

History teaching and Latin American historical consciousness

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RESUMO

O artigo resulta de pesquisa desenvolvida sobre a contribuição dos conteúdos latino-americanos na grade curricular de ensino para a formação histórica dos jovens na escola. A pesquisa consistiu na análise das narrativas históricas produzidas pelos 67 alunos que frequentaram a disciplina de Estudos Latino-americanos (ELA) da 7ª série do Colégio de Aplicação (CA) da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) em 2009. O objetivo era investigar a influência dessa disciplina na construção de saberes históricos sobre a América Latina e que relações ela estabelece com a formação da consciência histórica dos jovens.

Palavras-chave: ensino de História; consciência histórica; América Latina.

ABSTRACT

This article arose out of research on the contribution of Latin American content to the history curriculum of young people in school. The research consisted of the analysis of historical narratives produced by 67 students who took the discipline Latin American Studies (ELA) in the seventh grade of the Aplicação School (CA) attached to the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) in 2009. The objective was to investigate what the influence of this discipline was in the construction of historical knowledge about Latin America and what relations it established with the formation of young people's historical consciousness. Keywords: History teaching; historical consciousness; Latin America.

The feeling of belonging to a place, to a group in which we perform a social role, to which we are emotionally and affectively linked and with which we identify, it is very important for the human being and for his formation as a historical subject. We are experiencing a moment of the conformation and consolidation of regional blocks in Latin America and in this context school,

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and more especially the teaching of history, plays a fundamental role as a privileged space for the diffusion and consolidation of ideas, images and knowledge associated with political education, which can contribute to the formation of identities, especially a Latin American identity.

It is known that the school institution traditionally structured the teaching of history based on the nationalist matrix of the nineteenth century, whose objective was to form ‘Brazilians,’ ‘Argentineans’ or ‘Chileans’ for the new national society that is forging modern states. Despite all the changes incurred by the discipline over time the teaching of history remains a space in which societies dispute possible memories about themselves and project collective futures. For this there is a great challenge for education and for the teaching of history in particular, the submission of proposals which minimize cultural isolation among the Latin American nations. The greatest of all these challenges is overcoming the lack of knowledge in countries of each other in Latin America – this has led to distortions in national histories and prejudice and stereotypes which result in a form of isolation, and letting the Latin American reality be ignored by the nationalist vision of history in these countries.

In order to meet these challenges the Application College (*Colégio de Aplicação – CA*) of *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina* (UFSC) offers its students a subject in history that specifically deals with these issue, the discipline of Latin American Studies (*Estudos Latino-Americanos – ELA*), created in 2003 at the initiative of the teachers themselves with the intention of encouraging the breaking of existing stereotypes and prejudice about the students’ ‘selves’ and the Latin American ‘other.’ The influence of this subject on the construction of historical knowledge about Latin America and the relations it establishes with the formation of historical consciousness among young people has to be investigated.¹

The reference to the concept of ‘historical consciousness’ is taken from Jörn Rüsen in *El desarrollo de la competencia narrativa em el aprendizaje histórico*² and *Razão histórica: teoria da história – os fundamentos da ciência histórica*.³ According to Rüsen historical consciousness functions as a specific form of temporal orientation in real situations of the present time, whose function is to help comprehend past reality to act in the present. For Rüsen (1992, p.30), this implies that the reference for future time is contained in the historic interpretation of the present, since this interpretation has to guide action. From a Latin-American perspective, this signifies the capacity to use the history of Latin America to analyze a present situation and determine a course of action.

The issue of historical consciousness among young people has been the

concern of some research groups, both Brazilian and foreign.⁴ The results of this research has stimulated dialogue between groups and deepened the theoretical and methodological about the epistemological principles of this field of knowledge both in the scope of school knowledge and outside it. Nevertheless, many gaps still have to be filled, especially in regard to the relationship between historic conscience and Latin American identity.

In order to understand the contribution of Latin American content in the teaching curriculum for young people, since this knowledge is fundamental in the identity construction of these subjects in the current world, the historic narratives produced by students from the seventh grade in CA who took the subject of ELA in 2009 were analyzed. The analysis of the content of the narratives was privileged through the constitution of meaning which, according to Rösen (2001, p.155), operating on four axes:

- a) perception of changes in time;
- b) interpretation of the past;
- c) orientation of practical life by experience of the past;
- d) motivation to act which results from this orientation.

It is believed that the understanding of the *meaning* given to the teaching of history in Latin America is fundamental for the understanding of the relationship between the teaching of history and Latin American historical consciousness and for the comprehension of the processes of historical learning triggered by the inclusion of a specific discipline about Latin American history in the obligatory curriculum.

The research is part of a Santa Catarina project entitled “The School and Young People in the Conemporary World: Latin American historical processes of formation,” coordinated by Prof. Maria de Fátima Sabino Dias (UFSC),⁵ with the purpose of observing which formative processes the young people and children are actually submitted to, which historical knowledge is privileged in this education and which resources are mobilized in the process of forming a historical consciousness in the Latin American context.

In total, 67 young people participated in the research. According to the characterization of this sample a survey type questionnaire was administered with the aim of identifying the socio-economic and cultural profile of 7th grade students from CA in 2009, their media consumption and the interference of ELA in the learning of Latin American history. The questionnaire was completed by the respondents who were not identified. It consisted of 42 semi-

open multiple choice questions. It was validated by four professors who were part of the 'School and Young People' project and tested with five young people from the same age group as the sample selected. The data obtained from the survey was tabulated and analyzed using SPSS 17.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

After this an individual written task was proposed to stimulate the historical imagination of the young people involved in the research for the production of narratives which inter-relate the past, present and future of Latin America. The content of the narratives, conceived as manifestations of historic conscience, was analyzed based on adherence to the proposed activity (relating the past, present and future of Latin America); the significance, in other words the most frequent elements in the narratives; perspectives of the future and the four constituent axes of the narrative sense developed by Jörn Rüsen (2001, p.155), namely perception, interpretation, orientation and motivation, which together connect orientation for practical life in decision making in relation to society's problems in the present.

The two instruments (survey and written tasks) were used during ELA classes, after prior negotiation with the teacher of the subject. The detailed results of the research were presented in June 2010 to the Post-Graduate Program in Education, UFSC, as a master's thesis.⁶

THE PATHS FOR THE TEACHING OF LATIN AMERICAN HISTORY IN BRAZIL

Studies have found that UFSC Application College is the only school in Brazil to have Latin-American Studies (ELA) as an autonomous discipline in the obligatory curriculum for primary and secondary school. However, this does not signify that its content is something new in educational curriculums in Brazil.

In a study entitled "A invenção da América na cultura escolar no Brasil" (The Invention of American in Brazilian School Culture), Maria de Fátima Sabino Dias⁷ analyzes the origin and the constitution of the discipline of the History of America in Brazil in the middle of the twentieth century. According to this study, history was introduced in Dom Pedro II College in 1838 and 1856, proposed by Friar Camilo de Monserrate, who declared that the teaching of Brazilian history could not be completed without it being taught in parallel to other American nations, and other problems existing in Brazil would only be resolved with the data provided

by the history of other countries in the New World. However, the history of America was present only in the three items in the list of contents, and rarely was there time for it to be taught within a school year.

Only at the beginning of the twentieth century did educational reforms seek to introduce the History of America in curriculums in Brazilian schools. In 1931 the History of America was included in the official curriculum of secondary teaching following the Francisco de Campos reform. However, the reform lasted only until 1942, when it was substituted by the Gustavo Capanema reform which introduced the History of Brazil as an autonomous discipline and reduced the little space dedicated to the History of America.

According to Dias (1997), the affirmation of the republican regime in Brazil involved some Brazilian intellectuals who disagreed with the historical approaches which until then were hegemonic and sought to introduce the content of the History of America in Brazilian schools. For Manuel Bomfim, director of Public Instruction of the Federal District, this discipline was supposed to be taught in the training course for primary teachers, and was afterwards supposed to be extended to primary schools. To make this concrete, Bomfim proposed a competition in which the didactic work which won was *Compêndio de História da América* by José Francisco Rocha Pombo, the first edition of which was published in 1899. Dias (1997) stated that his humanitarian vision was in contrast to the didactic works permeated by the diffusion of the racial superiority of whites. However, this approach did not predominate in Brazilian schools and the didactic book gained little acceptance.

Dias (1997) also comments that in the middle of the twentieth century, the cultural approximation of the United States and Latin America was part of the principles of Pan-Americanism and was among the criteria defined by the Inter-American system which at that time represented the capacity of Latin America to adapt to the directives formulated by the United States, which included its leading role in the capitalist world. An example of this influence was the Inter-American Cultural Action Plan proposed by the Organization of American States (OAS), which offered some parameters for the thinking about the notions of America and secondary education proposed for the American continent by Pan-Americanism.

According to the Cultural Plan (cited in Dias, 1997), one of the great problems of Latin America is the isolation of Latin American nations and their lack of knowledge about each other. Therefore, a cultural method of action was to fight 'isolationism,' proposing greater knowledge among the American peoples through an more effective intercommunication between the nations

and the cultural conjunctures. In this sense, the Cultural Plan highlights the importance of implementing in studies of Inter-American history and culture in secondary education in American countries, with the aim of “breaching international barriers.”

From this perspective, in 1951 Edict 724 approved a history program which included the history of America in the second class of middle school, making it appear like an autonomous discipline. Nevertheless, at the end of the 1950s and at the beginning of the following decade, this discipline disappeared again from the curriculums. During this period many Brazilian intellectuals prepared a critique of US domination, motivated by the strength of anti-imperialist nationalism, by the Cuban revolution and by dependency theory. Many of these intellectuals, teachers at various levels of study, made their classrooms ‘centers of actions’ or ‘areas of resistance’ against a history curriculum with praised US values and despised the Latin America peoples.

According to Dias (1997), during the military dictatorship of Brazil the question of Latin America was practically abolished from history programs, giving way to social studies. Only at the end of the 1970s were studies about the Americas reintroduced in official secondary teaching programs in São Paulo schools, with an emphasis on Latin American history. The program emphasized economic and located the theme of dependency of Latin American countries. According to Circe Maria Fernandes Bittencourt,⁸ this involved understanding the insertion of Brazil in the capitalist system and its alignment with ‘underdeveloped’ countries.

More recently, new perspectives have been introduced in the teaching of Latin American history. In the National Curricular Parameters (*Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* – PCN) of history for the 5th and 8th classes of Fundamental Education there are various suggestions of Latin American history themes, including: “Relations between society, culture and nature in the history of American peoples in antiquity and their descendents at present;” “Labor relations at different moments of the history of the American peoples;” “Processes involving the creation of national states in the Americas, confrontations, fights, wars, and revolutions.”⁹

In relation to this aspect, Bittencourt (2005) stated that there exists a tendency in didactic manuals to present an ‘integrated history’ without the traditional divisions of general history, the history of Brazil and the history of the Americas, in an effort to create a synchronic time which identifies the historic relations is societies situated in different spaces. However, this perspective raises new problems for the teaching of history, notably in relation

to the definition of contents which favor the construction of a feeling of the belonging of Brazil in Latin America.

THE DISCIPLINE OF LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES (ELA)

ELA became part of the obligatory curriculum of CA in 2003, replacing OSPB (Social and Political Organization of Brazil). Initially it was part of the curriculum of the 7th class in Fundamental Education and the 3rd Year in Secondary Education, with an annual class load of 75 classes in each of these years. In 2008 it was replaced by Sociology in the 3rd year and came to be part of the curriculum of 1st year of secondary school, while remaining in the 7th class.

The proposal of including the discipline came from the teachers Silva Souza and Marise da Silveira Verissimo, together with the consultants Maria Sílvia Cristofoli and Maria de Fátima Sabino Dias. Its purpose was to encouraging the breaking of existing stereotypes and prejudice about the students' 'selves' and the Latin American 'other.'¹⁰

The discipline of ELA is part of the history curriculum of CA, where there is flexibility for it to be worked in an interdisciplinary manner with the other subjects in the human sciences. Among its objectives are providing reflection on historical, social and cultural questions of the Americas in a perspective which problematizes questions linked to local, national and continental identities, discussing how these questions are connected with various other political projects, economic vicissitudes and the historic perspectives of these peoples; allowing ethnic-political self-knowledge through the problematization of recurrent and new questions in Latin America; providing contact between Brazilians, Argentineans and citizens from other nations, in a perspective of difference and solidarity, and disseminating the history of the American peoples in a comparative perspective, allowing the emergence of significant knowledge about societies on the continent, contrasting these with stereotypes and prejudice.

Currently the ELA curriculum for the 7th grade focuses on comparative studies about political and historic processes, and the social and cultural questions of their countries. The general objective is to develop reflections about the differences and similarities between the peoples who are part of the Latin American nations, simultaneously fulfilling objectives which share mechanisms of integration, identity and difference with the intention of stimulating notions about cultural respect and continental solidarity. As a result the programmatic content for the 7th grade covers the Pre-Colombian

and Colonial periods in Latin America, focusing on the history of social, cultural and labor relations. The idea is to start with the current situation in Latin America and afterwards to follow the program, encouraging students to observe the changes, permanencies and simultaneities.

The content to be worked with is distributed in a single unit – History of social, cultural and labor relations – which has five thematic areas, namely: 1) Notions of time, difference/similarity, permanence/change; the occupation of the Americas by Pre-Colombian societies; different forms of life; 2) The land and indigenous communities in the Americas, myths and rites and the social relations of power; 3) Differences in the use/appropriation of modes of life in the organization of colonial productive systems; disorganization of indigenous communities/forms of mercantilization of land; diversification of the organization of labor and relations with the land; 4) Rebellions and resistance in the land expropriation process and the labor force; 5) Changes and permanencies in the process of constructing independent states in the Americas – national identities.

The objective of these content is to offer students the possibility of getting to know and identify cultural and historical characteristic of pre- and post-Colombian societies, respecting and recognizing the contributions of indigenous societies to knowledge and the accumulation of cultural and human experience; develop the observation, recognition and the visual memory of the cultural heritage of Amerindian societies; identify the existing similarities and differences in Latin American cultures and societies, in order to access a critical and respectful perspective of the historical diversity of the peoples of the continent; and compare the territorial occupation and colonial processes of Latin American societies.

RESEARCH SUBJECTS

The data obtained from the survey shows that in 2009 7th grade students in CA had a socio-economic level considered high in relation to the rest of the Brazilian population.¹¹ Their parents had a high standard of education, and a large part of them worked in the public service. However, since most of these students enter CA by lottery, it can be said that these young people are part of an even larger student profile similar to this.

In relation to access to information and the consumption of media, the survey showed that all the 67 students had access to the internet and used it as

a means of communication and information. Furthermore, the consumption of film, television programs and literature is also very high.

The principal occupation of these young people is music, followed by friends and the various use of computers, from playing games and searching on the internet to chatting with friends using specific programs such as MSN. In their free time these young people prefer to watching television and free. Sport appears only as an optional activity in school. The family life of these young people is very significant and their parents participant considerably in the school life of their children.

In relation to the interference of ELA in learning about Latin America, 51 students stated that it was one of the means which most contributed to learning about Latin American history. Nevertheless, the weight of other means such as travel, the internet and documentaries is greater. It remains to be investigated if the interference of these is not exactly due to the demands of the discipline; 28 students stated that in studying the history of Latin America they are studying their own history, and when questioned about the participation of the discipline for thinking about the current situation in Latin America, 33 students stated that the discipline contributed to this aspect; 26 students stated that what they liked best in studying the discipline was the culture of distant peoples, while 29 students indicated that something changed in their daily life with the study of the discipline: 16 of them came to be more interested in the news reports transmitted in the means of communication Latin America, 12 of them began to speak about Latin America with their friends and relatives and 12 began to watch more films related to Latin America.

NARRATIVES AND THE LATIN AMERICAN HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

At the end of 2009 ELA students were asked to carry out an written task aimed at stimulating the imagination for the production of historical narratives. The aim was to observe how students of the discipline related the past, present and future of Latin America and how this relationship guided the actions of these individuals in making decision about the problems of present day society. The task was entitled “Time capsule: messages for the future” and proposed the following:

When we are young we do things which we keep forever in our memory. In some cases it is common to get objects – such as an old doll, coins with little worth, shirt buttons or newspaper cuttings – and place them in a tin and bury

them in a yard. A type of time capsule which will one day be opened by someone who did not live at the time it was buried.

On 21 June of this year various children from Campos, in Rio de Janeiro state, will deposit their histories, their dreams and their desires for the future in a time capsule which will only be opened on 5 September 2017. This event will also be held in three other countries and was organized by the team of the Louis Cruls Astronomy Club in partnership with the Jornalista Oswaldo Lima Cultural Foundation.

Imagine that you, as a student of Latin-American Studies in CA, were chosen to participate in a similar project with the task of preparing a document telling the history of Latin America until the present day to be kept in a time capsule that will only be reopened in 50 years. How would you tell the history of Latin America? How would you describe the Latin America of the present? What would you expect for your future and the future of Latin America in the next 50 years?

The content of the narratives produced, conceived as manifestations of historical consciousness, was analyzed based on the adhesion to the proposed activity (relating the past, present and future of Latin America), in questions of significance, perspectives of the future and the four axes that constitute the narrative meaning as developed by Jörn Rüsen (2001, p.155), namely: perception, interpretation, orientation and the motivation, which together articulate orientation towards practical life in decision making about the problems of society in the present.

In the narratives analyzed the most frequent elements were:

- a) Violent European occupation and the acculturation of the native population – 35 students: “The past of the Americas was sad because its people was massacred by the Spanish on top and the Portuguese below. This brutal colonization left marks that have lasted to the present.”
- b) The names of Pre-Colombian peoples – 31 students: “In relation to the peoples, we can mention the Mayas, Aztecs, Olmecas and the Incas, which were the great civilizations of Latin America.”
- c) Latin America is underdeveloped or developing – 19 students: Now in the present, Latin America is a country in which the majority of countries are developing, growing globally.”
- d) The Mayan prophecy about the end of the world – 13 students: “however the Mayans predicted that something bad would happen on 21 December 2012 so I do not know what to expect from the future.”

- e) Technology – 10 students: “now with the advance in technology everything will improve and in the future it will be even better.”
- f) The history of Latin America began with the arrival of the Europeans – 8 students: “Latin America began with the arrival of the Europeans. A large part of Latin America was almost entirely colonized by the Spanish – Mexico, Peru, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Colombia and others. Only Brazil was colonized by Portugal, other countries which were colonized by Europeans were the Guianas, which were colonized by the French.”
- g) The arrival of man in the Americas by crossing the Bering Strait– 6 students: “The old peoples who lived in Africa were nomads and went northwards and during the Ice Age they crossed the Bering Strait and went to North America. They went south until they arrived in Latin America and there many people existed.”
- h) Deforestation/Pollution– 5 students: “I believe that LA will be one of the developed countries in the world, though I do not think it will be a paradise, since pollution, global warming, and the errors that society commits are continuing and do not change, I believe that a large part of LA will be covered by water.”

These questions indicate that in some form ELA interfered in the knowledge of these students about Latin America, since the most frequent elements in these narratives are directly related to the contents taught during the 2009 school year. It should be highlighted that in the weeks before these instruments were applied, the students studied the arrival of the Europeans in Latin America in the ELA discipline. In other words, the question of greatest significance among the narratives produced made direct reference to the most recent content studied.

For these students the colonization process of Latin America was extremely violent and left visible marks in the present, whether through the current situation of indigenous peoples, or to justify the underdevelopment of the continent. Nevertheless, apart from the real brutality of this process, these narratives show a victimized vision of the history of Latin America. This perspective which makes Latin Americans eternal victims of a hostile world and removes from them responsibility for their history has negative implications for the horizon of expectations and the possibilities of action of these young people. This shows that there remains a challenge for the re-signification of this perspective towards the continent. Furthermore, for eight students the history of Latin America began with the arrival of the Europeans.

The questions referring to technology, deforestation and pollution are

present in a significant form in the narratives. In many cases the relationship between these elements is contradictory, since while for some technological development guarantees a better future, for others it worsens problems with pollution and deforestation. This highlights one of the fundamental aspects of this research: the production of narratives is permeated with contradictions and it is up to the attentive researcher to observe the relationship between what changes and what remains the same when the same question is asked in a different form.

Also recurrent among many students is the idea that Latin America is undeveloped or is developing. This idea can be connected to the place that Latin American countries occupy in the world economy, since it is common to think that the world is divided into developed and underdeveloped countries. Developing countries are the former colonies and the dependent countries, which have a low level of economic development in comparison with the highly industrialized countries. However, which countries can be considered to be highly developed? What are the criteria that determine if a country or continent is in one or the other category?

Returning to Rüsén's categories, in relation to the manifestations of historical consciousness and the temporal meaning of orientation in time, 34 students showed a perception of changes in time in their narratives:

Practically every day changes are happening here, of all types, thus, I think that in a while things will be very different here. An example of this are the Mayans, the Aztecs, Incas, etc. In their epochs things were very different from what they are now, and I think that changes will continue to happen.

Nevertheless, in the majority of cases this perception of change is positive, with a belief in progress. This was also observed by Schmidt and Barca,¹² in their analysis of historical narratives of young Brazilians and Portuguese about the contemporary history of their countries.

The idea of progress is related to a gradual process of transformation, of a linear time, which moves from a worse stage to a better one, in which everything that comes afterwards is better than what has already happened. This idea is based on the capacity of man and humanity to resolve the material problems raised by nature or by life in common, improving them, making them more perfect. But can we state that the future will be better than the past or present? Will the scientific and technological advances guarantee better conditions of life for the population?

In relation to the understanding of the past as interpretation, 41 of the CA students had this element in their narratives:

Latin America had a very difficult colonization, since it had various colonizers, the deaths of the indigenous peoples, much slavery. However, despite this it had an important and very good consequence, culture. Until today this culture is present in our daily lives.

In addition to the fact that interpretation is part of the act of narrating, Rösen (1992, p.30) shows that the ability to interpret lies in perceiving differences between the past, present and future through the conception of a temporal whole. In relation to this research, the category 'interpretation' was conceived as the capacity to translate experiences from the past of Latin America for the comprehension of present day reality. Since more than half of the students who participated in the research drew on elements from the past to explain the current situation of the Latin-American continent, it can be said that the study of the history of Latin America in ELA helps them understand the current situation of the continent. This data also appears in the survey, when 33 students stated that ELA helped them think about the current situation of Latin America.

The attentive reading of the narratives produced by these students leaves it clear that they literally interpret the history of the Latin American continent and through the narrative articulation confer their own meaning on this history, which for this reason can vary both in form and content.

In relation to the mobilization of the past in the orientation of practical life, only seven students presented evidence of this possibility in their narratives: "Nowadays there are studies about these old peoples who influenced our lived until the present, such as Mayan astronomy which results now in things like calendars."

According to Rösen (1992, p.30), the mobilization of the past in the orientation of practical life supposes the capacity to use the temporal whole, with its content of experience for the purposes of the orientation of daily life. According to the author, this implies guiding action through notions of temporal change, connecting human identity with historic knowledge. Few students presented in their narratives elements which allowed the understanding of how they connected knowledge of the past with their practical lives. Without a doubt this is an extremely difficult task, including for historians and history teachers. How to approximate historical knowledge and the reality

of young people? The great difficulty perhaps resides in relating aspects of daily life with the study of events at a macro level distant in time by many centuries. For example, how can you relate the daily routine of a 13 year old, who spends a large amount of his day listening to music in front of a computer, with the colonization process of Latin America? The task is difficult but not impossible. Above all, it is necessary, since it is a basic condition for young people to recognize themselves as historic subjects, capable of transforming the reality in which they live.

The survey showed that 29 students indicated that something changed in their daily lives through the study of the history of Latin America in ELA, whether in conversation with friends, in the reading of magazines, or interest in reports in the means of communication. Even though these changes may have been motivated by the demands of the discipline itself, this signifies that in some form historical knowledge about Latin America has orientated the practical life of these students. However, none of the narratives analyzed indicated that this orientation motivates the action. This can be related to the age of these students (with an average age of 13.65), since various studies have shown that the development of a historic consciousness is related to intellectual and cognitive development, to the degree of perception of autonomy of these individuals and to the complacency and inertia which many believe characterize the situation of young people nowadays.

Common in the means of communication, as well as in common sense, is the discourse that characterizes young people nowadays are alienated, individualistic, short-termist, consumerist and irresponsible, respecting nothing and not having any limits. It is also said that this youth is not interested in politics, does not respect anyone and has no ideas. It seems that even the young people of previous generations were engaged in the struggle for liberty and justice. However, the youth of today is as apathetic as it ever was. There are alienated youths, as there always were. The exaggeration in the affirmation of ‘juvenile apathy’ in the twenty-first century hides the fact that the crisis of citizen participation is an amplified social phenomenon which affects all age groups of the population and in all places and age groups there are difficulties in finding means of action for the resolution of collective problems.

Research carried out by *Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas* (Ibase) in 2005, entitled “Juventude brasileira e democracia – participação, esferas e políticas públicas,” (Brazilian youth and democracy – participation, spheres and public policies),¹³ revealed that actually there are many critical youths who have proposal and seek paths for this. According to the

assistant coordinator of the project, Anna Luiza Salles Souto, society in a general manner does not perceive youths other than the stereotype of apathy and inertia. According to the researcher, at the same time that there is little youth participation in formal political spaces, the presence of youths can be noted in other types of collective action which contribute to the constitution of juvenilized public spaces in relation to different participative social experiences.

For these reasons it can be believed that the argument of juvenile apathy is not sufficient to justify the absence of the mobilization of attitudes in light of society's problems of society in the presence of the historical narratives produced by CA students. It is argued here that like the other three elements that constitute meaning for the formation of a Latin American historical consciousness that are present in these narratives, this absence may be related to the age of the students and their level of intellectual and cognitive development. Nonetheless, it has to be taken into account that the school system does not favor the development of autonomous postures in relation to the present reality. Can these young people take into account that they can interfere in the reality in which they live? Autonomy, understood here as the capacity of a person or community to make decisions which affect them, constructing their own rules, it is essential for the orientation of actions in light of the problems of society in the present. However, an individual only becomes autonomous if little by little they have the opportunity to make the decisions that affect them. It is thus necessary to investigate if there is a place for autonomy in the spaces which these young people occupy inside and outside of school.

In relation to the perspectives of the future, for 27 students the future will be better than the present: "In the future I believe that Latin America will have grown economically and will be a place with many developed countries, it will have a lot of technology."

However, for 41 students it will be worse than the present: "I think that in the future it will be well developed with various types of technology, but it will be very dangerous, and I do not know where this will end, because the population will grow and then fall with so many deaths and there will not be many jobs." For 20 students the future is already decided: "The people of the future will be certainly, with the way technology is developing, it will be materially better developed than us, all we have in terms of technology now they will have better and more will be invented." For 32 students it is being constructed: "The future is being formed by the decisions of people, if pollution and deforestation continue, the future will be horrible, but if they stop it will be better."

The pessimism in relation to the future – involving both the Mayan

prophecy and climate catastrophes due to deforestation and pollution, or the increase of violence and unemployment – configures a scary scenario in relation to the future of Latin America. This data also appeared in research carried out by Ferreira, Pacievitch and Cerri,¹⁴ using an intercultural survey involving young Brazilians, Argentineans and Uruguayans.

The presence of this element in the narratives of CA students can be related to the catastrophic discourse in the means of mass communication about the irreversible damage caused to the environment. However if the future is constructed by the choices made in the present, what are these young people doing to reverse this scenario? What is their role as subjects of the process?

The absence of the mobilization factor in the narratives of these young people limits the possibilities of transformation of Latin American reality. However, it should be highlighted that the path to the formation of a Latin American historical consciousness linked with the mobilization of attitudes has started to be laid down. Three of the four constitutive axes of historical meaning can already be found in the narratives prepared by these students in 2009, and this is directly related to the teaching of the history of Latin America in ELA.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

The historical narratives produced about the past-present-future interrelationship by students who participated in the research indicated that ELA interfered in the learning of the history of Latin America, since the most frequent elements in the narratives produced are directly related to the content taught during the 2009 school year. These elements contributed to the essential form for the development of Latin American historical consciousness, linked with a practical life orientation.

Furthermore, since more than 70% of the 67 students who participated in the research identified cultural and historical characteristics of pre- and post-Columbian societies, recognizing the contributions of indigenous societies to knowledge and the accumulation of the cultural and human experience, it can be stated that the discipline fulfilled its purposes. These students also demonstrated that they were capable of identifying the similarities and the differences existing in these cultures and in Latin American societies and of comparing the processes of territorial and colonial occupation in these societies.

In relation to the formation of a Latin American historical consciousness, even though the majority of students presented in their narratives the perception

of change in time and the notions of the past as the interpretation and guide of the present, these ideas still seem not to motivate the actions of these young people in light of the problems of Latin America in the present. This absence of motivation in the preparation of narratives can be related both to the age of the students and their level of intellectual and cognitive development, and the degree of perception of the autonomy of these individuals.

According to Rösen (1992, p.34), the learning of history is a process involving the digestion of experiences of time in narrative forms. He believes that this learning involves the acquisition of abilities to experiment the time that has passed, interpret it in the form of history and using it for a practical purpose in life. To effectively complete this process time is needed. Thus, what is reinforced here is the importance of giving continuity to this process over a series of different years, especially ELA, in order to encourage the actions of these individuals in decision making in light of the problems of Latin America at the moment.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS

The historical narratives produced by the young people who participated in this research showed the contribution of Latin American content in the teaching curriculum for the historical formation of subjects in the school, considering that this knowledge is fundamental for the identity formation of young people in the current world. Nevertheless, it should be taken into account that the production of historical school knowledge needs to be confronted with the consumption of contemporary cultural artifacts by young people, such as films, television programs, reading, music, magazines, the internet, etc, manifested in the vocabulary and behavior of these subject inside and outside history classrooms.

The results of the empirical research are not generalizable. The selection of the sample was intentional and not random, involving young people with a standard of living which can be considered high in relation to the other young people in Brazilian public schools, and who have access to an unprecedented discipline in its obligatory curriculum, Latin-American studies. For this reason this data has to be compared with other research involving young people with different socio-economic characteristics and who do not have access to this discipline. This has started to be done in Santa Catarina by the researchers who are part of the project “A Escola e os jovens e crianças no mundo contemporâneo: processos de formação histórica latino-americana” (The

School and Young People in the Contemporary World: Latin American historical processes of formation), and part of Interdisciplinary Research Group on the Teaching of History of UFSC, financed by *Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa Científica e Tecnológica do Estado de Santa Catarina* (Fapesc). The results of this will be presented in November 2011.

The data obtained from this research – activities, questionnaires and narratives – is kept in the Educational Memorial Collection (*Acervo de Memória Educacional – AME*) of CA. The information obtained is considered confidential and should only be used for academic research without the identification of participants.

NOTES

¹ The notion of ‘youth’ is used here based on the collocations in SOUSA, Janice Tirelli Ponte de; DURAND, Olga Celestina. *Experiências educativas da juventude: entre a escola e os grupos culturais. Perspectiva*, Florianópolis, v.20, n. especial, jul.-dez. 2002. According to these authors, in addition to the transition from one age condition to another, youth can be characterized as a link from one time to another – between past, present and future –, suggested through their social roles, whose meaning must be designed and on which society itself depends. Youths establish this link not just with themselves, tracing their biography, but also with society itself.

² RÜSEN, Jörn. *El desarrollo de la competencia narrativa en el aprendizaje histórico: una hipótesis ontogenética relativa a la conciencia moral*. Trad. Silvia Finocchio. *Propuesta Educativa*, Buenos Aires, n.7, out. 1992.

³ RÜSEN, Jörn. *Razão histórica. Teoria da História I: Os fundamentos da ciência histórica*. Brasília: Ed. UnB, 2001.

⁴ Most important here are the contributions made by the research carried out by Maria Auxiliadora Moreira dos Santos Schmidt and Tânia Maria F. Braga Garcia, Luis Fernando Cerri and Gonzalo de Amézola, Daniel Hortêncio de Medeiros, Ronaldo Cardoso Alves, Marizete Lucini, Sandra Regina Ferreira Oliveira and Marizete Lucini, Marlene Cainelli, Olinda Evangelista and Jocemara Triches, Marcos Roberto Kusnick and Juliana Pirola da Conceição in Brazil, Peter Lee in the United Kingdom, Rosalyn Ashby in Canada, Isabel Barca and Marília Gago in Portugal, and Rodrigo Henríquez Vásquez in Spain.

⁵ The proposal is part of a national project entitled “Peabiru: Ensino de História e Cultura Contemporânea,” coordinated by Profa. Ernesta Zamboni (Unicamp). This is an institutional project involving researchers from seven Brazilian universities and one Argentinean – Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp), Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC), Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF), Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná (Unioeste), Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU),

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) and Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (Flacso).

⁶ CONCEIÇÃO, Juliana Pirola da. *Ensino de História e consciência histórica latino-americana no Colégio de Aplicação da UFSC*. 171f. Thesis (Masters in Education) – Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Florianópolis, 2010.

⁷ DIAS, Maria de Fátima Sabino. *A invenção da América na cultura escolar no Brasil*. 1997. Dissertation (Doctorate in Education) – Faculdade de Educação, Universidade Estadual de Campinas. Campinas (SP), 1997.

⁸ BITTENCOURT, Circe Maria Fernandes. Ensino de História da América: reflexões sobre problemas de identidades. *Revista Eletrônica da Anphlac*, v.4, 2005. Available at: www.anphlac.org/periodicos/revista/revista4/circe.pdf

⁹ BRASIL. Secretaria de Educação Fundamental. *Parâmetros curriculares nacionais: história*. Brasília, 1998, p.58, 60 e 70.

¹⁰ SOUZA, Ivonete. Estudos Latino-Americanos: a criação e a inclusão de uma nova disciplina escolar no Ensino Fundamental e Médio do Brasil. In: DIAS, Maria de Fátima Sabino (Org.). *História da América: ensino, poder e identidade*. Florianópolis: Letras contemporâneas, 2004.

¹¹ According to Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), the average income of the Brazilian population in 2008 was R\$ 1345.18.

¹² SCHMIDT, Maria Auxiliadora Moreira dos Santos; BARCA, Isabel. Consciência histórica: um diálogo entre países. In: ENCONTRO NACIONAL PERSPECTIVAS DO ENSINO DE HISTÓRIA, 7, 2009, Uberlândia (MG). *Anais...* Uberlândia: s.n., 2009.

¹³ INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE ANÁLISES SOCIAIS E ECONÔMICAS. *Juventude brasileira e democracia – participação, esferas e políticas públicas*: Relatório final – nov. 2005. São Paulo: Ibase; Pólis, 2005.

¹⁴ FERREIRA, Angela Ribeiro; PACIEVITCH, Caroline; CERRI, Luis Fernando. Jovens brasileiros, argentinos e uruguaios na constituição de identidades e na tomada de decisões políticas. In: ENCONTRO NACIONAL PERSPECTIVAS DO ENSINO DE HISTÓRIA, 7, 2009, Uberlândia (MG). *Anais...* Uberlândia, 2009.

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