

Brasil, 1822/2022: 200 anos de escolarização¹

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Resumo

Este artigo tem como tema o processo de escolarização no Brasil nos últimos 200 anos. Seu objetivo é apresentar a forma como, no transcorrer desse período, a instituição escolar estabeleceu ou forneceu parâmetros fundamentais de classificação social, política, cultural e econômica. O artigo resulta de pesquisa histórica e bibliográfica que considera a polissemia do termo “escolarização”, bem como a pertinência de articulá-lo, no tempo e no espaço, com as demais dimensões da vida social. As fontes utilizadas foram os jornais, a literatura e uma ampla gama de trabalhos sobre o tema. O texto se estrutura em três focos — a relação entre a escolarização, civilização, progresso e modernização. Como resultado, demonstra como, no decorrer de dois séculos, a escola se estabeleceu como agência formadora das novas gerações, usufruindo de capital importância nas sociedades contemporâneas.

Palavras-chave: Bicentenário. Civilização. Educação Escolar. Modernização.

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Brazil, 1822/2022: 200 years of schooling process

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss schooling process in Brazil's last 200 years. We intend to present how school established important parameters of social, political, cultural and economic classification. This paper is a result of a bibliographic and historical research, which considers the polysemy of the expression "schooling process". We also take into account the importance of articulating this expression with others social dimensions in time and space. We used journals, literature and researches about schooling process as research sources. Thus, this work focuses on three aspects — the relationship among schooling process, civilization, progress and modernization. As a result, it shows how school has established itself as an educational agency for the new generations over two centuries, becoming very important for contemporary societies.

Keywords: Bicentenary. Civilization. Schooling. Modernization.

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Resumen

Este artículo versa sobre el proceso de escolarización de Brasil en los últimos 200 años. El objetivo es presentar como, en el transcurrir de ese período, la institución escolar estableció parámetros fundamentales de clasificación social, política, cultural y económica. El artículo resulta de una investigación histórica y bibliográfica que considera la polisemia del término “escolarización”, así como la pertinencia de articularlo, en el tiempo y en el espacio, con las demás dimensiones de la vida social. Como fuentes, se utiliza los periódicos, la literatura y una amplia gama de trabajos sobre el tema. El texto se estructura desde tres enfoques – la relación entre la escolarización y la civilización, el progreso y la modernización. Los resultados demuestran como, en el transcurso de dos siglos, la escuela se estableció como agencia formadora de las nuevas generaciones, gozando de capital importancia en las sociedades contemporáneas.

Palabras clave: Bicentenario; Civilización; Escolarización; Modernización.

Introduction

The choice made by Brazilian elites to structure Independence around the preservation of colonial foundations defeating proposals for an independence that sought deeper transformations in the social structure³ — especially as a means to guarantee the slave-based structure upon which society as a whole was organized is the key to understanding the intricacies of educational policies, which, particularly from the Constitution imposed in 1824 onward, began to take shape.

The birth of Brazil as an independent country occurred at a time when, under the influence of Enlightenment ideals and the strengthening of nation-states, school education was beginning to take shape as a force for national integration. On the one hand, the Enlightenment ideal proposed school instruction as an antidote and light against ignorance from school, then, would come the notion of greater individual autonomy. On the other hand, in the shadow of the French and Haitian Revolutions, Brazilian elites like those elsewhere in the world saw in the expansion of schooling a fundamental strategy for governing populations, in order to prevent a revolution in the tropics. From this perspective, school gave rise to the subject's social integration (BOTO, 1996).

The empire of order was established by the orders of the Empire that is, through the construction of a legal framework and the creation of institutions aimed at securing the exercise of power by the Emperor and the elites who took part in the aristocratic banquets. Although there were significant differences among the elites regarding the importance and purpose of public instruction, there was a consensus that it should be an activity controlled by the State, even if educational services could be carried out by private individuals (FARIA FILHO; CHAMON; INACIO, 2015).

From this understanding, it follows that the apparatus of public instruction especially elementary education played a decisive role in the very invention of the Brazilian State, in both its potentialities and shortcomings, serving as an important interpretative key for understanding Brazilian society and the relationships between the public and the private that were established here. It is with this perspective, therefore, that we undertake in this work an interpretative essay on the presence of the school in Brazilian society over the past two centuries. We are aware of the considerable gaps and the imprecision inherent in such an exercise, but we also regard it as legitimate

³ Recent historiography on Independence shows that the idea that Brazil's separation from the Portuguese Crown was merely a backroom deal among elites does not hold up. There was an ongoing struggle to determine which model best suited the country one that, in fact, did not end on September 7, 1822. The defeat of these movements was, therefore, twofold: a defeat on the battlefield and another in the memory and history of the nation.

and, in a certain sense, necessary today to outline the major educational moments and movements that have brought us to the present.⁴

The text is divided into four parts, each corresponding to key time markers that align with the commemorations of the 50th, 100th, 150th, and 200th anniversaries of Brazil's Independence. Although we recognize that the development of education has specific dynamics distinct from those of politics, we argue that around these dates it is possible to observe significant signs of major debates and the policies adopted for public instruction/education. It is as if these celebratory moments were also moments of danger (BENJAMIN, 1985), in which Brazilian society, amid and through struggles over representation, turned its attention inward in search of its past, aiming to construct a present more favorable to each of the groups contending in the Brazilian public (and private) sphere.

1822-1872: Enlightenment and Civilization

Art. 179. The inviolability of the civil and political rights of Brazilian citizens, which are based on liberty, individual security, and property, is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Empire in the following manner.

[...]

XXXII. Primary education shall be free and accessible to all citizens.(BRASIL, 1824, Art. 179)

The premature constitutional guarantee of free schooling even before political separation from the Portuguese Crown had been fully established without providing the necessary means to expand access to education, along with the Empire's decision to delegate responsibility for primary and secondary education to the Provinces while the central administration retained control over higher education, reveals the kind of society the school was expected to help construct and/or preserve.

Even so, in the decades following Independence, there was intense debate about how to expand schooling without significantly increasing public spending or removing poor children and youth from the labor force. The chosen approach was the adoption of the monitorial or mutual method, as reflected in the Law of Public Instruction of 1827 and in various newspapers and pamphlets of the time. This method, which circulated globally at that moment, promoted the idea that a single teacher could instruct up to a thousand students, thus saving time and resources for both the State and the students' families.

⁴ For readers interested in a more in-depth overview of the various aspects of Brazilian school education over the past 200 years, we recommend two books, both published as specific contributions to the understanding of the topic: Gazola et al. (2022) and Gondra, Limeira, and Clemente (2022).

Although, by the 1830s, the failure of the promises surrounding the monitorial method had already become apparent, the broad debate it sparked helped to consolidate the idea of the specificity of school education in contrast to other forms of education. Moreover, it strengthened the ongoing struggle led by teachers, families, civil associations, and a significant group of intellectuals for the maintenance of the schools inherited from the colonial period and their expansion into new territories of the newly independent country (FARIA FILHO; BASTOS, 1999).

Thus, in the following decades, under the aegis of the 1834 Constitutional Reform (the Additional Act to the Constitution), which granted the Provinces, among other things, the prerogative to legislate on primary and secondary education, virtually all the Empire's Provinces enacted laws aimed at organizing their own "instruction policies" and, at the same time, creating State structures beyond the schools themselves to support them.

This movement was highly uneven but showed a certain degree of coordination, as provincial laws were very similar, and in the case of secondary education, there was Colégio Pedro II, located in the Court Municipality, serving as a model for provincial counterparts. In this way, we can see that the Imperial State was being invented at the same time as it expanded its pursuit of enlightening and civilizing the population of the Empire (GONDRA; SCHUELER, 2008).

It was in this context that, for the first time in Brazil, the need and possibility of an "education of educators" was fostered that is, specific training for teachers. As a recognition of the particularities of school instruction compared to that carried out in the domestic sphere, and as a strategy for governing the teaching profession, normal schools were created in nearly all the Provinces of the Empire. Increasingly attended by women, these institutions became singular spaces in the Brazilian educational landscape. Although they did not provide direct access to higher education until the mid-20th century, normal schools were the breeding ground for a female intellectual class that, from the late 19th century through the mid-20th century, energized Brazil's cultural, political, and intellectual life (ARAÚJO; FREITAS; LOPES, 2008; BARRETO; ARAÚJO, 2022).

However, in parliamentary debates and newspapers, one can discern something of broader scope and significance in the history of Brazilian education during the imperial period: the political struggle to assert the importance of public instruction in the process of consolidating the national state and in the dissemination, in our context, of the 19th-century civilizing and scientific ideals. There was also another factor: the specter of the French and Haitian Revolutions haunted the tropics. In this sense, the strategy of expanding public instruction to as many people as possible from the "lower classes" stemmed from political fear and thus served as a means to prevent new revolutions.

This fracture becomes clear, for example, in the article “Public Instruction”, published by the newspaper *O Universal* near the end of its circulation period ⁵ (June 14, 1842). We believe it is worthwhile to cite this article despite its length due to its role as a synthesis of the perspective that guided both Portuguese and Brazilian elites regarding the need to educate the poorer segments of the population:

It is among the automatons, who vegetate like animals in the lowest classes of society, that one finds agitators and troublemakers; it is to the ignorant masses that the Catalines and Marats of the time appeal—they call them virtuous and sovereign when they need them to carry out dark schemes. An insurrection carried out by serious and educated individuals would be impracticable. As a general rule, instruction is the mother of prudence; the savage is reckless and short-sighted because he is ignorant; foresight and reflection necessarily follow, in both nations and individuals, the progress of civilization and education. The worker and the laborer who study the elements of moral and natural sciences will reflect on their own condition and that of their families, and by concentrating their thoughts, will necessarily come to understand that good behavior and sobriety are the most solid guarantees of their happiness, and that their primary duty as husbands and fathers is to secure, while young and strong, those comforts and resources they will need when old and infirm. Once they develop a taste for and habit of reading, they will flee from laziness and vice. A worker who, through reflection, refrains from spending twelve vinténs on spirits will certainly not be seditious. Education improves society not only because it promotes habits and customs of orderliness, but also because it replaces bad habits with good ones; a diligent and studious worker will find delight in study itself, and he will be happy and content not only for having learned what others know, but also for knowing what others ignore. Once he is possessed by a love of knowledge, he will even avoid innocent distractions in order to devote himself entirely to study. In this state, the Cleons and Hyperboluses of our day (on the revolutions of Athens and Rome, see our article published in *O Diretor* on December 10, 1839) may come knocking at his door; but, prudent both by calculation and inclination, he will not throw himself into street disorder and sedition that might jeopardize his life and well-being. It seems impossible to us that the opposite would occur, and we believe that only the most blindly partisan supporters of the status quo would rather excessively maintain even what is useless, simply out of fear of endangering public peace and tranquility.

This governance of the population, which gradually takes shape and develops through the school including with the incorporation of the poor and Black population, whether free or formerly enslaved was, from the perspective of the nation-state, the longest-standing and most far-reaching presence of the Brazilian State among the poorest segments of society. This presence of a school that, in its institutional dimension, reflects a unique aspect of the confusion between State and government(s) has only been counterbalanced, in our history, by the apparatus of security (or violence) in the form of public or private policing, and by religious institution (VEIGA, 2008).

⁵The newspaper ceased publication in 1842 due to political reasons, given its involvement in the political debates that culminated in the so-called Revolution of 1842.

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What was sought especially up to the end of the Empire, though not entirely abandoned afterward was the incorporation of the poor, Black, and Indigenous population into the *Raison d'État* and into the civilizing project organized by the elites, through school practices guided by Enlightenment ideals and, without ever ceasing to be so, by Catholic and/or Protestant Christianity. The school statistics of the 19th century, including those from the 1872 Census though highly unreliable show a reasonable increase in the presence of Brazilian children and youth in schools. When considering gender, girls began to appear more and more in the data. Population surveys from the Provinces show despite provincial and regional differences and inequalities that Black children also entered the school system, though always in smaller numbers than their white peers (FONSECA, 2009; VEIGA, 2008; POMBO, 2018).

The dynamics behind the expansion of schooling in the 19th century combined complex and multifaceted elements. There were investments by the national State in the governance of the population, just as there were more or less public movements of popular demand for schooling. There were also intellectual movements defending the need to expand education as a means to enlighten and civilize the poor, as well as corporative movements such as those of teachers and physicians who advocated for schools, either to protect and expand their own professional opportunities or to better educate women to properly care for their children and husbands. These collective movements, however, should not overshadow the individual and/or family investments in the schooling of children and youth, even if such instruction often still took place at home or in its surroundings.

1872-1922: Civilization and Progress

The dreadful shackle is broken,
That once bound the hand of man,
And a problem long unspoken
Found its answer in this land.
This glorious date forever
In golden letters shall be:
— In our fair homeland, never
Shall slave-born children be.

In the land of liberty,
The vile yoke has been undone;
Where Christendom holds sovereignty,
No servile race shall run.

(GUIMARÃES – *Hymn to the Law of September 28, 1871*)

It is not by chance, then, that all the major debates that swept through Brazil in the last quarter of the 19th century which, not coincidentally, coincide with the abolition of slavery, the Proclamation of the Republic, and efforts toward a greater secularization of State structures and policies include schooling as one of the paths through which the country could reach the desired order and progress.

The end of the War of the Triple Alliance (Paraguayan War) and the growing pressure for abolition marked, at the very beginning of the 1870s, a new atmosphere and new scenarios for the Empire. With regard to the pressure for abolition, although tracts such as Joaquim Manuel de Macedo's *Vítimas algozes* (*Victim-Executioners*) attracted public attention by arguing that slavery was a threat to the Empire, to the family, and to moral values and therefore should be abolished the true strength of the abolitionist movement came from the organization of the Black population, even among the enslaved, and from social movements advocating for abolition.

As in the work of Joaquim Manuel de Macedo, Bernardo Guimarães also circulated a series of representations of the enslaved and of slavery that, as we have seen, stand as the antithesis of what would be considered a “civilized” society. In *A Escrava Isaura* (*The Slave Isaura*), Guimarães presents, through his characters, genuine projects for integrating enslaved people into the Brazilian nation. In the novel, this project is embodied in the figure of young Álvaro, who studied Philosophy and Law. Of him, the novel states:

With such ideas, Álvaro could not help but be a fervent abolitionist—and not only in words. As a considerable part of his inheritance from his parents consisted of enslaved people, he immediately set about emancipating them all. However, since Álvaro had an exceedingly philanthropic spirit, and knowing how dangerous it was to transition abruptly from a state of absolute submission to the enjoyment of full freedom, he organized, for his freed people, a kind of colony on one of his estates, placing it under the care of an honest and zealous administrator. This measure could yield great benefits for the freed people, for society, and for Álvaro himself. The estate was given to them to cultivate under a leasehold arrangement, and they were subject to a kind of communal discipline not only preventing them from falling into idleness, vice, or crime, and ensuring their subsistence and the ability to accumulate savings, but also enabling them to compensate Álvaro for the sacrifice he had made by emancipating them (GUIMARÃES, 1875, p. 88-89)

As is well known, the choice made by part of the Brazilian landowning elite was not to incorporate the poor population whether white or Black into the Empire through a revision of the Land Law or through waged labor. The preference for foreign immigrants by the more “progressive” elites of the Empire reveals the racist ideology and practices embedded in both State structures and civil society practices that have persisted throughout our history.

However, one cannot ignore that the 1872 Census conducted in the year marking the 50th anniversary (half a century) of Brazil's Independence and the publication of its results in the years

that followed had a symbolic and, therefore, political-cultural impact on how Brazil perceived and represented itself. The Brazil revealed by the census figures was far removed from the country that white elites starting with the Emperor himself seemed eager to portray. Among the most striking aspects of this unflattering self-portrait, beyond slavery, was the widespread illiteracy of the vast majority of the population.

As a result of these developments, from the standpoint of social and political representation, the presence or absence of schools could no longer be ignored by the State, by the elites, by the churches, and increasingly by the population itself. Even though the most respected “imperial professions” were those of doctors, engineers, and lawyers, when it came to proximity to the population and, especially, to provincial spending, the teaching profession had already become the most relevant within that context.

Likewise, although schooling was still absent from most territories and concentrated in a few urban centers, it was increasingly represented as the cornerstone of the political and cultural system that the country sought to build. The debates surrounding Electoral Reform and its approval in the 1880s revealed just how much the defense of popular participation through voting in national decision-making could simultaneously result in the disqualification of the unschooled as trustworthy political-cultural agents and in their exclusion from electoral processes for more than a century (FARIA FILHO, 1999; FERRARO, 2013).

In these debates beyond the actors who had historically occupied the “public space,” such as lawyers, legal clerks, doctors, and especially clergy from various traditions new collective subjects began to advocate strongly for the expansion of education. To the presence of members of religious orders and graduates of law schools in Brazil and abroad who had until then dominated parliamentary and governmental proposals on public instruction was added (or challenged by) the powerful voice of the medical profession. Viewing Brazil as a great ailing body, doctors offered their diagnoses and prognoses for the nation, and the lack of education, along with the urgent need to expand it, were recurring themes in their analyses.

However, by the final quarter of the 19th century, it was no longer possible to ignore the strength of the movement organized by teachers in defense of public education. For a variety of reasons, more and more women embraced the teaching profession, and together with their male colleagues through magazines, newspapers, and school-based organizations they advocated for the expansion of public instruction, teacher training, better salaries, and improved working conditions (LOURO, 1997; FARIA FILHO *et al.*, 2005).

Although both monarchists and republicans especially those with a more liberal orientation advocated for the expansion of public instruction, it was the republicans who most effectively captured the spirit of the times and claimed the banner of public education as their own. Thus, we saw debates over the instructional reforms proposed in the Court Municipality in the late 1870s which later brought great acclaim to Rui Barbosa as a great “Brazilian pedagogue” followed by discussions around Electoral Reform in the 1880s and leading into the first republican educational reforms in the early 1890s. From this, a powerful representation emerged: that the nation’s order and progress were intimately linked to republican ideals and to the expansion of public instruction. In this way, an imaginary was constructed in which there could be no order and progress without a Republic, nor could the Republic exist without a strong public school system to educate republican workers and citizens.

Even though this idea must be understood across time and studied in its territorial specificities, the affirmation of the school as a social institution responsible not only for educating new generations, but also as a force that produced and propelled systems of social classification, gained enormous strength in Brazil during the 1880s, particularly in the context of the Electoral Reform debates. It was in that moment of “danger,” to borrow Benjamin’s (1985) term, that the weapons namely, political and cultural arguments were wielded to assert the educational and cultural superiority of the school in the political formation of new generations, and as a decisive marker for political classification and participation. The prohibition of voting by illiterate individuals, which resulted from the Reform and lasted for over a century, stands as clear evidence of that shift. Although all parties involved in the political struggle especially those who opposed the measure were aware that education and instruction largely occurred outside of formal schooling, what was at stake, according to Rui Barbosa a fervent supporter of the prohibition was not fundamentally the exclusion of the illiterate, but rather an incentive for them to seek out schooling, for themselves and their children, so that they could participate in elections and, therefore, in democracy.

However, it is important to note that in this process, both schooling and public instruction itself were being re-signified. For many teachers working in the everyday environment of the classroom and interacting with their peers through meetings, public lectures, and printed publications—and for a significant group of intellectuals interested in the topic of public instruction—for the school to fulfill its important mission in the moral, intellectual, and physical education of the new generations, it needed to be reinvented (CARVALHO, 1989).

The invention, appropriation, and acclimatization of “pedagogical modernities,” which were widely circulating around the world at that time, had especially to do with the need to incorporate the

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latest discoveries of science and pedagogical experience into the schooling of new generations. From this perspective, the notion that school education should supplant or correct and, in general, replace family education, particularly in the case of the poorer population, was already taken for granted, at least among more progressive circles and advocates of compulsory schooling. However, there was no longer talk of the old-fashioned schools, where animals and birds competed in noise with teachers who knew little or nothing of their craft other than how to maintain order through strong blows with the palm, as Machado de Assis illustrated in his short story *Conto de Escola*.

In this way, the pedagogical movement of the late 19th century advanced quickly in its defense of incorporating scientific advancements into educational policies and practices, through the revision of teaching methods, curricular content, schedules, spaces, and other aspects. Content considered increasingly scientific was to be taught through natural, scientifically grounded methods, and in environments that respected the physical and mental limits and potential of the students. The conditions were thus established for a teaching movement (by educators) that would respect the learning movement (by students), leading to calls for the abolition of corporal punishment in Brazilian schools even though, in practice, this has never been fully achieved in all schools to this day (VALDEMARIN, 1998).

In this context, the advocacy of the intuitive method which emphasized the importance of the senses and envisioned the student's active role in their own learning simultaneously addressed the need to revise materials, schedules, spaces, and the very nature of teaching itself. This opened the way for a reimagining of the teaching profession as one more closely aligned with the feminine sphere (more affectionate, more attentive to children's needs, less violent) than with the masculine.

It is no coincidence that these elements became central to debates about education at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th throughout the country. Even though this "enthusiasm for education" yielded uneven and unequal results across states and, within them, across different territories often to the detriment of rural, poor, Black, and peripheral urban populations it nonetheless brought about extraordinary changes in educational policies, methods, schedules, spaces, and content in the early decades of the Republic.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the emergence of *grupos escolares* (consolidated public elementary schools) reinforced the school's presence in urban settings, also contributing to the creation of a distinction within public primary education between schools located in city centers the *grupos escolares* and those situated in the countryside or urban peripheries the so-called isolated schools(SOUZA, 1998; FARIA FILHO, 2015).

As we know, the emergence of *grupos escolares* marked much more than educational and cultural distinctions: they synthesized, so to speak, the schooling of new generations something that had been in the making in the Western world for at least two centuries. Through these institutions, modern pedagogy was able to take shape and, both symbolically and practically, over the course of the coming century, surpass other forms of educating children and youth, whether those forms were represented by the family, the church, or the world of labor.

Contemporary with the assertion of the superiority of State governance over domestic authority regarding the education of new generations through increasing enforcement of compulsory schooling and restrictions on child labor the *grupos escolares* brought into public education systems the possibility of applying scientific knowledge being produced about populations, particularly children, and about the world of work. In both cases, these schools represented an effort to “gather in order to divide” and to improve the governance of school subjects.

Grouped within the same physical spaces, children and their (mostly female) teachers were divided and assessed by shifts, grade levels, age, intelligence, and capacity clear applications within the school setting of the “sciences of labor” and the sciences of “bodies and minds.” The latter came primarily from the advances of Hygienist Medicine and Psychology and their influence on the school system and its participants. The division of school labor and students by intelligence scales is the other side, instituted by the *grupos escolares*, of the gathering of school subjects into a common space-time structure.

However, this gathering quickly revealed its deep contradictions. These arose not only from the production and reproduction of educational and cultural distinctions within the broader school system, as already mentioned. The most visible manifestations of these contradictions were, without a doubt: the invention of a new form of “school disqualification” the practice of failing students at the end of each grade level; the resulting increase in school dropout rates (among students); and the organization of female teachers in defense of their interests and rights (among the teaching staff).

By bringing female teachers together, only to divide them and place them under the same administration, the educational policies that supported the *grupos escolares* also created the conditions for these professionals to encounter one another daily and to discover or construct shared notions of destiny and rights. These were previously hindered by the physical distance between schools and contributed to the development of a certain, albeit vague, notion of autonomy in the exercise of teaching.

In light of this, by the end of the first decades of the 20th century, it had become clear that progress including educational progress had not reached everyone. At the same time, urban social

Brasil, 1822/2022: 200 anos de escolarização movements, with the active participation of teachers, revealed that the desired order was fragile and increasingly required the use of police force rather than the persuasion and political integration that the school was meant to represent (SILVA, 2018; 2019; DE DECCA, 1984).

Thus, between the archaic and the modern between *Jeca Tatu* and the urban *sportman*, the machine and the *coivara*, the hygiene leagues and the disaster of the Spanish flu pandemic, *Os Sertões* and the *Macunaímas* who already inhabited it Brazil was moving toward the celebration of its first centenary of independence (ALMEIDA, 2019; LINHALES, 2009).

1922-1972: From Progress to Modernization in/through Education

When the hero came out of the bath, he was fair-skinned, blond, and had light blue eyes the water had washed away his blackness. No one would be able to tell anymore that he was a son of the dark-skinned Tapanhumas tribe (ANDRADE, 1928).

The celebration of the first centenary of Brazil's Independence, in 1922 when the world was just emerging from the First World War and the Spanish flu pandemic was a crucial moment for rethinking Brazil: its origins, its history, its population, and its institutions, including the school. Just over three decades after the proclamation of the Republic, a widespread certainty permeated public debate: the Republic had failed. The envisioned progress, pursued under the republican order an order constructed to preserve the privileges and prejudices inherited from a slaveholding and unequal society was gradually showing signs of exhaustion. The eruption of protest movements and struggles for rights, alongside those seeking to echo in Brazil the changes brought about by the Russian Revolution, bore clear evidence of this.

In this context, the urgent need to address the challenges of expanding school education to the broader population and the precarious state of existing schools as well as their inefficiency in achieving literacy became subjects of wide discussion. Moreover, within the broader debates about the modern Brazil that was to be finally invented, educational modernism adopted the name “Escola Nova” (New School).

Faced with a rustic, backward, mixed-race population resistant to methodical work and discipline, and fond of bohemianism and unruliness it was deemed necessary to establish a school rooted in science and modern pedagogy. Only then, it was believed, could the Brazilian people now imagined as white, orderly, hygienic, conscious voters and productive workers contribute to the construction of a modern nation in the tropics.

The diagnosis of the 1920s was very clear: compared to the rest of the world, Brazil was a backward country, and all comparative indicators brought forth by modern statistical science including those related to education left no doubt about it. It was therefore necessary to accelerate time, to hasten the pace of progress if the country was to leave the rearguard position it found itself in. Under such circumstances, no institution was as indispensable to the governance of the population as the school (FREITAS, 2005; MONARCHA, 2009).

To carry out a revolution within order “Let us make the revolution before the people do,” as the president from Minas Gerais, Antônio Carlos, famously said education and culture were central elements. Unsurprisingly, among the educational renewal movements of the 1920s, which echoed into the following decades, those that gained prominence were the ones that sought to combine the defense of modern pedagogy, grounded in the sciences of education, with an increasingly strong and distinct presence of the State. These movements aimed to establish an educational system that, without deeply questioning the social order, would be more inclusive and efficient.

Given Brazil’s unique position in terms of access to and retention in schools unlike the central countries where these ideas originated the *Escola Nova* (New School) movement came to represent the most visible face of a revolution in and through school order. Its proponents defended a comprehensive and inclusive school system, grounded in the application of educational science and effective teaching methodologies. For this to be achieved, it was necessary to expand schools, systematically organize them, and ensure a certain unity of purpose, while still respecting regional diversities. At the same time, attention had to turn inward, to the core of each school: the classroom. It needed to be ordered according to specific, scientifically established rules.

Thus, bringing together diverse political, philosophical, and educational perspectives, a strong defense of the school emerged as an institution that, in its specificity, could decisively contribute to the construction of a modern Brazil. It was under this rationale that, throughout the following decades even under very different forms of government a vast state apparatus was built around the school and the schooling of the population. This apparatus aimed to contribute to national modernization by accelerating the pace of individual formation (CARVALHO, 1998; FREITAS, 2005).

Nothing represented this movement of accelerating time within order more than the educational reforms from the 1920s to the 1940s. These reforms sought, on both regional and national levels, to expedite the formation of a “new people” for a “new country.” The idea was that this new nation would be born hand in hand with the “old Brazil” it aimed to surpass this was the price to be paid for maintaining the so-called “revolution within order.”

While the 1920s and early 1930s saw various regional reforms, and despite the creation of the Ministry of Education and Health in 1931, little was achieved in terms of national reform. In the 1940s, however under the aegis of a State of Exception that exercised discretionary national power the *Capanema Reforms* sought, for the first time, to give national form to educational policies, overriding regional idiosyncrasies (MIGUEL; VIDAL; ARAÚJO, 2011).

Yet, even as the presence and importance of schooling in the education and governance of the population increased, so too did the struggle among a wide array of actors for control over educational policies and processes. This "clashing of arms" in the public sphere and behind the scenes of the State is a crucial chapter in understanding the direction of educational policies and the challenges related to both the expansion and improvement of the schooling offered by the State to the majority of the Brazilian population.

A school intended to accelerate Brazil's historical time and contribute to the modernization of Brazilian society needed to be broad-reaching, agile, kinetically structured, staffed with trained personnel and also inexpensive, to ensure financial support from the elites who dominated the state apparatus. A political economy of national schooling focused on the expansion of education across territories might reveal that, in truth, the school was part of the same endeavor as other institutions meant to embody and enforce the rights of the country's poorest populations: a chronic lack of material and financial resources to support the ideological and political visions of intellectual elites, as well as the daily struggles of working-class communities in pursuit of access to education (PEIXOTO, 2003).

After the Estado Novo and the end of World War II, the intense cultural, political, and ideological battle fought in Brazil over the first Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education (LDB) was a clear indication that the importance of schooling was now at the forefront of national concerns. At that time, profound debates unfolded, with Catholic groups and other advocates of the supremacy of private authority disputing the role of public institutions and resources thereby remaining at the forefront of Brazil's educational backwardness while defenders of public education championed the same ideals promoted in the 1920s, calling for a more unified and efficient school system. In this context, a substantive shift was occurring within the broader field of social thought regarding the role of schooling in contemporary societies, embodied in what became known as the "human capital theory".

With the advent of human capital theory, educational policies were effectively captured by economic theory and language, symbolizing the defeat of those who had advocated for "progress"

understood as both individual and social transformation by those promoting the “modernization” of the social world. The school system, in this process, became subordinated to the economic factors governing both societal and individual life. This marked the beginning of a process that, within a few decades, would consolidate the figure of *homo economicus* as the central rationale for schooling and the organizing principle of its fundamental dynamics, centered around the space–time conjunction under the rule of efficiency.

This victory of economic thought over other ways of conceiving and organizing the social domain of public policy resulted, in the decades that followed (and still today), in a drastic narrowing of the aims attributed to education by economic and technocratic elites, who came to dominate the national state and, by extension, social policy (RIBEIRO, 2000). The approval of the LDB (Law of Guidelines and Bases) in 1961 already reflected the emergence of a new era, and for this reason, the law soon proved inadequate to meet the expectations of “human capital” formation set by both national and international capital. Unsurprisingly, within less than a decade, it was supplanted by more targeted legislation for higher education (1968) and for primary and secondary education (1971).

The 1968 reforms, which created the “modern” university, and the 1971 reform, which introduced mandatory vocational education in primary and secondary schooling (now reclassified as the 1st and 2nd cycles), while formally extending compulsory education to eight years, once again revealed the harsh inequalities of Brazilian society and the continual reconfiguration of mechanisms that perpetuate educational injustice (CUNHA, 1977).

In structuring the universities designed for a privileged white and upper-class minority generous career tracks, decent salaries, professional conditions, and robust academic training were offered. By contrast, primary and secondary schools, intended to prepare working-class children for the labor market, were left without career pathways, decent wages, or adequate working conditions. This was further exacerbated by the dismantling of normal schools and the introduction of shortened teacher training programs (*licenciaturas curtas*), designed to fast-track the production of teaching professionals.

1972-2022: From Modernization to Barbarism

There has never been a monument of culture that was not also a monument of barbarism. And just as culture is not free from barbarism, neither is the process of transmitting culture (BENJAMIN, 1940).

The changes introduced by the civil and military apparatus that forcibly took over the powers of the Republic in 1964 marked the history of both higher education and basic education in Brazil in the final decades of the 20th century. This turning point was evident not only in the expansion of basic schooling and the privatization of higher education, but also in the population's relationship with public education in the country.

Although compulsory vocational training was not implemented in large parts of the country, it clearly signaled the intended direction of education policies targeting subordinate groups: the gradual reduction of the school's formative scope, so as to increasingly adapt it to the interests and objectives of capital precisely at the moment when education was expanding. This expansion also entailed its precarization, since educational policies, like other social policies, contributed to the construction of a society whose foundation was the broad production and reproduction of inequalities.

In the case of higher education, while a public university of teaching and research excellence was being built to reproduce and ensure the political and social distinctions necessary for the exercise of various powers political, intellectual, epistemic, and economic a clear policy of privatization was implemented. As a result, the lower classes were offered higher education opportunities far inferior to those made available to the ruling elites (CUNHA, 2007).

It is evident that this did not occur without contradictions and resistance. The movements fighting for public schooling, which can be traced back to the 19th century, also renewed their demands and strategies. Moving from expansion to the improvement of educational quality, social movements anchored in previous experiences and informed by educational research updated their vocabulary and gave free rein to the invention of new forms of resistance and innovation in the educational field.

In the context of social struggles for education, and within the broader landscape of cultural and political struggle in Brazil, there is no doubt that the emergence of the "new teachers' unionism" in the late 1970s was a particularly novel and promising development. This unionism, fueled by the growth in the number of education professionals (due to the massification of schooling) and the unique intelligence of its leadership especially women made teachers central actors in Brazil's public arena, not only during the country's redemocratization, but also, and more significantly, throughout the past 40 years (NOGUEIRA; MIRANDA, 2011).

The 1988 Federal Constitution was, to a certain extent, the result of the efforts of a fundamental triad which, in the following decades, broadened the meaning of the right to education: organized social movements especially in the field of education ; researchers and specialists working in

universities and within the state apparatus; and parliamentarians who translated these agendas into legislation, ensuring rights. These were the actors who, even in adverse conditions, due to the influence of business interests and executive powers opposed to public priorities, secured important victories in the educational field.

Thus, the modernization that was meant to be implemented in the realm of schooling often exacerbated and subordinated to a rising neoliberal agenda, which aimed to reduce educational opportunities for new generations of workers was challenged by a strong defense of the expansion of the right to education and by proposals to reinvent the school itself. Increasingly, the school space desired by capital was countered by a citizen-oriented, plural, and high-quality perspective socially grounded and inclusive one that sought to welcome and value all forms of diversity and engage in dialogue with various territories.

Although this generous vision of schooling often suffered significant defeats, it is important to note that, especially in the early years of the 21st century, state policies incorporated much of this agenda and developed new forms of governance over the child and youth population through education, from early childhood to higher education.

From funding policies to initiatives concerning textbooks, teacher training, Indigenous, Quilombola, and rural education, to the recognition and appreciation of diversity, the fight against racism and homophobia, and the acknowledgment of multiple childhoods, adolescences, and youth experiences, every aspect of school life was, in some way, touched by the political, cultural, and pedagogical renewal brought by social movements and educational research.

It was these movements that catalyzed and drove profound changes in public higher education, which also began to be offered by the Federal Institutes of Education, Science, and Technology. In this sense, there was a remarkable expansion of the system, along with increased openness through affirmative action policies to new forms of diversity. With the inclusion of more Black and Indigenous students, public higher education advanced beyond the limits historically imposed on it by the prevailing forces of order.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the promising atmosphere that enveloped Brazilian education at the beginning of the 21st century despite its many benefits in various areas, as previously noted left virtually untouched some of the structural and long-standing elements of the Brazilian educational system. Without addressing these, it is nearly impossible to build a socially grounded quality education for all. Brazilian society, with the State as one of its main public agents, has failed to resolve the precarious state of school infrastructure, the short daily school hours, and has made little progress in recognizing and valuing basic education teachers.

Brasil, 1822/2022: 200 anos de escolarização

A significant portion of schools, even in the early years of the third decade of the 21st century, still lack libraries, internet access, laboratories, sports facilities, adequate sanitation, and common spaces for students and teachers. Similarly, the average daily school time four hours remains unchanged since the late 19th century, despite the substantial expansion of the curriculum and the increased social, cultural, cognitive, and political roles assigned to schools.

Regarding teachers, it is clear that many Brazilian municipalities still lack structured teaching careers, that Brazil pays some of the lowest salaries in the world to public basic education teachers, and that there are no adequate programs for the recognition and appreciation of education professionals. Unsurprisingly, in a country where teaching is often deemed a respectable career but only for "other people's daughters" we are witnessing a growing disinterest in the teaching profession among new generations (ESQUINSANI, R.; ESQUINSANI, V., 2018).

It is precisely in this "gap" created by the devaluation of the teaching profession that education entrepreneurs insert themselves, with their salvational discourses grounded in the supposed efficiency of private management and the intensive use of technology. This is, without doubt, one of the newest forms of dispute over the future of schooling, and a clear indication of the subjugation of public education to private interests currently underway.

Under the Bolsonaro administration, everything that once signaled progress has been systematically dismantled, and the intensification of modernization and neoliberalism gave way, as expected, to barbarism. Beyond the policies aimed at dismantling the State and, consequently, public education, Bolsonaro and his allies masterfully exploited the COVID-19 pandemic to produce some of its most devastating outcomes: the senseless deaths of over half a million people, the deepening of poverty and inequality, and unimaginable levels of corruption.

In this context where everything touched by bolsonarismo becomes a symbol of death, including democracy and politics perhaps one of the few advances made by Brazilian civil society has been the rediscovery of the importance of Parliament.

In the set of the Republic's representative powers, Brazil has a long-standing tradition of centralized power and, consequently, of public attention being directed primarily to the Executive Branch. Within this context of an oversized Executive, the Legislative Branch has generally been relegated to a secondary role, even though it has consistently tried to portray itself as the "house of the people." Throughout Brazil's republican history whether under democratic regimes or authoritarian rule it has not been uncommon for the Executive to assume the authority to legislate "on

all matters,” leaving the Legislature with merely a decorative function or the task of ratifying executive decisions.

Due to this concentration of powers and resources, most organized social movements advocating for the Brazilian State and the scholars who analyze its operations have historically focused on engaging with the Executive Branch. For much of the 20th and early 21st centuries, this dynamic led to a general lack of attention to the functioning of the Legislative Branch and its internal rituals, rules of self-regulation, mechanisms of self-reproduction, and its role in maintaining the political, social, and economic order especially in terms of exclusion and inequality.

However, this historical tradition must not blind us to the fact that, particularly during times of democratic breakdown or when, as now, democracy is under threat and the Executive takes a stance that is overtly hostile to the interests of the poor and marginalized, the legislative arenas both at federal and state levels have often proven to be the most powerful. These institutions have provided a platform where, even if under close scrutiny and in minority, the principles of the Democratic Rule of Law, the defense of life, and the proposition of rights-based policies for the majority population have found expression.

From this perspective, it is no coincidence that, especially since the 2016 coup, social movements and democratic collectives have increasingly turned to the Legislative Branch as a key battleground to confront the antidemocratic and violent practices and policies imposed by the Executive and several state governments. This has led, in recent Brazilian political life, not only to a rediscovery of the function and significance of the Legislature but also to a deeper understanding of its rules and procedural rituals.

Understanding how legislative bodies operate has become essential. Despite the unequal balance of power within these institutions, thanks to the support of parliamentarians aligned with the interests of the broader population, significant victories have been achieved in the face of authoritarian, corrupt, and corrupting Executives including city councilors, state deputies, and senators.

Victories such as the approval of the “new Fundeb,” against President Bolsonaro and his allies in Congress, and the overturning of Governor Zema’s veto concerning the enforcement of the State Constitution and the Teachers’ Salary Floor Law in the Legislative Assembly of Minas Gerais, are not isolated cases. Rather, they are emblematic of this renewed recognition of the power and importance of legislative bodies.

This is not, of course, a call to overlook the profoundly unrepresentative composition of our legislative bodies or their alignment with the most harmful economic and religious powers. On the

contrary, the more we understand these institutions, the more we can expose the flaws within the powers of the Republic and the shadowy interests they serve. Furthermore, the more we understand, the more we can intervene in their operations and demand that they be shaped by the interests of the majority of the population those who sustain them and who are, ultimately, the reason for their existence.

Final considerations

Over the past 200 years, we have built the Brazil we know today, including its trajectory of schooling. We have made this a schooled nation: from a few thousand students at the time of Independence to several tens of millions in the early 21st century. Likewise, school-based references for epistemological, cultural, political, and social classifications have come to shape how people represent and act in the world.

To achieve this, it was necessary to construct a broad and complex state apparatus to address the challenges of schooling a structure which, as previously stated, has played an active role in the very construction of the national state, in one of its most visible and accessible dimensions to the population: the public school. This public structure, along with its counterpart, the private school, has mobilized and continues to mobilize enormous contingents of professionals and families, significantly affecting collective social life. The school's function as caretaker, alongside its teaching and learning roles, represents a fundamental chapter in the history of Brazilian society and of Western societies more broadly as was clearly demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic.

On the other hand, as in other sectors, it is no exaggeration to refer to an "education economic complex," one that involves not only a substantial portion of the national budget but also directly affects the entire supply chain of books, paper, clothing, food, and other school materials.

In this complex network of institutions spread throughout all territories, women play a prominent role not only as students, but also as education professionals. The predominance of women in the educational field, from early childhood to postgraduate education, stems from a wide range of efforts, especially those of the women themselves, in pursuit of schooling. This has led to one of the most significant social transformations experienced during the 20th century. It is also no exaggeration to say that the schooling of women has profoundly impacted the social world and is key to shaping various contemporary social arrangements from gender and family relations to the country's political-economic structure.

With due consideration to proportionalities and differences, the same can be said of the presence of the Black population in the realm of schooling. From a timid and at times denied presence in the early 19th century, this population has gained access to education throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, even if, quite often, the schools accessed are not the same ones attended by the white and affluent elites of the country. Nevertheless, the struggle of Black movements for education, their engagement with educational research, and the consolidation of their achievements through legal formalities and state structures have undeniably had a major political, cultural, social, and economic impact. These developments are at the root of how the most perverse forms of violence and the deepening of racial inequalities have been updated and institutionalized through current public policies in Brazil.

Public education structures have expanded and grown more complex, while social, cultural, racial, and gender diversities have increased within schools. This has led to the formation of an economic complex necessary to meet the demands of mass schooling. Alongside this, there has also been a significant increase in the need for training and knowledge to manage and operate within this complex teaching-learning system, as well as to understand the range of factors that contribute to the success or failure of education. Today, through research and reflection on school experiences, we are well aware of all these factors though the actors who draft and approve public policies within state structures often persist in ignoring such knowledge.

In this context, the 2018 election of a President of the Republic who is openly denialist, misogynistic, racist, homophobic, and an explicit advocate for the end of politics replaced outright by violence serves as a warning. It shows that public schools not only hold very limited power to shape politically engaged, generous individuals committed to a more democratic and equal society, but that their very existence is under threat. This reminds us once again that no victory or defeat is ever permanently secured; history unfolds in the everyday act of its own making.

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