



Literacy And Lettering In EJA (Education For Youth And Adults): An Approach In The Light Of The National Literacy Policy (NLP)

Alfabetização e Letramento na EJA: uma Abordagem à Luz da Política Nacional de Alfabetização (PNA)

Alfabetización Y Letramiento En EJA: Un Enfoque A La Luz De La Política Nacional De Alfabetización (PNA)

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ABSTRACT: *This study aims to understand the conceptions of literacy and lettering present in the NLP and the social and political consequences arising from such public policies for the young, adults and elderly people involved. For this purpose, Decree nº 9.765 (BRASIL, 2019a) and the PNA section, (BRASIL, 2019b), in addition to Freire's contributions (1994; 1999; 2011), Alves (2018), Tfouni (2006), Soares (2004), among others. In the methodological scope, it is a qualitative, documentary type of research. The data collected indicate that the current literacy policy presents a conservative view of it, subtracting the lettering and its systematic teaching, adopting a technical and mistaken nature literacy, in addition to disqualifying the knowledge built by Brazilian researchers in the field.*

LITERACY. LETTERING. EJA. NLP.

RESUMO: *O presente estudo objetiva compreender as concepções de alfabetização e letramento presentes na PNA e as consequências sociais e políticas advindas de tais políticas públicas para os sujeitos jovens, adultos e idosos implicados. Para tanto, será problematizado o Decreto nº 9.765 (BRASIL, 2019a) e o caderno PNA (BRASIL, 2019b), além das contribuições de Freire (1994; 1999; 2011), Alves (2018), Tfouni (2006), Soares (2004), dentre outros. No âmbito metodológico, trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa, do tipo documental. Os dados colhidos indicam que a atual política de alfabetização, além de desqualificar o conhecimento construído pelos pesquisadores brasileiros na área, apresenta uma visão conservadora de alfabetização, subtraiu o letramento e seu ensino sistemático, adotando a literacia, de natureza técnica e equivocada.*

ALFABETIZAÇÃO. LETRAMENTO. EJA. PNA.

RESUMEN: *El presente estudio tiene como objetivo comprender las concepciones de alfabetización y letramento presentes en la PNA y las consecuencias sociales y políticas que surgen de tales políticas públicas para los jóvenes, adultos y ancianos involucrados. Para tanto, el Decreto nº 9.765 (BRASIL, 2019a) y el cuaderno PNA 2019, (BRASIL, 2019b), además de los aportes de Freire (1994; 1999; 2011); Alves (2018), Tfouni (2006), Soares (2004), entre otros. En el ámbito metodológico, es una investigación cualitativa de tipo documental. Los datos recolectados indican que la actual política de alfabetización, además de descalificar el conocimiento construido por los investigadores brasileños en el área, presenta una visión conservadora de la alfabetización, restando el letramiento y su enseñanza sistemática, adoptando la alfabetización, de carácter técnico y equivocado.*

ALFABETIZACIÓN. LETRAMIENTO. EJA. PNA.

Introduction

This article aims to show the study of a National Literacy Policy, from the following research problem: What is the conception of literacy and literacy skills present in the National Literacy Policy and the main consequences of this policy for young people, adults, and the elderly? Aiming to understand the concepts of literacy and literacy skills present in the National Literacy Policy and the social and political consequences arising from these public policies for young people, adults and the elderly.

Therefore, it will problematize the Decree nº 9.765 of April 11th, 2019, which establishes the National Literacy Policy and the PNA section launched on August 15, 2019, that explains the consequences of this policy (BRASIL, 2019b). As for the theoretical contribution, we turn to scholars whose research and experience elucidate the investigated approaches, such as: Freire (1994; 1999; 2005), Soares (2004), Tfouni (2006), Albuquerque, Morais e Ferreira (2010), Alves (2018), Cunha e Dionísio (2019). It is a qualitative research, (MINAYO, 2012¹), relying on document analysis (BARDIN, 2009², NASCIMENTO, 2009). It was made a documental treatment of the decree and section content above (NASCIMENTO, 2009), to then understand the concepts and conceptions present.

Content analysis (Bardin, 2009) was used as a technique for data analysis, as it better serves the field of documentary observation. Therefore, it is configured as an important stage in the research, since part of the documents were analyzed, seeking interpretation of the content from the objectives that mobilized the research.

Making education universal, in particular literacy, has been the subject of discussions across academies and it is at the center of Brazilian public policies. However, in the last year we coexisted with a National Education Plan that represents a retrogression of the conquests obtained in the last decades in relation to this right, especially when it comes to the literacy of young people, adults and the elderly in a country that has not been able to solve the problem of illiteracy.

The concept of literacy instituted in the last two years, Curriculum Common National Base (BNCC) and the National Education Policy, is a reductionist and a denier of rights, and it is far from facing the universalization of the literacy of children, youth, adults and the elderly, as a right and a social good that must be guaranteed. In the BNCC youth and adult education was not mentioned. There was no discussion about EJA and its specificities and in the PNA it was slightly pointed. Therefore, the literacy of young people, adults and the elderly, is a liberating, creative, and transforming in nature, as defended by Freire (2005), the concept of conservative literacy has been replaced, centered on the phonic method, which removes the political and transforming character of the literacy process and subtracted another facet of the process: literacy skills.

¹ It is qualitative because it refers to a level of reality that cannot be quantified but, rather, problematized, reflected, analyzed, from a perspective beyond numbers.

² For that author, Document Analysis consists of presenting the content of the documents under study in a way that facilitates understanding and reveals beyond what is announced.

Our reflections were systematized as follows: in the first section, we present a historical, conceptual and political discussion of literacy and literacy skills. The second section analyzes the conceptions of literacy and literacy skills present in the PNA and the social and political consequences for young people, adults and the elderly in the process of literacy. The third section, entitled Final considerations, closes the text, with a discussion of the results of the study about the concepts of literacy and literacy skills present in the PNA and its social and political consequences for young, adult and elderly subjects.

1 Literacy and literacy skills: historical, conceptual and political aspects

Getting literate has been a goal often postponed by millions of Brazilians who currently make up the classes of EJA. Knowing how to read and write to face their time is a right for all of us and a task reserved for schools since its institutionalization, however, we know that there is no consensus on what it means to teach and learn and learn to read and write. This fact can be seen from the changes in conception that literacy has undergone over the years and that are revealing of “[...] cultural nature of knowledge (about the functioning of the alphabet, about the texts in which it is used) and the practices in which we exercise such knowledge”. (ALBUQUERQUE; MORAIS; FERREIRA, 2010, p. 15).

Indeed, Tfouni (2006) considers that the writing is dated around 5,000 years BC, that the adoption and propagation process was slow due to political and economic factors, making it work, in many cases, both to hide and to grant power to those who have access to writing, in line with the author, writing historically is associated with the “[...] game of domination/power, participation / exclusion, which characterizes social relations ideologically, it can also be associated with the social, cognitive and cultural development of peoples [...]” (TFOUNI, 2006, p. 12-13).

The author estimates that the oldest form of writing, known, appeared in Mesopotamia³. It was the Sumerian writing (recorded on pieces of clay used inside the temples to record the exchange and loan relations of goods that took place there), and that historically coincides with other “[...]innovations such as the wheel, the organization of agriculture and hydraulic engineering [...]”, as well as “[...]a trade that grew regularly and a culture that extended to neighboring peoples and reached distant lands like India and China” (VALVERDE, 1987, p. 40, *apud* TOUNI, 2006, p. 14).

In the West, alphabetical writing was introduced around the 8th century BC in Greece and Ionia, however, Tfouni (2006) draws attention to the fact that only in the 5th and 6th centuries BC Greece can be recognized as generally literate in a “[...]historical moment that this society went through a process of radical cultural and political-social transformations [...]” (TFOUNI, 2006, p. 14). Thus, the author states that the emergence and dissemination of alphabetical writing is linked to the emergence of logical-empirical and philosophical thinking, to the formalization of History and Logic (intellectual subjects) and that the Greek democracy is directly related to the expansion and solidification of phonetic writing in such peoples.

When analyzing the history of Brazilian education, particularly the teaching and learning of reading and writing, it appears that in colonial Brazil’s literacy practices were limited to the teaching of reading in order to catechize the Indians, what was done through the oralization and memorization of Tupi grammar, catechisms and doctrines.

As approached by Corrêa (2005), in the middle of the 19th century, training readers in Brazil also implied living with a very small set of printed materials for the teaching of reading. Much of this material was of a religious nature (Bible, Gospel) or legal (Political Constitution of the Empire, Criminal Code) [...] (ALBUQUERQUE; MORAIS; FERREIRA, 2010, p. 16). (free translation)

³ Today, it corresponds to Iran and Iraq.

Given this reduced number of printed materials for reading, in that same century, the authors identified the institutionalization of Brazilian schools and, with them, the development of practices that used alphabetical and syllabic methods.

It was from the 1950s, of the 20th century, that some Brazilian primary schools started to rely on other objects to initiate their students in learning to read and write. They are the catechisms, ABC letters or booklets that, in general, were produced or brought by Portuguese authors. According to Galvão and Soares.

ABC letters are made up of: letters containing the alphabet; syllable letters (composed of segments of one, two or three letters) and name letters (where words are presented whose syllables are separated by a hyphen). ABC letters have established a tradition in the history of the Brazilian primary school. Even though it is a tool linked to one of the most traditional methods of literacy (synthetic method), it resisted the innovations promoted by supporters of other literacy methods and continued to be published until the 1950s in the 20th century (GALVÃO; SOARES, 2004, p. 3 apud ALBUQUERQUE; MORAIS; FERREIRA, 2010, p. 16). (free translation)

Teaching how to read from the perspective of synthetic methods⁴, meant teaching how to “decode” (translate the letters or syllables that formed the words, phrases and texts into sounds). It means saying that it was necessary to fulfill some steps. That is, first the child, the young person or the adult should learn all the letters, syllables or phonemes that, memorized, would allow him to read any word. (ALBUQUERQUE; MORAIS; FERREIRA, 2010).

With these methods, the criterion for determining whether the subject was literate was being able to sign his own name. In this perspective, it was understood that if the subject managed to memorize all the graphophonetic correspondences, he would be able to read and write any texts.

Tfouni (2006) points out two ways of understanding literacy. The first one comprises literacy as a process of individual acquisition of skills required for reading and writing. According to the author, literacy, seen from this angle, presents itself as “[...]something that comes to an end, and can therefore be described in the form of instructional objectives” (TFOUNI, 2006, p. 15), which, for the author, constitutes a “misunderstanding”. In the second form, literacy is presented as a process and, in this case, the author affirms the inconclusiveness of literacy.

Albuquerque, Morais and Ferreira (2010) alert us to the fact that this traditional practice does not guarantee the training of readers and writers and present results of research carried out in developed countries (presenting zero illiteracy rates), with the following conclusion: many people with high levels of schooling were unable to make use of reading and writing for everyday purposes, so “[...]As a result of this observation, the notion of ‘functional illiteracy’ was created after the First World War (cf. RIBEIRO, 2003), which has only recently been released by the media”. (ALBUQUERQUE; MORAIS; FERREIRA, 2010, p. 17-18, emphasis of the authors).

The second way of understanding literacy, proposed by Tfouni (2006), opposes this approach analyzed by understanding it from the perspective of the representation process of many objects and also diverse nature. In this understanding, literacy is not linked to the teaching of a graphic system that is equivalent to sounds, writing and orality and starts to maintain a relationship of “[...] *interdependence*, that is, both systems of representation influence each other equally, but within a principle of autonomy” (TFOUNI, 2006, p. 19, emphasis of the author). She says that incompleteness is what characterizes literacy. Saying that, she clarifies that the description of objectives to be achieved concerns the control of schooling; not literacy.

And it is because of this incompleteness highlighted by the author and long advocated by Freire (1999) that literacy is continually expanded and refined over the last forty years. In the book *Pedagogia da*

⁴ The methods considered synthetic are: alphabetic, syllabic and phonic.

Autonomia (Pedagogy of Autonomy), Freire presents us with the meaning of his unfinished work and his method, as he understands that literacy is a permanent process “[...]It is also in the inconclusion that we become aware and it inserts us into the permanent movement of demand that is based on. "I'm not hopeful", once said, out of pure stubbornness, but out of ontological demand”. (FREIRE, 1999, p. 64-65, emphasis of the author).

The assumption of this feeling of demand, of Freire's inconclusion, is an indicator of the need for constant updating of his method and which can be found in Tfouni's (2006) words, when we assume, with Freire, and with him, literacy in the broadest sense, expressed in constructivism and sociointeractionism, which are by nature enlargers and revealer of literacy political practices. “[...]It is apparent, therefore, that, from a socio-interactionist point of view, literacy, as an individual process, is never complete, since society is in a continuous process of change, and individual updating to accompany these changes is constant [...]” (TFOUNI, 2006, p. 15-16)

The fragment is of importance, since the complexity of social reading and writing practices has required much more than the ability to encode and decode. This observation, present in all of Paulo Freire's work, it is an indication of the relevance of his political-pedagogical attitude. In his book *A Importância do ato de ler* (The Importance of Reading), the author points out: “Adult literacy as a political act and an act of knowledge, committed to learning to write and read the word, simultaneously with the 'reading' and the 'rewriting' of reality [...]” (FREIRE, 1994, p. 21).

Due to this observation and the subject's need to become literate to understand the world, using reading and writing autonomously to face a project that liberates society. In the 1990s, the term literacy was expanded, incorporating literacy skills. This, taken in broad terms, is pointed out by Tfouni (2006) as a product of the development of trade, the diversification of the means of production and the increasing complexity of agriculture and within a dialectical view “[...]it becomes a cause of profound historical transformations, such as the appearance of the steam engine, the press, the telescope, and industrial society as a whole”. (TFOUNI, 2006, p. 21).

In the Houaiss Dictionary (2001), literacy is defined as “*set of practices that denote the ability to use different types of written material*”. Soares (1998) points out that the term literacy is the Portuguese version of the English word *literacy*, which means the state or condition assumed by the one who learns to read and write. It is important to note that the word literacy encompasses the entire complex process of literacy. Although some researchers (FERREIRO, 2003) defend the use of a single term - literacy - to encompass the processes of learning and using reading and writing, we have defended, in agreement with Soares (1998), the maintenance of the two words - literacy and literacy - to designate distinct but inseparable processes. (ALBUQUERQUE; MORAIS; FERREIRA, 2010, p. 18) (Free translation)

These authors, as well as Tfouni (2006) share the position of Soares (2004) that literacy and literacy skills are distinct and inseparable terms. Literacy is understood as the process of appropriating alphabetical writing, while literacy skill is related to the effective uses of writing in reading and writing activities in different contexts. “[...]The first would therefore be related to the learning of alphabetic notation, while the second would involve the use and production of the language that is used when writing, that is, of the written texts that circulate in social interactions.”. (ALBUQUERQUE; MORAIS; FERREIRA, 2010, p. 18). Thus, it becomes necessary to literate in the context of social practices of reading and writing.

We find in Soares (2004) didactic-pedagogical directions for an educational practice that enables the formation of citizens capable of facing the current world, when she informs us that the path for teaching and learning reading and writing needs to be articulated to knowledge and also methodologies based on various sciences and which pedagogical practices need to integrate the various facets, that is, articulating the:

[...]acquisition of the writing system, which is favored by direct, explicit and orderly teaching, understood here as being the process of literacy, with the development of skills and behaviors of competent use of reading and writing in the social practices of reading and writing, here understood as being literacy skills. (SOARES 2004, p. 100). (Free translation)

The teaching of alphabetic writing, based on constructivist studies, demonstrates that for children, youth and adults to appropriate the knowledge about the alphabetical systems they need to provide answers to what writing represents/note and how it creates representations/notations. That is, “[...]they need to resolve issues related to the relations between part and all (oral and written), to the segment of a serial order (which explains why the letters are put in sequence) and searching for term-to-term relationships (to achieve the proper pairing between oral and written segments)” (LEAL; MORAIS, 2010, p. 37).

What is the implication of these studies? First, it questions the methods of literacy and, in particular, the phonic method advocated in PNA, that conceive the learning of reading and writing as “[...]a simple work of 'association of phonemes and graphemes', and secondly, it demonstrates that [...]phonemes, for a long time, are not available in the learner's mind, as a unit that he can access and manipulate [...]” (LEAL; MORAIS, 2010, p. 37) and that, corroborating with the authors, new knowledge is built when accessing previous knowledge.

In addition, researchers, such as Leal and Morais (2010) and Estrela and Andrade (2019), suggest that young and adult literacy students experience the same levels of writing construction experienced by children, that is, they present pre-syllabic, syllabic hypotheses, syllabic-alphabetic and alphabetic writing. In this sense,

[...]the level of writing was not directly related to the knowledge of letters, since subjects at different levels showed similar knowledge of letters [...]even when the phonetization of writing had already started (at the syllabic and syllabic-alphabetic levels), the ability to identify, name or describe isolated letters did not show a direct relationship with a use that respected the conventional sound value, when writing words. (LEAL; MORAIS, 2010, p. 45-46). (Free translation)

The authors infer that there is no causal relationship between understanding how the alphabet works and knowing about isolated letters. Such findings make us defend, according to Souza (2019), the need for literacy to go beyond the technical question, taking as a starting point the specificities of the EJA modality, their cultural identities and the requirement of specific public policies for the literacy of young people, adults and the elderly, being necessary the “[...]expansion of the right to education for millions of people over the age of 15, under penalty of ratifying socioeconomic exclusions, reiterating the denial of the right to education for youth and adults”. (SOUZA, 2019, p. 16).

2 Literacy and literacy skills in PNA: conceptions and social and political implications

We are living in a delicate moment and that, increasingly, we have an ethical obligation to contribute to the debate on education and, particularly, the literacy of young people, adults and the elderly, having Paulo Freire's ideas as a guide, in the sense of reviewing anti-democratic practices and concepts disseminated through current public policies, which guarantee to mitigate the ills of illiteracy, but which awake outdated and old methods (synthetic/phonetic) that, instead of making popular an education as thought by Freire, insist on obscuring it.

Souza (2019), based on Haddad and Siqueira (2015), assesses that Brazilian public policies aimed at the literacy of people, over the age of fifteen, were only significantly implemented after the Federal Constitution of 1934, with the inclusion of women, blacks and indigenous people in this process, although between 1940 and 1960 literacy campaigns aimed at teenagers and adults, only Paulo Freire's popular education proposals seem to match the needs of this public and they had a short duration, as they were silenced by the military dictatorship in 1964 and, years later, replaced by the Brazilian Literacy Movement (Moblin) in 1969.

With this frame of reference, Souza (2019) summarizes the issue by clarifying that Mobral increased prejudice against those who could not read or write, being extinguished in 1989. Freire made severe criticisms, at the time, of this prejudiced and naive stance of seeing illiteracy:

[...] sometimes as a 'weed' – hence the current expression: 'eradicating illiteracy'- sometimes as 'illness' that passes from one to the other, almost by contagion, as a 'sore' depressing to be 'cured' [...] manifestation of the people's 'incapacity', their 'little intelligence', their 'proverbial laziness'. (FREIRE, 2001, p. 15). (Free translation)

It was after the Federal Constitution of 1988 that young people and adults started to have the right to basic education. From 1994 to 2002, we had the Solidarity Literacy Program (focus on youth and adult literacy throughout the national territory), which was replaced in 2003 by the *Brasil Alfabetizado* Program.

Souza (2019), analyzing these programs, did not observe significant differences, because they failed to break the campaign character similar to the model of previous decades and did not reverse the persistent denial of the right to literacy of millions of Brazilians, therefore, “[...]current statistics show the lack of school attendance for the youngest after 1988, no longer a residue of past policies”. (SOUZA, 2019, p. 16).

In view of these findings, what the National Education Plan proposes - (PNE) and the PNA to literate young people and adults? It is worth remembering that Brazil is a signatory to the Hamburg Declaration (1997) and, with that, takes responsibility for literacy noticed as “[...]a fundamental human right to promote participation in social, economic, political and cultural activities, as well as a requirement for lifelong education”. (BRASIL, 2000)

Facing the challenge, the PNE (Law 13.005, of June 25th, 2014) treats EJA in goals 3, 9 e 10. Of these, goal 9 deals with literacy and proposes: “[...] raise the literacy rate of the population aged 15 (fifteen) or more to 93.5% by 2015, and until the validity of this PNE, eradicate absolute illiteracy and reduce by 50% the functional illiteracy rate (BRASIL, 2014, p. 159).

However, the attempt to confront the illiteracy statistics, present in the goals mentioned, which is committed, a fact verified by Estrela and Andrade (2019), when analyzing the data presented by IBGE and the statistics announced by the census:

The analysis of the information released by the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), carried out in 2017, corroborates this feeling by demonstrating that Brazil has 11.5 million illiterate young and adults people (7.0% of the population aged 15 and over). These data indicate how far we are from reaching goal 9 of the current National Education Plan (PNE),

which expected to reduce the illiteracy rate to 6.5% in 2015. (ESTRELA; ANDRADE, 2019, p. 3) (Free translation)

Comparing these data with the survey done in 2018⁵, we observed that there was a small reduction (0.2%) in illiteracy in Brazil: 6.8%, that is, 12.4 million people aged 15 and over who could not read or write. It means that 87.9% of these people were over 40 years old and 53.1% were elderly. The illiteracy rate for people aged 60 and over, in the country, reached 18.6%.

The above suggests that socioeconomic inequalities continue to widen due to the denial of the right to knowledge, since 12.4 million young and adults people are rejected from one of their fundamental rights. They are the oppressed of yesterday; and the excluded today.

The National Literacy Plan (PNA) with regard to this public follows the Brazilian tradition of lack of attention: in the section that details this policy (BRASIL, 2019b), of the 35 pages that deal with the literacy proposal, only one page (p. 35) is directed to this modality and, even so, it is limited to presenting the reasons that lead these people to return to studies and equates the literacy process of the child to adult: “In the literacy process of young and adults, the same components mentioned above must be present: phonemic awareness, systematic phonic instruction, fluency in oral reading, vocabulary development, text comprehension, and writing production [...]” (BRASIL, 2019b, p.35).

These are the components presented that, considering the “specificities”, of young people and adults seek to provide them with autonomy to read and write their own name and some words related to their daily lives and present reading and writing as means of “[...]personal and professional development, access to literature and other possibilities, according to the motivations and aspirations of each person”. (BRASIL, 2019b, p. 35).

Article 1 of Decree n° 9.765, of April 11th, 2019, Instituting the National Literacy Policy (BRASIL, 2019a), mentions that federated entities should implement programs and actions to promote literacy, based on scientific evidence, in order to improve the quality of literacy and “[...]combat absolute illiteracy and functional illiteracy, within the scope of the different stages and modalities of basic and non-formal education”. (BRASIL, 2019a, p. 1). There are many questions arising from this reordering: what is literacy with scientific evidence? What is understood by literacy and how to carry it out in order to guarantee autonomy and personal and professional development, as stated in the PNA section?

Looking at the Decree, Art. 2 (chapter I, of the general provisions) consists of eleven items, aiming to conceptualize the terms. Of these items, IV, V and VI, providing us with a general idea of how conservative and limiting the assumed literacy concept is. As below:

- I - literacy - teaching reading and writing skills in an alphabetical system, so that the literacy student becomes able to read and write words and texts with autonomy and understanding;
- IV - phonemic awareness - conscious awareness of the smallest phonological units of speech and the ability to intentionally manipulate them;
- V - systematic phonic instruction - explicit and organized teaching of the relationships between graphemes of written language and phonemes of spoken language;
- VI - fluency in oral reading - ability to read in an accurate, speedy, and prosody way [...] (BRASIL, 2019a, p. 1). (Free translation)

Chapter II - PNA Principles and Objectives - supports the definitions above, highlighting the six components considered by MEC as essential in the teaching of reading and writing which, in addition to equating the teaching of children with that of young people and adults, ratifies the restricted approach to literacy: “[...]phonemic awareness; systematic phonic instruction; fluency in oral reading; vocabulary development; understanding of texts; and writing production” (BRASIL, 2019a, p. 2).

⁵ For more information, check: <https://g1.globo.com/ba/bahia/noticia/2019/06/19/com-alta-evasao-escolar-entre-jovens-ba-tem-2o-menor-percentual-de-adultos-com-nivel-superior-completo.ghtml>

Through analysis of articles 1, 2 and 3 of the PNA Decree and considering the bases that support the research field in EJA, we found, with Abreu and Laffin (2019), that it has a distinct epistemological field, so, it enjoys the guarantee of particularities, complexities and knowledge, “[...] Because it is a Basic Education modality, EJA is a field that comprises knowledge, curriculum, pedagogical practices and different individuals”. (ABREU; LAFFIN, 2019, p. 64).

In this interpretation, we ratify that the first three articles presented in Decree (BRASIL, 2019a) point to “[...]the lack of a relationship between the specificities of young people and adults [...]” (SOUZA, 2019, p. 20).

The assumption of the six “so-called essential” components for the literacy of children, such as youth and adults, defended by the PNA did not consider the scientific evidence from decades of studies and research, that clarify the needs and desires of young people and adults with less education, as well as “[...]cultural uses, the meanings they attribute to literacy skills and what they need to learn in graphocentric societies, investing only in a technical aspect of the literacy process”. (SOUZA, 2019, p. 21).

PNA does not conceive writing as a cultural object, it does not conceive the active role of literacy students (culture producers) so, it denies the literacy of young people, adults and the elderly, as an act of knowledge, permeated by dialogue, by respect, because we learned from Paulo Freire in his political-pedagogical inherence that learner and teacher are individuals of the act of knowing and they are mediatized by the object to be known. Learners are creative individuals. “Learning to read and write is no longer memorizing syllables, words or phrases, but to reflect critically on the process of reading and writing and on the profound meaning of language.” (FREIRE, 1977, p. 49).

An extended, plural literacy such as that practiced by Freire should encourage the potential of the new students and the needs presented, so the end point is the development of their autonomy when reading, writing and positioning themselves before the world and, for that, they need living writing, whose method is Freire's dialogue, and that PNA, centered on phonic aspects, in pseudowords, does not give any guarantee.

Regarding literacy, we found in the reading of article 2 of Decree nº 9.765, 2019, which was subtracted from the text, by defending and conceptually assuming three “types” of literacy:

- VII - literacy - set of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to reading and writing and their productive practice;
- VIII - family literacy - set of practices and experiences related to language, reading and writing, which the child experiences with his parents or caregivers;
- IX - emerging literacy - set of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to reading and writing, developed before literacy (BRASIL, 2019a, p. 1).

Andrade and Estrela (2020b), in an article entitled *A Concepção de Alfabetização e Letramento na Política Nacional de Alfabetização (PNA): entre tropeços e retrocessos*, (The Conception of Literacy and Literacy skills in the National Literacy Policy (PNA): between stumbles and setbacks), arguing the use of literacy in the Brazilian literacy policy, they warned about the political-pedagogical implications arising from this choice for educational practice, when literacy teachers are unassisted in intentional and systematic planning, enabling literacy in the context of social practices, that is, teaching and learning from the situations of use of reading and writing.

Cunha and Dionísio (2019), in fact, call attention to the political project promoted by international and national agencies that present literacy and economic development as if it were a simple cause and effect relationship, which does not correspond to reality, since others factors are implicated there. Therefore, the relationship that is to be believed in literacy and development implies a limited understanding of it, that presents itself as a:

[...]set of technical and decontextualized skills that, once acquired, can be used in any context of everyday life [...]literacy is translated as a high-value product, an essential asset, a “thing” that can be cultivated and ordered in categories and, therefore, easily used as a “barometer” of the

socioeconomic growth of nations. (HAMILTON, 2012a, 2012b *apud* CUNHA; DIONÍSIO, 2019, p. 127) (Free translation)

Cunha e Dionísio (2019)⁶ claim to be based on this understanding that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCDE) have been imposing increased investment on countries under the justification of promoting quality basic education, as well as intensifying training programs explicitly aimed at developing literacy between young people and adults.

In an attempt to deepen the issue, the authors claim that Fransman (2008) grouped the understanding of literacy into three conceptualizations: the first refers to the autonomous approach or as a set of Skills, that is, literacy understood as the ability to read and write to encode and decode the writing.

Cunha and Dionísio (2019), based on Barton (1994), suggest that literacy, when originated from studies on the cognitive development of language and reading, learning and teaching mechanisms and methods become essential. In this model, reading and writing are nothing more than a neutral and universal set of a technique that is acquired, independent of the contexts in which they occur. “[...]On the other hand, the interpretation of any type of text mobilizes cognitive abilities that are related to the knowledge of the language, which, once acquired, the reader will be able to resort and apply in any situation of daily life”. (CUNHA; DIONÍSIO, 2019, p. 200).

The second conceptualization of literacy highlighted by Fransman (2008) is ideological or as a set of social practices placed here: the ideological or pluralist model, which Cunha and Dionísio (2019), attribute to (STREET, 2005; 2013) and (HANNON, 2000), respectively have their roots in the sociocultural approach and in New Literacy Studies (*New Literacy Studies* - NLS). The authors claim that this second conceptualization gave new values to literacy, when breaking “[...]with static categories (namely literate/illiterate), refusing access to writing as a neutral and universal value” (HANNON, 2000; STREET, 2005, 2013 *apud* CUNHA; DIONÍSIO, 2019, p. 201). In this approach, literacy encompasses everything that people do with writing, in its most diverse forms, as well as in the different social events in which they move in their daily lives.

Fransman (2005) and Street (2005) conclude that many people considered “illiterate”, in the perspective of the “autonomous” approach, are, after all, from a more culturally situated point of view, habitual users of literacy, since they mobilize the daily writing, in various situations and for specific purposes (CUNHA; DIONÍSIO, 2019, p. 201). (Free translation)

The third conceptualization pointed out by Fransman (2008), and analyzed by the authors, is “Transformative or as an instrument of transformation and emancipation”. They are based on Freire’s work. In Freire’s perspective, literacy is beyond technical skills. Literacy is seen:

[...]as a domain of reading and writing to create, recreate, transform and assume a position of intervention in the world. Therefore, these are social practices from which readers deliberately question and become aware of the meanings of the texts and the influence that these representations have on themselves, within the social context to which the text refers, using this information to denounce and alter hidden powers. (MACEDO, 2000 *apud* CUNHA; DIONÍSIO, 2019, p. 202) (Free translation)

We note in the fragment that the purpose of literacy, present in the third conceptualization, is to enable citizens to become aware of their role and place in the world and to fight for another project of society.

⁶ Os autores sustentam seus argumentos respaldados nos estudos de: Azevedo (2014), Dataangel Policy Research Incorporated (2009), Highlevel Group Of Experts On Literacy (2012), OCDE (2000) e Unesco (2005).

However, when analyzing the three perspectives or conceptualizations described, it can be inferred that in the proposal of literacy adopted in the PNA, stands out “Autonomous or as a set of Skills”, with a technical and mistaken nature, that is; literacy - set of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to reading and writing and their productive practice” (BRASIL, 2019a, p. 2) that ultimately, “[...] they are not defined by the recipients and main beneficiaries [...]restricting the role of the student/graduated to ‘containers’ or ‘receptacles’ of content and information determined by others [...]”. (CUNHA; DIONÍSIO, 2019, p. 214). But, also, the PNA presents several literacy concepts, as we could see in Art. 2, VIII and IX.

Facing this finding, suggest that as in Portugal, the PNA restricted “[...] many concepts of literacy, in which autonomous approach is notorious (STREET, 2005; 2013) (or ‘focus on skills’ (HANNON, 2000, our translation) [...]” (CUNHA; DIONÍSIO, 2019, p. 208, emphasis of the authors). Thus, disqualifies what was already being achieved in Brazil in the 1990s, with the strengthening of discussions about the importance of EJA and training beyond the technical; a human formation. From a learning process directly linked to your daily experience, not only professional, but also in life. (DEBUS, 2019).

By privileging a European concept (literacy), PNA declines studies made by Magda Soares (2004), Tfouni (2006), and others, that assume literacy, as well as previous educational policies, guiding initial and continuing teacher education, such as the National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age (PNAIC)⁷.

PNA, far from overcoming the difficulties and/or deficiencies presented, and mitigate functional illiterates, it hides the interest of a project to modernize the economy and its levels of increase in economic production, making the education second plan, particularly the literacy of young people, adults, and the elderly.

This lack of priority for EJA can be easily seen in Art. 6 which deals with the target audience “[...] IV - youth and adult education students; [...] V - young people and adults without enrollment in formal education” (BRASIL, 2019a), but ending with a single paragraph: “[...]Priority beneficiaries of the National Literacy Policy are the groups referred to in items I and II of the caput” (BRASIL, 2019a, p. 3, emphasis in the document), therefore, it reaffirms that the priority and beneficiaries are children in early childhood and students in the early years of elementary school, items I and II respectively.

[...]EJA assumes a place of less value as it has been throughout history. In times of policies that reduce financial resources and rights, we know what happens to educational actions aimed at serving EJA, that is, they tend not to materialize in states and municipalities, especially when the federal government is no longer an important driver of these actions for the area. (SOUZA, 2019, p. 21). (Free translations)

The place, in fact, reserved for EJA and clarifying what is required of it in this policy is expressed in chapter V, which deals with the Implementation of the literacy policy “V- development of specific didactic-pedagogical materials for the literacy of young people and adults in formal and non-formal education” (BRASIL, 2019, p.4). This fact make us agreeing with Souza (2019) analyzes, when he underlines that:

[...]in the way the modality appears in other articles and items, that the challenge of this area of important social relevance is restricted or limited to the production and sending of teaching materials. So these subjects are the focus of PNA only as possible consumers of books and, perhaps, for the development of policies, never actually read them, so history will repeat itself. (SOUZA, 2019, p. 21) (Free translation)

⁷ It refers to a public policy of continuing education for in-service literacy teachers. It constitutes a commitment assumed by the federal government, states and municipalities since 2012 to meet the goal 5 of the National Education Plan (PNE), which establishes the obligation to “Literate all children up to the third year of elementary school”.

Souza's analysis (2019) allows us to infer that we are far from reducing the data in the statistics already announced and, unlike, we continue to struggle with mistakes and inaccuracies, as highlighted by Souza (2019), especially when the actions related to EJA, as pointed out by Giroux (1997) they are limited to support in the distribution of didactic material and literature books. Actions of this nature, according to the author, which are present in the PNA, provoke the technical division of work at school.

As ponderações expressas e as evidências revisadas balizam quem pensa e quem executa o trabalho and, in that perspective, it ends by taking from literacy teachers their autonomy in a process of teaching and learning.

Final considerations

From the last two years, they have been challenging in face of the policies implemented impacting on the conceptions of literacy and literacy skills that have been underway for decades, since the PNA presents itself as a limiting example for tackling illiteracy and guaranteeing citizenship, valuing the functional perspective and ability to write.

It is, in fact, a policy organized and carried out by the MEC, out of step with the productions of Brazilian researchers and educational policies National Curriculum Parameters, National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age - PNAIC, National Curriculum Guidelines for Basic Education – (DNEB). In this perspective, it incurs a simplistic and functional conception of literacy, secondary to the systematic teaching of reading and writing for the competent use in social practices. The PNA insists on not breaking the notion of literate as the one that encodes and decodes simple words and texts, so, it mitigates the ability of individuals to autonomously use the knowledge of the alphabetical system as also to produce their written texts and, as a consequence, acts for “*disempower* persons” (FREIRE; MACEDO, 2011).

Literacy, in this situation, is subjugated to its cultural policy character and, is imposed, authoritatively, concerned only with the mechanical acquisition of skills in the Portuguese language: literacy in a positivist and instrumental way, criticized by Freire throughout his work.

A conception of literacy as “teaching reading and writing skills in an alphabetical system” (BRASIL, 2019a), for the purpose of reading and writing words and texts with autonomy and understanding, it all goes against everything that was defended and practiced by Paulo Freire throughout his life. Freire (2005) argued that the act of learning to read and write begins with a comprehensive understanding of the act of reading the world as it really is.

Note that the PNA repeats a distant past of the synthetic (phonic) method, which has already shown itself unable to cope with the complexity of today's society. And doing it disregards Brazilian studies and research on initial learning of reading and writing and the specifics of this learning for young people, adults and the elderly.

The PNA does not seem interested in guaranteeing EJA a literacy process, as a political act, critical and creative (FREIRE, 2005) and in the current historical moment, it is a condition for exercising citizenship. In this way, it makes impossible for young adults and the elderly⁸ to be able to read and produce texts to meet their needs, making its systematic teaching second plan, something that can be seen when MEC is unaware of the many facets of literacy announced by Magda Soares throughout her work, adopting a restricted European term, literacy: set of skills that guide the instrumental use of reading and writing.

The data allows us to infer that the place reserved for EJA in this policy is secondary, limiting to the development of literacy materials that send us two messages. The first one is to surround yourself with the selection of what knowledge should be taught and learned, compiled in a kind of “apostilage of pedagogical processes” (ALVES, 2018, p. 44-45); And the second one, as a result, is to impide teachers

⁸ The elderly were not mentioned in any article of the Decree

of acting as subjects capable of thinking and exercising their own knowledge related to the selection, organization of teaching materials, as pointed by (FREIRE; MACEDO, 2011).

PNA “based on scientific evidence”, the way it is set, it is far from improving the quality of literacy and fighting absolute illiteracy and functional illiteracy. This will keep being the challenge of today and tomorrow (make literacy universal), since the literacy model imposed and translated into the six essential components (phonemic awareness; systematic phonic instruction; fluency in oral reading; vocabulary development; comprehension of texts and writing production) brings social and political implications for young, adult and elderly individuals, because it reduces a political and cultural literacy process (FREIRE; MACEDO, 2011) to a mechanical and functional perspective, of mastery of “skills” as for Giroux (1983), subjugates writing to the interest of capital, taking it away from its critical dimensions.

The analyzed data authorize us to agree with Souza (2019, p.29), when stating that public policies in Brazil reiterate the denial of the right to education for youth and adults, a fact that has been repeating since the 1930s until nowadays which, in addition to compromising goal 9 of the PNE, contributes to the setback by repeating the mistakes of the past. A literacy project suitable for EJA students must be forged from a dialogical perspective, methodical and political practice of education, which is always subject to review and recreate.

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