drafts presented include special chapters on the education of youth and adults.