

Thematic Article



Education, Education Of The People And The Building Of The Brazilian Nation

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Abstract

Contrary to the information disclosed in the manuals of classical history and history of education, the construction of Brazil and Brazilian education was the object of struggles and clashes resulting from different political projects and tensions between dreams, possible ways and plural forms of the nation and Brazilian education. In this article, supported in more recent studies in the field of history of education, we explored a number of evidences pointing out the complexity of the process of nation building and the organization of educational forms in Brazil during the nineteenth century. When considering the diversity of forces and agents located in different social spaces, their initiatives and the principles that have guided the educational projects elaborated, we observed the various mediations established at international, national and local levels, a condition for understanding the models adopted and the inequality that the process of schooling has helped to consolidate throughout the history of Brazilian education.

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“The invention of Brazil”, a political project, developed during the process of Independence, encouraged during the Regency period (1831–1840) and throughout the Second Empire (1840–1889), also showed itself in support of the educational, cultural and scientific institutions and patronage to arts and cultural production. The aim of such actions was to promote a body of experts, who would produce of scientific knowledge, cooperate in disseminating the mother tongue, build the national literature and understand the nature, richness, territory and population of the Empire.

One of the landmarks of the “process of national invention of traditions” was the constant financial support from and granting of privileges by the *Crown* to the Brazilian Geographic and Historical Institute (IHGB), established in 1838. Following the model of European academies, IHGB promoted historical and geographical research, taking control of scientific literature in these fields, and becoming an important place for the development of national memory (Guimarães, 2003).

The idea of building the Empire of Brazil and national identity can also be observed in the preparation of projects and measures taken to organize secondary education in the country. The establishment of the Imperial College of Pedro II on December 2, 1837 marked the production of a national “place of memory”, not only by associating the date commemorating the birthday of Emperor D. Pedro II and the name of the institution with it, but above all, by establishing a network of symbols and cultural representations that extolled the Empire and the image of the monarch, present in several solemn occasions or unexpected visits to the college.

The construction of the Empire of Brazil required a legal apparatus and establishment of the staff for its management. In this direction, after tense debates in the Constituent Assembly, 1823, concerning their location, the first Brazilian law courses were established in 1827 in the cities of Olinda (later in Recife) and São Paulo. In Law Schools, the graduates obtained not only training to serve as jurists and lawyers, but they were also trained to “learn about power”, since many law graduates were involved in politics and state bureaucracy, holding the positions of deputies, senators, diplomats, presidents of the province, in addition to the positions related to the Judicial system, such as judges, public prosecutors and police chiefs.

While seeking to govern, the State revalidated and established hierarchies and social distinctions marked by the establishment of educational institutions for different audiences, such as the Imperial College of Pedro II and graduate courses in Medicine and Law, for example. These institutions were created to educate the elite in tune with the civilizing project of the Empire and the establishment of personnel positions in the state government. The hierarchy among citizens was legitimized by census criteria for the exercise of citizenship, by excluding slaves from political rights and the unequal possession of material and symbolic goods. With regard to cultural capital, for all citizens and subjects of the empire, elementary education through public schools was considered as one of the key mechanisms to form identities and ties between the

inhabitants of the Empire and “the world of government”, i.e., for the “education of the Brazilian people” (Mattos, 1990).

The political purpose for establishing public education in the first decades after Independence was to produce identities and social ties of interdependence, integrating all the active and inactive citizens into the State. Soon after the Independence, one of the first measures of the First Empire concerning education was the incentive for opening private classes and schools, under Law of October 20, 1823. The establishment of public classes, schools, high schools, colleges, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions was related to concerns about the “education of the people” and the broader political intentions for the construction of nationality and public spaces³.

Therefore, education emerged as one of the fundamental rights of individual assurance to Brazilian citizens, established by the Constitution in 1824 under Article 179, paragraph 32, after the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in 1823: “*primary education was free to all citizens*”.

Following the liberal guidelines that established the right to education as one of the guarantees of freedom and equality among citizens⁴, the Imperial Constitution of 1824 defined, specifically for the Brazilian social reality, the scope and limits of citizenship. Consequently, this would also define the right to education.

It is important to point out that there were riots and protests as regards the definitions of citizenship imposed in the Constitution of 1824, also among blacks and mestizos, just as there were disputes over the delimitation of the target public of schools and the extension of rights to education throughout the 1800’s, including proposals to educate and civilize the Indians, freedmen and review education offered to women. During the Regency period (1831–1840), the city of Rio de Janeiro, for example, witnessed the proliferation of radical and exalted printed matter, such as *O Homem de Cor* (Man of Color), *O Brasileiro Pardo* (The Brazilian Pardo), *O Mulato e O Cabrito* (The Mulatto and The Goat) that fought for equal rights of Brazilian citizens, regardless of their ethnic origin. In the case of Bahia, the study of Reis (1989) and Grinberg (2000) showed how these issues were still being discussed, even after the legal regulation by the Constitution.

Disputes over the meaning of what constituted the Brazilian being and the limits of citizenship were derived from legal provisions themselves. According to the Magna Carta, the fundamental criteria for the exercise of citizenship, civil and political rights

³We recommend two classical studies about education during the Brazilian Empire: Almeida (1989), Barbosa (1982), and Barroso (2005). To access a broader bibliography about Brazilian education in the nineteenth century, see Gondra & Schueller, 2008.

⁴In the “Age of Revolutions” of the eighteenth century, see the Declarations of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, established under the aegis of the French Revolution (1789).

were the possession of the attributes most dear to classical liberalism: liberty and propriety. The criteria, which initially excluded slaves who, in quantitative terms, represented the largest portion of the empire's population until the 1850's. The distinction between freedom and slavery marked one of the major divisions that characterized the hierarchical, aristocratic and monarchical society, assigning concrete meanings to the monopolies that constituted the group of slaveholders: monopoly over land and slaves.

However, the differences were not restricted to the criteria of liberty. The hierarchy of citizens and the limits to political participation, through the election of representatives to occupy public positions, were also defined by property. Under the rules of the Constitution, 1824, the elections were held in two sessions, i.e., locally they were direct, and indirect at the provincial level. Citizens eligible to elect justices of the peace, city councillors for City Hall and voters authorized to choose the representatives in the House of Representatives and the Provincial Assemblies had to be over 25 years⁵, and had to prove they earned at least 100 thousand reis⁶. Locally, in the first stage of the elections, freedmen could participate. This category of citizens, also called voters, although eligible to vote in parish elections and choose the Electoral College for higher positions, could not be candidates for the high political positions of the State.

The citizens eligible for the positions of Deputy and Senator had to prove they had an income of 400 thousand and 800 thousand reis, respectively⁷. To choose these representatives to form the electoral colleges, the citizen, also called voters, had to prove they had an income of 200 thousand reis. In this category, the freedmen were not allowed to participate. These two groups – categories of voters – constituted the body of active citizens of the Empire. Although there was no explicit prohibition in the Constitutional text, women and slaves had no right to vote.

The dilemma between the liberal idea of natural equality among men and the maintenance of slavery, under the aegis of free Constitutions, was not specific to Brazil, but unfolded throughout Afro-America. As regards the Brazilian Empire, Mattos shows

⁵The Constitutional text made exceptions to the age limit, which was 21 years for householders, military officers, alumni, clergy, public employees and in general all eligible citizens who were economically independent (Carvalho, 2007).

⁶According to Carvalho (2007), the income criterion did not exclude the entire poor population from the right to vote, at least with regard to local elections, since the amount of 100 thousand reis per year was accessible to free workers and freedmen. In Minas Gerais, for example, data from the municipality showed that in 1876 only 24% of voters were rural landowners, mostly workers, artisans, civil servants and liberal professionals (Carvalho, 2007). With regard to the Brazilian Empire, see Carvalho, 1996a and 1996b; Holanda, 1977; Lyra, 1977; Lyra, 1994 and 2000.

⁷Lifetime senators and those elected from a triple list, from which the Emperor appointed the candidate of his choice. The term of deputies was four years.

that the constitutional census criteria, established by the Carta in 1824⁸, were economically out of date by mid-century, even after updating the income figures in 1846, which allowed poor workers and mestizos, free and freedmen to vote, at least locally, when going beyond electoral fraud. The author also argues that from the mid-nineteenth century, with the increasing complexity of imperial society and the abolition process, the contradictions between civil and political rights intensified leading to great lack of definition as regards the legal status of freedmen, ambiguity of race relations and the “disappearance” or rare mention of the color of individuals in the documentary references of the epoch (Mattos, 2003).

According to the hierarchies and distinctions between citizens, the right to primary education, guaranteed by the Constitution to members of political society was being established during the 1800's, based on the process of constructing the educational laws and provincial public education systems. However, in the first instance, as non-citizens, slaves were expressly excluded from official educational policies. With regard to all citizens, Article 179 did not distinguish between the active and non-active, therefore, in principle, in the free and freed condition, both had the right to primary education.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the educational process in Brazilian society can be seen through various articulated mechanisms, such as: a) school legislation and educational policy; b) establishment of a technical and bureaucratic system of inspection and control of educational services to recruit and employ, create a political and knowledge network and develop a political economy of education; c) production of statistical data to find out about and produce representations about the state itself and its population, being essential elements for modern governability (Lopes, Faria Filho & Veiga, 2003).

From this perspective, historians of education have noted that from the 1830's, in different locations around the country, there were intensive discussions concerning the implementation of elementary public schools as well as debates about the pertinence or not of educating children, blacks, Indians or women at a time when endeavors were made to support the need for schools⁹. The need was asserted by the presence of the state that gradually determined mandatory elementary education¹⁰ through, for example,

⁸The figures for exercising the right to be a voter and to choose the Electoral College were updated in 1846 from 200 and 400 mil reis, respectively (Nicolau, 2002).

⁹Discussions on educational projects for slaves and Indians point to social tension involving the construction of the national State and the establishment of schooling procedures during the Imperial society. Important documents to consider are the bills presented by Jose Bonifacio de Andrada e Silva in the Constituent Assembly of 1823, entitled Notes on the Civilization of the Indians in Brazil and Representation to the General Constituent and Legislative Assembly of the Brazilian Empire about Slavery (*Apontamentos sobre a Civilização dos Índios do Brasil e Representação à Assembléia Geral Constituinte e Legislativa do Império do Brasil sobre a Escravatura*). For the projects by Jose Bonifacio, see Caldeira (2002) and the practices of indigenous education in the Northern Imperial Brazil, see Rizzini (2002).

¹⁰With respect to mandatory, see Silva & Schueller, 2013; and Almeida, 2012.

a process of normalization in which the relationships between the processes of structuring the state and school education were revealed.

In some provinces of the Empire such as Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo, Espírito Santo, Maranhão and Rio de Janeiro, elementary education was regulated by provincial laws, especially after the Additional Act of 1834 that redefined the jurisdiction of education, giving the Provinces legislative autonomy, i.e., the duty to legislate, organize and supervise primary and secondary education, leaving to the central government, by means of the portfolio of the Ministry of the Empire, the management of both degrees at Court and higher education throughout the country. According to the constitutional amendment, the Provincial Assemblies created at the time, were responsible for legislating on:

Public education and establishments suitable for promoting it, not including the Schools of Medicine, law courses, academies existent at the time and any other establishments of education, which would be created by a general law in the future¹¹.

The Additional Act of 1834 was the first amendment to the Constitution of 1824 and it met the demands for decentralization resulting from the of political tensions and conflicts that occurred in the troubled Regency period, in which some regions of North and South of the Empire reacted to centralizing proposals driven by the interests of political groups in the Central-Southern region, which sought to impose their hegemony on control of State and building of the nation. By the measure, the Provincial Assemblies were created with the highest degree of legislative and executive autonomy, considering the regional powers. However, constitutional reform made little progress with regard to the distribution of resources among the provinces, since public taxes remained centralized in the hands of the central government (Lyra, 2000).

The process of decentralization in the management of public education, caused by the Additional Act of 1834, has been interpreted by the historiography of education as an obstacle to the development of school education in imperial Brazil due to regional differences and insufficient resources destined for education in the provincial budgets, or even because of the lack of interest of the provincial political elite in disseminating primary and secondary education, which would have resulted in a huge gap between the educational laws and practice, thus favoring the predominance of heterogeneous forms of education and access to education, as a rule in the sphere of the home and family, throughout the nineteenth century.

Despite the prevalence and coexistence of multiple forms of education (family, religious, craft, professional, among others) having been the characteristics of Brazilian social formation during the entire nineteenth century, recent researches have pointed out that the idea of educating and instructing the free population by means of educational institutions acquired consistency within the scope of the provinces and Imperial state.

¹¹Law No 16, October 12, 1834.

Although there have been advancement in the researches, there are still significant gaps for understanding the period from 1800 to 1840, particularly when we consider the diversity of educational policies in the Brazilian regions, which have hindered the attempts to produce a more finished synthesis with respect to this period.

In the Province of Rio de Janeiro, the government has sought to regulate public education since 1835. In the same year, one of the first measures taken was the establishment of the Normal School to train primary teachers in the city of Niteroi, the capital city of the Province. The Provincial Law of 1837, the first to reorganize teaching after the Additional Act of 1834, established the fundamental principles of primary and secondary education, delimiting the curricula for schools for boys and girls, organized recruitment of teachers, books and textbooks to be used, among other things. Considered by the main ruling groups as a vital tool for the constitution of the unit of the Empire, primary education would make it feasible to educate the Brazilian people and to acquire:

Certain notions, certain practices and feelings that should be general both for the lower and higher classes of society. It is this common instruction, this identity of intellectual and moral habits that constitute unity and nationality (Mattos, 1990).

The Province of Rio de Janeiro has been considered by historiography as a “laboratory” for public educational policies during the development of the Imperial state and therefore, a model for the entire Empire (Mattos, 1990). This position has been redimensioned due to the advancement of researches that have indicated the existence of educational, regional and local initiatives since the 1820’s and 1830’s – therefore prior to the process of conquering conservative hegemony and centralization/consolidation of the Imperial State starting from the Mid-South.

For the Province of Minas Gerais, for example, studies have shown that the discourses for the creation of public seats of elementary education, the primary schools were legitimators of the National State under construction since the 1820’s (Lopes, Faria Filho & Veiga, 2003). When investigating the action of the Provincial Board of Education of Minas Gerais from 1825 to 1835, Caldeira (2006) noted that the ongoing discussions about education indicated the school as a central key element in the constitution of the state and nation. The establishment of laws by councillors meant a way to implement policies in the education of the people, giving the Province of Minas its own set of laws with legal rules based on those of civilized countries, in to make it feasible to establish an educational system, which would include the primary schools, secondary schools, *Gymnasiums*, high schools, technical courses, higher education and college to educate the Indians.

In Rio Grande do Norte, there are indications of the process of education and placement of teachers connected to the Church, and of teachers who have taught at their own homes since the eighteenth century. According to Araújo and Medeiros (2000), homes and farms in the drylands of Caicó have organized themselves as production units to

supply not only the daily needs for survival food, clothing and work, but also as “social enterprises for various art crafts, among them the art of teaching”. The movement for the creation of public schools and governmental subsidies and control over private teachers, particularly in Natal, was intensified as from the period of Pombal’s reforms, and especially during the period of formation of the Imperial state and the provincial government between 1834 and 1889 (Medeiros, 2004).

In the Province of Mato Grosso, the organization of public education also included the movement of setting up the National State and “a people” that could represent it. The Educational Regulations of 1836 and 1854 attributed the responsibility of organizing, maintaining and supervising the schools to both the provincial government and the private enterprises, with state intervention being more evident as from the second half of the nineteenth century. However, the schooling process was not imposed on the population of the drylands without resistance. On the contrary, there were various social responses, not always in agreement with the proposals originally formulated in the laws and regulations, which demonstrates the possible limits and outlines of a project that was intended to be national in the midst of regional and heterogeneous, multifaceted diversities and a silenced cultural universe (Siqueira, 2000).

In São Paulo, although the first law regulating public education in the province was decreed in 1846, since the beginning of the Provincial Assembly in 1835, primary public education has been the object of debates, and legislative and administrative measures. With the technology of the *rule*, an endeavor was made to organize and resolve the questions, complaints and demands of the population and teachers by means of letters, petitions and representations directed to provincial authorities or Municipal Chambers. The Provincial Law of 1846 represented the understanding of the movement of defense of official intervention in the development of the educational structure of the São Paulo, a movement that included the Province of São Paulo in the projects of construction of the National State by means of school education (Ananias, 2004)¹².

According to Faria Filho, as of 1835, throughout the Empire, the Provincial Assemblies did publish a significant number of legal texts aimed at regulating primary and secondary education in different regions, demonstrating that the legislative process was one of the mechanisms of State interference. On the other hand, in addition to construction of the “Empire of laws”, the development of educational services, different school networks (public, private, domestic) in accordance with the reality of each of

¹²To access the educational legislation for Mato Grosso see Sá & Siqueira (2000); Paraná, see Miguel (2000) and Miguel & Martin (2004); Paraíba, see Pinheiro & Cury (2004); Rio Grande do Norte, see Bastos et al. (2004); Rio Grande do Sul, see Tambara & Arraiada (2004); and Pará, see Melo, Almeida and Rosário (2012). The latter is available at (www.sbhe.org.br), Brazilian Society of History of Education. Accessed on January 3, 2014. At this website the Brazilian Journal of History of Education and the Annals of the Brazilian Congresses of History of Education can be found.

province was remarkable, although historiography affirms that the application of resources has always been far short of the real needs (Faria Filho, 2003).

The process of developing the types of school education in nineteenth-century Brazil was not uniform, undifferentiated or continuous, which resulted in inequality of educational conditions among the Provinces, a profusion of reforms and complexity of the rules thus produced. Nevertheless, these rules represented important building blocks to the various provincial public school systems.

The process of schooling was also not limited to the action of the State, as there was participation by families and part of the local population, either by means of creating schools, or providing teachers with support, or by demands addressed to the public authorities containing complaints about the physical conditions of schools and teachers and their work of teaching. From this aspect, there were many tensions between the different concepts and styles of education, as Veiga and Viana point out (2004):

Therefore, on the one hand, within the context of development of the Public Education Network, the family was an entity that remained firmly bound to tradition, preserving its private space from state interference, and on the other, it was an entity that evaluated that same process. The family's interference in school education worked as a means of redefining teaching practices and even the determinations of the government. They put forward to the authorities, the need to establish schools and monitor the conduct of teachers; and denounced the fragility of a State that rose from the ideals of Enlightenment, but based on a structure marked by the tradition in which the public was part of the private sector. (Veiga & Viana, 2004)

The same movement of dispute for the implementation of schools or between the different types and practices of education, by intermediary of the action of individuals, families and social groups, was observed in other provinces, as can be seen in the reports of ministries and provincial presidents.

The diffusion of elementary knowledge, written culture and dispute for access to schools would remain latent in a society marked by the management and diversity of regional and local cultures. Thus, the devices of the modern school machinery would uncomfortably coexist with the multiplicity of types of education and instruction coexistent throughout the nineteenth century.

The construction of Brazil and Brazilians, contrary to the information disclosed in the classical manuals of History, was the object of struggles and clashes between different political projects and tension between dreams, possible paths and plurality of the nation and Brazilian education.

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