

## *The History of Education in Brazil: The Formation of the Field and Theoretical Influences*

### *La Historia de la Educación en Brasil: formación del campo e influencias teóricas*

**Marisa Bittar**

e-mail: [bittar@ufscar.br](mailto:bittar@ufscar.br)

*Federal University of São Carlos. Brazil*

**Amarilio Ferreira Jr.**

e-mail: [ferreira@ufscar.br](mailto:ferreira@ufscar.br)

*Federal University of São Carlos. Brazil*

**Abstract:** This article is concerned with the History of Education in Brazil in two key areas: the disciplinary field and the research field. As a discipline, the History of Education has formed a part of the school curriculum since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a research field, it gained impetus in the 60s with the setting up of post-graduate courses and became one of the most consolidated areas of Brazilian education. In the light of this, there is a discussion about academic organisation and an attempt is being made to show how the field is characterised by theoretical renewal and is facing two key challenges: cultural exchanges involving the use of English and a recognition of the value of the History of Education as a discipline in the light of the fact that less space is being devoted to it in teacher-training curricula.

**Keywords:** History of Education in Brazil; disciplinary field; field of research; theoretical trends; internationalisation.

**Resumen:** Este artículo se refiere al ámbito de la formación en la Historia de la Educación en Brasil en dos áreas clave: el campo disciplinar y el campo de la investigación. Como disciplina, la Historia de la Educación ha formado parte de los programas escolares desde el comienzo del siglo XX. Como campo de investigación, ganó impulso en la década de 1960 con la creación de cursos de postgrado y se convirtió en una de las áreas más consolidadas de la educación brasileña. A la luz de esto, hay una discusión sobre la organización académica y se está haciendo un intento de mostrar cómo el campo se caracteriza por la renovación teórica y se enfrenta a dos retos fundamentales: los intercambios culturales que implican el uso del Inglés y un reconocimiento del valor de la Historia de la Educación como disciplina, a la luz del hecho de que actualmente menos espacio está dedicado a ella en los programas de formación de maestros.

**Palabras clave:** Historia de la Educación en Brasil; campo disciplinar; campo de investigación; tendencias teóricas; internacionalización.

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## 1. Introduction

At present, the History of Education in Brazil is a dynamic, firmly established and well conceptualised subject-area. This can be traced back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when this discipline began to form a part of the teacher-training syllabus; it was only later in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the History of Education first constituted a research field. This shows that the prestige that this field enjoys in the whole area of Brazilian education is to a large extent owing to the subject or rather to the teaching of the History of Education.

It was at first regarded from a Positivist standpoint, and later adopted more critical attitudes, until it reached the situation today when it is one of the most important subject-areas in the teacher-training curriculum. However, it has been giving ground to other domains of knowledge. For this reason, this study has entailed a good deal of reflection on the future of the History of Education as a disciplinary field in Brazil. With regard to the research field, our aim is to show how it has been increasingly strengthened since the 1980s against the background of a struggle against the military dictatorship. This growth in prestige in the last few decades has begun to have an influence on the History of Education curriculum, (particularly since the 1990s), through the introduction of new research areas. It involves a relationship between the disciplinary and research fields which was broadened to include post-graduate courses on education in Brazil after the academic output that resulted from both Master's and PhD courses, began to have a direct influence on the syllabus of the classroom.

As a result, research approaches and subjects of interest are currently being highlighted to the detriment of a more comprehensive curriculum which until the 1990s attached importance to a global view of Brazilian education in terms of the national system of education and the struggle to achieve greater democracy and make public schools available to everyone. At present, it is believed that this conception of teaching the History of Education has been superseded by the new approaches and rather than adopting a comprehensive outlook, the teaching of the subject has increasingly become more content-based. The implication of this is that in the classroom the teacher of the subject is concerned with matters of interest to him/her as a researcher and the discipline has begun to become a space for the reproduction of aspects of education that are the object of research projects in post-graduate courses.

Naturally, this study does not seek to deny or underestimate the fact that research enhances teaching and that there ought to be a dialectical relationship between these two spheres of activity. However, this does not mean that teaching and research are equivalent but rather that each has its own specific features and

in our view, research should never replace the character of the disciplinary field. In the case of the former, the concern is to explore new knowledge without necessarily being able to foresee its application, whereas the latter is concerned with training teachers who will become involved in the national system of education. Nonetheless, in our understanding, the History of Education is essential because it has the ability to provide future teachers with a wide understanding of the system in which they will take part. This does not imply that the innovative results achieved in the research field will not have a bearing on teacher-training courses but rather that they should not replace the teaching curriculum itself. Alongside this, there are clear signs that the number of lessons devoted to the History of Education in teacher-training courses is being reduced owing to the splitting up of areas of knowledge within the curriculum.

There has been an awareness of this for some time in Brazil and the matter has been the subject of debate by the History of Education Study Group at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Post-Graduate Studies and Research (ANPEd), in 2013. This question is pursued in this article with the following objectives: a) To stress the achievements that have been made in this field and its prominence in the current climate of education in Brazil; b) To provide a view of the formation of the field in its two dimensions; c) To introduce current challenges into the discussion.

With regard to methods and sources, this article is the outcome of our teaching practice and research into the History of Education over the past 20 years. During this period, while acting as both teachers and researchers, we have adopted the following procedures: (a) Reviewing the literature produced on the History of Education with a stress on the research studies that emerged from the institutionalisation of Post-Graduate courses in education during the 1970s; (b) The mapping of current epistemological perspectives which have influenced the production of knowledge in the History of Brazilian Education, in particular Positivism, Marxism and the Annales School; (c) The publication of teaching material about the History of Education for students in teacher-training courses; (d) The compiling of two archives – one about the hegemony of Jesuit education in colonial Brazil (1549-1759) and the other about Brazilian education during the period of military dictatorship (1964-1985). These archives comprise written manuscripts, printed documents, books, articles from periodicals and newspaper articles that are drawn on to underpin the analysis carried out in this article.

## **2. The History of Education in the teacher-training curriculum**

The History of Education in Brazil, whether viewed as a discipline or area of research, has not always been closely linked to the Brazilian academic tradition and

there have been a wide range of interpretations about its role in teacher-training courses. In the opinion of Warde, who conducted some important surveys of this issue at the time when the History of Education was first introduced as a discipline in Brazil:

it did not escape the influence of moral pragmatism (by removing some lessons and some doctrinaire teaching) or even Positivism which had a slight effect by adopting procedures for consulting sources, and was thus a really powerful conception. In its genesis and development, the History of Education was characterised by a particular identity: it was born to be useful and not to have its effectiveness measured by its ability to explain and interpret the historical objectives of education but rather by the fact that it could offer fundamental explanations for the present day (Warde, 1990, p. 9).

In the final part of this article, there will be a discussion of the effects that the subject-area is currently having on teacher-training. Here, there will be a short digression to outline the historical path the subject has followed and examine the extent to which it has been interwoven with different historical contexts that have characterised Brazil in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This includes two periods of dictatorship (1937-45/1964-85), a brief democratic period (1946-64) of great cultural and political ferment and finally, the period of democracy which began with the defeat of the military dictatorship in 1985.

Unlike the academic tradition of some European countries which is based on indissoluble ties between teaching and research, Brazilian universities such as the University of São Paulo, founded in 1934, were at first entirely based on teaching degree courses and had little scientific output. Thus, research studies in the History of Education only gathered momentum with the setting up of Post-Graduate Programs after 1965. As a result, there was a hiatus of more than 30 years between the founding of the first Brazilian universities and the effective production of academic research studies. This lapse in time can help explain why the teaching framework was given precedence over research in the History of Education.

Strictly speaking, it can be stated that since the 1970s, the curriculum for the teaching of the History of Education was structured on teacher-training courses that corresponded to those in secondary education – the well-known *Écoles Normales* (teacher-training colleges) of the French tradition – and the few degree courses in Pedagogical Studies at the Faculties of Social Sciences and Humanities of some of the larger universities (University of São Paulo and Federal University of Rio de Janeiro)<sup>1</sup>. In general terms, these curricula were based on works produced outside the university and concentrated on subjects of a religious (Catholic) nature. Later, with the advent of Post-Graduate Studies,

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<sup>1</sup> The first Courses of Pedagogy were created in 1939.

this bibliography which reflected a «Positivist» perspective began to be subject to radical criticism owing to the influence of «Structuralist Marxism» during the military dictatorship (1964-1985). Since then, the academic world has produced dissertations and doctoral theses which have systematically nurtured the bibliography and lent support to the teaching of the History of Education as a subject in teacher-training courses in Brazil.

With regard to how it has constituted a subject in the History of Education, its historiographical origins go back further to the Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute which was established in 1838 under the aegis of the monarchy. Adopting a Positivist view, the Institute valued the task to collect, archive and publish documents in order to preserve the historical and geographical memory of the country. The positivist influence on historiographical works on Brazilian education has been explored by several authors such as Dermeval Saviani. This writer believes that these works can be understood as a means of «constructing» and «deconstructing» the «memory» of Brazilian education which in its first stage was characterized by a compilation of laws and a celebration of the deeds of the Empire. In a similar analysis, Diana Vidal and Luciano Faria Filho state that the first stage of this historiographical production «moved in the same way in the realm of statistics (...) and supported a Positivist stance with regard to the writing of history» (Vidal, Faria, 2003, pp. 40-41). In support of the authors, it is worth noting «the stress that this inclination for a type of history that is close to documentary description but is completely lacking in legal sources, repeatedly lays on the division of items of fieldwork» (Vidal, Faria, 2003, p. 46). As Saviani says, this led to a concern with carrying out surveys, identifying sources and classification «especially from the 1970s onwards, with the introduction of graduate studies courses, and since the 1990s, with the setting up of research groups in the area of the history of education» (Saviani, 2008, p. 155).

The idea of the nation as conceived by the Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute in the 19<sup>th</sup> century entailed the espousal of Christianity as an essential value of Portuguese colonisation, together with an esteem shown for «whiteness», to the detriment of indigenous or black features in the historical composition of the Brazilian people.

The predominant religious component in the History of Education originated from the long period of Jesuit hegemony in Brazilian education (1549-1759), a period during which the Jesuits established the first schools in colonial Brazil. In carrying out their activities, to some extent these priests played the role of the State in education. This was because Portugal, which was the stronghold of European Catholicism, entrusted the Company of Jesus with the task of

evangelizing the indigenous people and setting up the first schools in the colony, which were regarded as essential for the creation of a Catholic nation.

The pedagogical supervision of the Company of Jesus was largely based on the establishment of schools to form administrative teams, unlike the pedagogical conception of the Protestant reformers who established a network of elementary schools so that everybody could read the Bible. Hence, from the beginning, Brazil lacked a tradition of primary schools and even when the country became independent from Portugal (1822), it did not create a national system of education for everybody. After independence, the ruling elite established the monarchy (1822-89) which preserved the structural trappings of the colonial past: landed estates, a monoculture and slavery. Against this background, schools were destined for the children of the white elite and landed estates and even after the end of slavery (1888) and the proclamation of the Republic (1889), the problem of educational exclusion did not alter very much in Brazil, although recent research has shown children from poor families and slaves did occasionally attend school. However, no special schools were built for them and no inclusive or compensatory policies were put into effect for the people who had been enslaved. In short, in contrast with many Western countries that had consolidated their schools in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so that they became «almost the centre of gravity of social life» (Cambi, 1999, p. 381), Brazil which was preeminently agrarian, rural and marked by three hundred years of slavery, entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a seriously backward educational system: in 1900 there was an illiteracy rate of 65.3% (among people over 15 years of age) (Romanelli, 1986, p. 64).

In 1932, in response to the fact that primary schools excluded most children (in particular blacks and poor whites), 26 intellectuals, inspired by the pedagogical theories of John Dewey, launched a Manifesto which claimed that the following principles should be enshrined in a unified school system: schools for every child from the age of seven to fifteen, State responsibility for full-time education, secular schooling, compulsory attendance and co-educational schools.

The Manifesto which was an expression of liberal pedagogical thinking, stated that «in the hierarchy of national problems, none is more important and serious than the problem of education» (Azevedo *et al.*, 1960, p. 109). By placing education at the forefront of national problems, the liberals of 1932 believed that education was an essential feature in constructing the nation. The movement they began, which was known as the New School, was the most important and influential in the history of education in Brazil in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was a rival to the doctrines of the Catholic Church (which was fearful of losing its hegemony in Brazilian education).

Basically, until this time, what was produced by the Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute served as a source of material for teacher-training courses where the History of Education had been introduced as a subject-area since the beginning of the republican regime. After this, following the influential principles of the «active school» as applied to primary school education, they set out to address pedagogical ideas. These principles had begun to be disseminated in Brazil through the Brazilian Association of Education which was set up in 1924 and became a theoretical and political landmark; this led to a series of debates and exciting ideas, culminating in the publication of the Manifesto in 1932. In fact, the 1920s were as outstanding and forward-looking in the history of Brazil as later, the 1980s would be.

With regard to the History of Education, this Manifesto (together with its critical view of the methods of traditional teaching which was authoritarian and centred on the figure of the teacher), began to form the syllabus of the curriculum from the 1940s onwards. However, its influence was much greater in the realm of ideas than in establishing a planned system. In her investigation into the content of the History of Education both in teacher-training colleges for primary courses and pedagogical courses<sup>2</sup>, Miriam Warde states that «the teaching of the subject was left to the responsibility of the teachers and had a pronounced religious character – at least, until the 1950s» (Warde, 1997, p. 94). Clarice Nunes also reached the same conclusion and stressed that:

the history of education as taught by primary and secondary school teachers had a doctrinaire intention and effect. The fact that it is continuing and being constantly updated shows the weight attached to the religious influence despite the trend towards secularisation by society and the State which began with the first republican government (Nunes, 1996, p. 70).

In view of this, since the publication of the Manifesto of the Pioneers of the New School in 1932, ideological debate has become entrenched between liberals and Catholics in the field of pedagogical ideas, particularly with regard to the secularization of Brazilian public schools.

In political terms, the country experienced a dictatorship for eight years (1937-45), which interrupted the debate that had begun in the 1920s. In the context leading up to the Cold War, Brazil returned to democracy (1945-64) and it was at this time that Paulo Freire developed his pedagogical theories which began to provide literacy to adults against a historical background where only a tiny minority of the public attended a school. It is worth remembering that in 1960, 39.35% of the Brazilian population remained illiterate and in Freire's

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<sup>2</sup> Secondary courses trained teachers for primary school and university degree courses to high school.



view, schools were elitist in both quantitative and qualitative respects since the booklets used for teaching literacy conveyed values and contained pictures that were completely at variance with the experience of most Brazilian people.

Freire attached importance to education in a society like Brazil that in his view was undergoing a transition from a closed to an open society. This transition from a rural to an urban-industrial society and from a closed society (i.e. characterised by a lack of democratic experience) to an open society, corresponded to the degrees of consciousness of the public. In his opinion, what was taking place in Brazil was a move from a «magic consciousness» which largely characterised the closed society in a rural environment to a «naive-transitive consciousness», and this was a result of urbanisation and industrialisation. However, the transition from the naive-transitive consciousness to critical awareness was different since it could not take place automatically but depended on educational work that was geared towards attaining this objective. He believed that it was only this work that could ensure that consciousness could be taken to a critical level. Hence in theoretical terms, Paulo Freire was more concerned with the levels of awareness of the public than with the structures of society. With regard to improving the literacy of adults, he turned to the process of making the «oppressed» conscious of their role in history. From a political standpoint, the importance of his ideas lies in their radical criticism of the Brazilian elite, which is embedded in the selfishness of its class and is both detached from and above the people. This critical and humanist view derives from a re-interpretation of Christianity in Latin America, the Liberation Theology and the choices available to the poor. Hence although Freire's ideas have close affinities to Marxism, his main stimulus was Christianity. However, he was regarded as subversive by the supporters of the 1964 military coup and his activities were abruptly interrupted and there was a delay in his ideas being disseminated in Brazil itself.

In 1970, Brazil had a population of 94,501,554 inhabitants and the rate of illiteracy was 33.1% (Romanelli, 1986, p. 64). Primary schools continued to be for the minority and secondary education was confined to the elite. In quantitative terms, there was an expansion of Brazilian public schools with the reforms of 1971 which extended compulsory education from four to eight years. This was an essential factor in ensuring that Brazil could become, in the military jargon of the time, «a great power»<sup>3</sup>. However, this expansion was not accompanied by the conditions necessary for learning and since then, the picture

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<sup>3</sup> The military forces inundated the country with slogans like «Brazil, the land of the future»; «This is a country that is forging ahead» and «Brazil, love it or leave it». The last of these was clearly aimed at left-wing militants who were in opposition to the dictatorship. According to the ideological belief of the military, loving Brazil meant not criticising anything and accepting the dictatorship itself. Those who were not satisfied should leave the country (Ferreira, Bittar, 2008, p. 343).



of public schools in Brazil has been one of dilapidated buildings, overcrowded classrooms, teaching separated into morning and afternoon sessions<sup>4</sup>, and low salaries for teachers. In addition, the leaders of the military dictatorship failed to solve the problem of illiteracy.

The debate centred on the educational scene in Brazil at the end of the military dictatorship when the new civilian government exerted an influence on the History of Education curriculum in teacher-training courses, and allowed a critical interpretation of education to become predominant. At the same time, the curriculum continued to attach importance to educational reforms. This was due to the fact that although democratic governments have introduced further new reforms in recent years, they have failed to fulfil their basic goals by providing universal education for a continuous period of eight years. Evidence for this is provided by government assessments which show that after eight years of compulsory schooling<sup>5</sup>, many Brazilian children leave school without an ability to employ their native language. In addition, secondary schools are far from being available to everyone, literacy is still a lost cause and the teaching profession has ceased to be as attractive and prestigious as it was up to the 1960s.

In reality, the history of Brazilian education from the issuing of the Manifesto in 1932 until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was characterised by a disparity between the debate and the formation of a national system of education. Thus it can be said that the unacknowledged but growing weakness of the public educational system throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was in striking contrast with the debates and clamorous ideological disputes that were constantly being heard in pedagogical quarters, or with the pressure on the State expressed in demands that education should be provided for everyone.

Until the advent of post-graduate studies in Brazil and its initial outcomes in the 1970s, the objectives of the History of Education were as follows: to extol the virtues of a Catholic education in Brazilian society, to highlight the educational facts and names of the past that were regarded as important and to record the rules and regulations of different governments. A factual and linear view of history has tended to predominate.

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<sup>4</sup> The separated sessions involved dividing lessons into four periods per day in the schools (morning, between the morning and evening, the evening, and at night) with the aim of ensuring that the physical space could be filled by more students. As a result, the students spent about three hours a day at school, a period which is completely insufficient for learning. Even after the dictatorship, several schools retained this system, mainly in the interior of the country but not only there.

<sup>5</sup> Until 1971, compulsory education was only for four years in Brazil. In 1971, the military dictatorship enacted a reform known as «Law No. 5.692», which increased compulsory education to eight years. However, even today, secondary education is not compulsory or attended by everyone in the country.

However, the curriculum of the History of Education and the approach it adopted, began to change in the 1980s under the influence of post-graduate studies. At the same time, the subject became more established as a result of the expansion of higher education and could be found in all the teacher-training courses that ranged from one to three terms in length<sup>6</sup>.

With regard to Master's and PhD courses, the data show that the History of Education is one of the most commonly found subject-areas in all the Post-Graduate educational programmes in Brazil. According to Macedo and Sousa, «the full benefits provided by areas such as educational policies, the history of education and the didactic/training features of the teachers, comprise a central triad of educational studies in Brazil» (Macedo, Sousa, 2010, p. 172).

Despite constant changes, the History of Education was not an object of conflict with other areas such as Educational Administration and Educational Supervision. However, this situation began to change after 2000. As a result, although the History of Education had never needed to justify its existence or its capacity to provide valid knowledge when compared with other subjects that are regarded as «more useful», currently the number of History of Education courses in the curriculum has been reduced from three to two six-monthly terms or even to a single academic term. This means that there has begun to be a disparity between the subject and research in the History of Education in Brazil.

### 3. The History of Education as a research field

As a research field, the History of Education derives from Education rather than History. This is worth noting because research into History was older and dates back to the renewal of Brazilian historiography in the 1920s, which until then had been Euro-centric and factual, as well as having a racist tinge owing to the long period of slavery in Brazil (1550-1888). Yet there is a strong reason for believing that research into Education did not originate in History since this area of knowledge attaches little importance to Education as an object of study.

In his analysis of the historiographical output in Brazil, Francisco Falcon noted that: «the almost complete lack of works on the History of Education as if this study and research into this area of history is not regarded as being competitive» (Falcon, 2006, p. 328). In reality, as an illustration of this assertion, of the 19 chapters of the work, *Domínios da história*, [Domains of history] compiled by a leading historian Ciro Flamarion Cardoso, none is devoted to the history of education (Ciro, Vainfas, 1997). In turn, Miriam Warde shows

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<sup>6</sup> Undergraduate courses in Brazil are divided into two terms or semesters in the academic year. The first term begins in February and ends in June and the second begins in August and ends in December.

that for the first time, the History of Education «is effectively drawing closer to and identifying with the cognitive processes that are involved in the specific field of History» (Warde, 1997, p. 96). However, the author does not make any data available to clarify «whether this movement of drawing together is a two-way street or in other words, if the area of History is becoming receptive to the inclusion of educational issues» (Warde, 1997, p. 96). On the basis of studies about writing dissertations and theses for History programs, Warde also states that this area devoted 4-5% of its attention to educational issues in the period 1970-94.

Research into the History of Education stems from two key events. The first of these was when in 1924, the liberal intellectuals set up the Brazilian Association of Education (ABE), which disseminated the pedagogical principles of John Dewey around the country. This movement of renewal exerted an influence on the partial educational reforms being carried out at that time and from the 1940s onwards, its ideas found their way into the curricula and teaching material of the History of Education. Several decades later, when research became established in Brazilian universities, this movement began to be one of the most widely studied areas in the History of Education. One of the explanations for this is that the demands of the 1932 Manifesto (for full-time State schools for every child between the age of seven and fifteen) have not been put into effect in the country.

The second event took place during the dictatorship (1937-1945), which set up the National Institute of Pedagogical Studies (INEP) in 1938. The research studies of INEP entailed conducting surveys of the data on educational realities which were still being given little attention. Since 1940, the Institute has begun to gather information about the experience of education that can be regarded as important for the country.

In effect, since 1930 the National State has begun to be strengthened in a process which Fernandes, the leading Brazilian sociologist, has described as a bourgeois revolution of an authoritarian character<sup>7</sup>. There have been a number of well-known investigative inquiries into the composition of the Brazilian population, school enrolment figures, rural education and the drop-out rate, as well as the expansion of schooling in the urban centres. In the opinion of some researchers, the INEP set in motion a new trend in Brazilian educational historiography. This was extended to current periods and, as pointed out earlier,

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<sup>7</sup> 1930 marked an important turning-point in the history of Brazil called the Revolution of 1930. This political breakthrough was characterised by the end of the dominance of the rural oligarchs of São Paulo and Minas Gerais in their power over the States who were replaced by members of what was called the «Vargas era». This was a period of 20 years under the rule of Getúlio Vargas, who introduced a nationalist model based on industrialisation. This national project had repercussions on society and from that time, a national system of education began to be established in Brazil.

in response to the requirements of the Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute: a documentary history, and descriptive information, particularly in the location of legislative sources (Saviani, 2008, p. 155).

From the 1950s onwards, research studies began to turn to sociology for a theoretical basis. Those which had an empirical and «functionalist» basis were underpinned by the theory of human capital, which conceived education in terms of economic development. They attracted attention at that time and in the 1990s began to influence research into education in Brazil although under a different name.

Strictly speaking, research into the History of Education had its origins in the 1950s at the University of São Paulo (USP), under the leadership of Laerte Ramos de Carvalho, within the syllabus of «History and the Philosophy of Education». The aim of this research, (which was based on primary documentary evidence and was to become a benchmark for future studies) was to form a comprehensive historical picture of the period from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This project led to some important work which became a benchmark for the area of education in general and revealed the potential value of the History of Education at a time when post-graduate studies were beginning to be established in Brazilian universities after 1965. According to Saviani, at this time «the History of Education was influenced by two interpretations: the sociological history governed by positivism of Fernando de Azevedo («A cultura brasileira», 1943) and the philosophical history» of Laerte Ramos de Carvalho (*As reformas pombalinas da instrução pública*, 1952) (Saviani, 2008, p. 158).

The introduction of post-graduate studies at the height of the military dictatorship (1964-1985) shows how capitalism was being modernised through authoritarian means; this was a peculiar feature of this dictatorship which included expansionist policies in the State system of higher education and provided incentives for research. This technocratic mode of thinking displayed its ideological beliefs in every sector, although by establishing post-graduate studies in universities, the military dictatorship was confronted by an opposing force. This is because there was a Marxist ideology within it which began to influence research by undertaking a critique of capitalism and regarded schools as being a part of the ideological apparatus of the system.

Marxism offered a new approach to Brazilian education and had a strong influence on idealistic trends which saw education as a redeeming force of society. Marxist studies became a benchmark too but there was a problem about their origins: they emerged against the background of a dictatorship and since schools were regarded by them as being simply the «reproductive apparatus» of the State, they began to be ignored as an object of research. This first research undertaking

on education in Brazil was heavily influenced by the ideas of Althusser, Bowles and Gintis and Bourdieu, which established a direct theoretical relationship between the State and schools. In their view, if the State was authoritarian, it follows that the schools must be too. Since schools were seen as a means of conveying the ideology of the dictatorship and had no chance of introducing changes, they began to be discredited. The setting up of a distinguished research team whose work was characterised by studies of education and who had an influence on the next generation, is one of the main factors that arose from the scientific field of that time. This is borne out by the testimony of Buffa: «It seemed that by showing us these things [the contradictions of society] historical materialism opened up our eyes, while at the same time, making us more skeptical» (Buffa, 2005, pp. 170-171). These researchers began to act as a reference-point in the field and were polarised between opposing approaches; however, the scepticism referred to by Buffa ended up by constraining this kind of interpretation, since in her view:

what predominated were studies that rather than carrying out research into schools, were more concerned with understanding the broader relationships between schools and the capitalist system. (...) The empirical data were rejected because they were considered to be «Positivist» (Buffa, 2001, p. 81).

However, by paying more attention to the contradictions of society and criticising the military dictatorship, while neglecting the schools themselves, these Marxist studies had the merit of releasing education from its «narrow pedagogical» concerns. From now on, schools began to be viewed in terms of their relationship with society.

### 3.1. *Research into the History of Education during the military dictatorship (1964-1985)*

Research into the History of Education began to be strengthened at exactly the time when there was a struggle against the military dictatorship, and stands out as a stimulating and fruitful period in the history of Brazil. This is because, even though the country had experienced a dictatorship which had overthrown an elected president, outlawed political parties, and persecuted, tortured or killed its opponents, this same climate of repression had led to the emergence of a large political movement opposed to the military regime. A broad spectrum of political opposition to the military dictatorship had been formed since 1974 which reached its apogee in the next decade. Two particular conflicts reflect the special features of this period of Brazilian republican history: the demand for the amnesty of political prisoners and the campaign for a direct vote to select the President of the Republic.

The struggle for democracy at the beginning of the 1980s took place in the streets and also in the academic world of historiographical research. This centred on educational experiences of resistance to the dictatorial regime and ushered in a series of studies that ensured that the History of Education could be a field of knowledge that was able to show how changes could occur at every stage of history and even among those subjugated by dictatorial regimes. In this way, the past began to be subjected to new interpretations and in addition, since research at universities was a recent phenomenon, almost all the questions discussed were unpublished in Brazilian educational historiography. The most important of these issues was perhaps the national system of education, together with its history and struggles for universal education and a greater degree of democracy in a system that was unequal and continues to have serious inequalities. This is more evident if account is taken of the words of Saviani, who believed that Brazil had entered the 21st century without having completed the task of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – that is, to make the entire population literate (Saviani, 2007).

In summary, at the end of the military dictatorship, all these questions of the past in Brazil came to the surface and from this time, there was a great sense of political and academic excitement that the History of Education was becoming the strongest component of the Fundamental Principles of Education in Brazil and superseding the Philosophy of Education and Sociology of Education. The three subject-areas are included in teacher-training courses and (with regard to the structuring of the syllabus in the academic world of Brazilian universities) are regarded as pedagogical courses in the Department of Education. A recent survey shows that in 2014, there were 1,640 pedagogical courses being run in Brazil. However, the same academic institution may offer classes at different times (daytime and at night). In view of this the number of classes has doubled, compared with the number of courses and reached 3,240; since the History of Education is a compulsory subject, it forms a part of the Curriculum in all these classes (Brasil, 2014).

During the transition to democracy in the 1980s, Marxism continued to exert an influence on Brazilian academic work. However, this influence derived from a different interpretation of Marxism which reached Brazil as a result of the first translations of the works of Antonio Gramsci by intellectuals linked to the Brazilian Communist Party at the end of the 1960s (Ferreira, 2012, p. 128). As soon as they became known in Brazil, the ideas of Gramsci exerted a considerable influence on the academic world, particularly in the Social Science courses and the area of Education where the Gramscian principles with regard to the State and hegemony proved to be a powerful means of understanding the course of history in Brazil. In addition, the importance attached by Gramsci to education (as a necessary terrain for establishing a new historical cohesive group



which could overcome capitalism) challenged the Althusserian interpretation which predominated among the Marxists. The influence of Italian Marxism was strengthened by the translation of the works of Mario Alighiero Manacorda in 1989. This represented a turning-point in the field of the History of Education in Brazil owing to the original way this author interpreted educational processes, the wealth of source material drawn on and above all, his explanatory system that viewed education as a possible means of social change. As well as this, Manacorda, (following in the footsteps of Gramscian thinking), carried out an original interpretation of the ideas of Marx in which he stressed the importance of the liberal-democratic tradition; this entailed giving it support while also seeking to overcome it by combating any kind of determinism (Manacorda, 2012).

Thus in the 1970s and 1980s Marxism was important in the study of the History of Education in Brazil, whether as the main criticism of the educational policies of the military dictatorship and the way schools were regarded as an ideological apparatus, or as a theory in which schools were understood to be a space for social change.

In summary, it can be stated that Marxism was a significant influence that had a notable degree of acceptance in the climate of resistance to the military dictatorship. However, with the change in the international scene following the disintegration of the Soviet Union – a factor which caused a crisis in Marxism – together with new policies that came into force in universities in the context of neo-liberalism, other tendencies of a relativist character, began to influence research into the History of Education in Brazil.

### *3.2. Current trends in the field of the History of Education in Brazil*

In theoretical terms, there was a renewal of educational historiography in Brazil in the 1990s; this occurred in the research field in general and gradually led to a belief that what had existed before was now being surpassed. From this viewpoint, all the previous movements which are generically classified as Positivism and Marxism, were now being replaced. In this decade, the Social and Human Sciences in Brazil underwent a period of crisis with regard to their paradigms and a large section of the intellectual world in these areas, expressed strong criticism of what was called «old interpretative systems», especially Marxism, which was criticised for having conducted a reductionist reading of schools (by means of economic determinism).

Hence the origins of the renewal in the field of the History of Education took place at the beginning of the 1990s when Marxism had been superseded



by the New History, a movement derived from the French Annals School<sup>8</sup>. The Annals School was founded in France in 1929 and claimed that it was possible to have «total history» and a «history-problem» and was thus opposed to the Positivist view which believed that history could not exist without documents. By seeking in history to discover what remains and not what has changed, the founders of this movement struck a decisive blow at the political dimension where the Muse of Clio had until then prevailed. One of the main historians from the first generation of this school, Braudel, explored this notion in his chief work, *The Mediterranean and the world of the Mediterranean*, in which in examining mankind, the sea and the environment, he writes a kind of history that is almost geography – that is a history without people. Thus, in his first volume Braudel wrote:

Let us leave the inland regions and go to the sea. There the maritime spaces, coastlines and islands will be a sequence of studies. These geographical configurations will determine the course of the voyage but the analysis will give priority to features that are strictly the same by making comparisons that arise from them. The systems will then appear to be more intelligible (Braudel, 1983, p. 121).

Braudel was accustomed to saying that the waves of the sea represent the surface of history and that the historian should seek to find his essential nature in deeper waters or rather, in areas that are not visible. However, historians who are critical of this viewpoint, believe that the search for a static history in the depths of the sea and the rejection of superficial waves as representing the apparent face of history, should not be regarded as being diametrically opposed, since in the process, (or rather, the things that are not episodic or visible) the key factors of their development can be regarded as being embodied in events. In other words, events are the unfolding of a process. In rejecting the political dimension and understanding it as only a «positivist» mode of conducting historical inquiry, these historians invoke «the silence of long duration». From the 1960s onwards, the new generation of the Annals School began to produce a historiography with the following characteristics: a continued denial of the political dimension, the domain of anthropology, and a denial of structural patterns in the historical process.

Running parallel with this influence, the new trends that began to exercise hegemony in the field of the History of Education in Brazil were opposed to interpretations of a «macro» character by becoming involved with the specific aspects of educational phenomena. This was positive in so far as it focused on schools and opened up a field for new areas and sources of research. However, the stress on the essentially monographic character of research meant that the

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<sup>8</sup> With regard to the waning influence of Marxism, see: Bittar, Ferreira (2009).

links with more general contexts were lost as a result of a concentration on specialised features. In theoretical terms, what followed was that the French generation of the 1960s reversed the concern with economic factors of the first generation of the Annals School, by moving from the cellar (structures) to the attic (super-structures), as defined in the analysis of Peter Burke (1997, p. 81). The obsession with the super-structural level led to a wide range of approaches such as «mentalities», everyday routine, cultural manifestations, the private life, and studies known as micro-history.

These new trends in Brazil, (Cultural History), coincided with the expansion of post-graduate studies, which began to require that research be conducted in very limited time periods (especially in Master's degree courses). This created the false idea that the study of a specific theme should not be accompanied by a more comprehensive explanation. In addition, the inclusion of approaches such as «mentalities» and «private life», led to a rejection of political factors and a downgrading of the category of change where a kind of static history predominated which destroyed the essence of history – that is, human activity.

However, it should be noted that parallel to the French influence, English historiography became widespread in Brazil, particularly through the works of Eric Hobsbawm and Edward Thompson. The latter had a greater influence on the historiography of education after his book in three volumes *The education of the English working-class* (Thompson, 1987), was translated in Brazil. This English historiography also addressed the cultural dimensions of history, but without rejecting political and economic factors. This contrasts with the French historiography which influenced the field of the History of Education in Brazil and was mainly concerned with criticising and rejecting the political dimension of history.

The new trend has broadened in the last two decades when political approaches have been practically abandoned, a phenomenon that has coincided with the expansion of post-graduate studies in Brazil since the 1990s. This expansion has led to an increase in historiographical output and helped strengthen the field of the History of Education. Incidentally, the statistics for scientific output in Brazil show that 1,244 studies were published on issues concerning the History of Education in Brazil in the period 1990-2008 (Masters and PhD Doctorates) (Brasil, 2012). The main areas covered were as follows: the education of infants and children, the education of black children, the teaching of reading and writing, school institutions, educational policies, the Curriculum, teacher-training, social practices and representations. The French influence was a striking feature of this research and this generally led to articles which appeared in specialist journals. One survey carried out by the Revista Brasileira de História

da Educação [Brazilian Review of the History of Education] (RBHE) showed the most commonly cited foreign authors in the articles published between 2001 and 2007 were in the following order: Roger Chartier, Pierre Bourdieu, Michael Foucault, Antonio Novoa, and André Chervel (Bittar, Silva, Hayashi, 2011).

Running parallel with this expansion and important renewal of research issues, important Brazilian historians began to issue a warning about the risk of adopting an acritical approach. This may lead to some progress but it means that research areas where no satisfactory understanding has been achieved, are being replaced with studies of «mentalities», everyday routines and private life.

In their view, when the Annals School began to combat factual history before the 2nd World War, France already had an established historiography with subjects and periods that had been very well studied. Felipe de Alencastro, for example, criticised the lack of important issues in Brazilian historiography; he discussed the fact that the New History had made advances in France which was a country that had previously established a 'Positivist' history that had been mapped out in detail and had effective history classes in secondary schools and universities that covered the whole history of the country (Alencastro, 1990, pp. 7-8).

From the same perspective, Ciro Flamarion Cardoso believes that these post-modern positions are permissible and stated that the notion that the time for global explanations has passed, is based on an assumption that everything is relative. In his view:

The effect of these new fashions was that the whole world – or almost the whole world – abandoned issues which had previously been regarded as important, for example, the discussion of modes of production in the colony and economic and social problems in general. I don't have anything against these issues in themselves (though sometimes I do with the way they are addressed). I think it is a pity to abandon them and treat them as taboo subjects (...). Issues that are thought to be important are simply abandoned as if they are of no interest to anyone and matters of debate which have not reached a logical conclusion are simply left to hang in the air and are never returned to again (Cardoso, 1995, p. 5).

Owing to policies in force with regard to post-graduate studies, in the first two decades of the 21st century, this trend has become more widespread with the reduction of the time-limits for completing Master's and Doctoral theses. As a result, there is unsuitable and insufficient graduate training, and the lack of an appropriate framework for carrying out the research such as, for example, disorganized archives.

In an analysis of the quality of historiographic productions in the academic world in Brazil, the historian Mello e Souza recently reflected that the loss of general history had been a grave error:

We are leaping over a [historical] stage and entering directly into the world of dissertations, for universities which require specialist articles. (...) This is leading to a crisis of paradigms where it is impossible to formulate general explanations and where a general phenomenon can only be understood by always resorting to a specialist item and the effects of micro-history and post-modernism. I think that an attempt should be made to overcome this phase and if possible to carry out monographic studies so long as they include general explanations (Souza, 2011, p. 14).

What this means in her opinion is that academic advances in Brazilian historiography are not ceasing to raise common questions such as the specialization of knowledge and the need for reflection on one's own productions.

#### 4. The history of Education in Brazil and its academic organization

The field of the History of Education in Brazil has been one of the most well organized since the end of the military dictatorship. This organisation, as well as the scientific productions that have accompanied it, have followed a set pattern which will be briefly explained in the next section.

Although the situation in Brazil is characterised by regional diversity (in economic, social, cultural and techno-scientific areas), since the 1950s, Brazil has been able to rely on State scientific agencies to formulate national policies for scientific and technological development and to fund innovative research and the training given to researchers. In 1951, the Federal Government set up the National Council of Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq)<sup>9</sup> and the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES)<sup>10</sup> with the aim of funding research in all areas of knowledge. CAPES was responsible for the training of researchers by means of grants for Master's and PhD courses and also (after the 1970s) for the organisation and assessment of Post-Graduate Programs. The CNPq was assigned the task of funding the research which was strictly speaking, carried out by means of projects, notably in the areas of the Natural and Exact Sciences and the setting up of large research laboratories. After the 1960s, State research agencies began to be formed with a view to furthering regional development. After the university reforms advocated by the military dictatorship in 1968, a slow and gradual process began of academic standardisation based on the indissoluble ties between teaching and research throughout the whole country. With this end in mind CAPES – with its standardised assessment procedures for the Post-Graduate Degree Courses and CNPq – with its financial schemes for various areas of knowledge – played a strategic role in the complex and contradictory process of standardising the

<sup>9</sup> National Council of Scientific Technological Development (CNPq).

<sup>10</sup> Brazilian Federal Agency for the Support of Higher Education (CAPES).

training of researchers and enabling knowledge to be produced throughout the whole country. In this way, the regional diversity which can be found in Brazil led to a wide range of studies but the pattern of research is being characterised by signs of uniformity as a result of the State funding policies.

Another national factor that has caused a degree of uniformity in the standard operations of the field has been the struggle for democracy in Brazil which has widely involved the universities, intellectuals and education in general. After the military dictatorship, the field of the History of Education in Brazil made great progress in terms of its academic organisation and gathered strength and prestige. This organisation began in 1984, when the History of Education Study Group was formed under the auspices of the National Association of Post-graduate Studies and Research in Education (ANPEd). More than a thousand participants from every sector of education took part in the annual meetings of ANPEd and each of them included a Study Group, the oldest and most established being the History of Education. Historians of Education from other countries are invited every year, as a necessary practice for an international cultural exchange of ideas and activities in the research field.

In the political ferment that characterised the 1980s, researchers of a Marxist persuasion founded the Research Study Group «History, Society and Education in Brazil» in 1986. Clearly this measure strengthened the History of Education, since in a short time, this Group had spread throughout Brazil.

In 1999, these two entities formed the basis of the Brazilian Society of the History of Education (SBHE) – which publishes the Review of the History of Education and holds bi-annual conferences with more than a thousand participants. This explains why the History of Education in Brazil is an open field with an interface with several other fields such as educational policymaking. In the light of this, the studies of researchers from almost every research field of education are included. These address questions from a historical perspective, although the participants may not be trained as educational historians<sup>11</sup> or have done a Master's degree or PhD in the History of Education.

As well as SBHE, there are research groups and regional associations of the History of Brazil throughout the whole country. Today the main cultural exchange takes place in two forums: the Ibero-American Congress of the History of Education in Latin America (CIHELA), founded in 1992, and the Luso-Brazilian Congress on the History of Education, founded in 1996. Brazilian researchers form the largest national group in these Congresses.

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<sup>11</sup> Despite the lack of precise data, it can be claimed that most professionals doing Graduate degree courses or research in the History of Education or teacher-training are pedagogical and not history graduates.

With the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE), the presence of Brazil has been increasing in recent years, a factor which can probably be ascribed to the government's «internationalization» policies and cultural exchange, mainly with English-speaking countries. Funding agencies such as CAPES, CNPq and FAPESP<sup>12</sup>, the most important in Brazil, have insisted on the need for this exchange since «internationalization» is currently the key objective.

## 5. Conclusion and future challenges

In a general way throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century the area of Brazilian education came to recognise the value of having the History of Education in the teacher-training curriculum. It has now been fully accepted in all the teacher-training curricula.

However, since the beginning of this century there has been a disparity between the discipline and research<sup>13</sup>. Although this has been continually gathering strength, the space allotted to the subject has been questioned in reforms that give priority to more practical teacher-training courses and the utilitarian value of the History of Education has been put in question.

At the same time, the academic departments in Brazilian universities have witnessed a dispute among their peers; this can be partly attributed to the new opportunities that have arisen to occupy key posts in the administrative sector, from directors of departments to rectors of universities. Moreover, as well as these university sectors, there are also posts in publishing committees of magazines, the supervision of Study Groups and the directorship of different entities. On the other hand, this path leads to the occupation of posts in the apparatus of the State itself. Together with this political context, the theoretical and thematic renewal which has been witnessed since the 1990s has given rise to new issues which in turn, have brought about successive curricular reforms in Brazilian universities.

In summary, there is a situation of conflict which has shaped what Pierre Bourdieu described as a dispute for hegemony within the scientific field in which other domains of knowledge seek to occupy the space of the History of Education under the pretext that they are also involved with historical matters. As a result, in the post-graduate departments and programmes, there has been a splintering of knowledge into different subject-areas and syllabic content that forms a part of the curriculum of the History of Education.

<sup>12</sup> Foundation for the Support of Research in the State of São Paulo (FAPESP).

<sup>13</sup> On the growth of academic production in the History of Brazilian Education, see: Hayashi, Ferreira, Bittar, Hayashi, Silva (2008, p. 198).

It is a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, although research into the History of Education was not noteworthy during the whole of the last century, it has been shaped as one of the strongest and most prestigious areas since 1980. For this reason, there has been a considerable growth in the amount of academic work that centres on the History of Education: research groups have been set up, associations have become institutionalised and there has been an increasing number of national and international events which is reflected in a significant increase in the number of publications. On the other hand, in recent decades, the country has experienced a climate of uncertainty since the very existence of the History of Education as a discipline has been put at risk.

This paradox raises questions and the need for profound reflection on the part of historians: what is the future of the History of Education as a disciplinary field? Will the History of Education merge with other subject-areas and in turn, enable a historical approach to be adopted to their objects of study? Will these historical approaches to all educational areas replace the specific features of the History of Education? If there is already a history of children, school materials, academic culture or reading, legislation, teaching staff, school subjects and the curriculum, what is the specific purpose of the History of Education? Finally, what is or should be the curriculum of the History of Education? In other words, if the History of Education has no definite objective, what can justify its existence as a discipline?

We will briefly list the following stages which can be regarded as the most important means of continuing to enhance our field of knowledge: 1. Strengthening the History of Education as a disciplinary field; 2. Reinforcing theory in research studies in the History of Education by taking account of tradition and the need for renewal in the fields of the Social Sciences, History and Education; 3. Recovering a vision of change and a desire for a historical synthesis, by combining several levels of reality with a short and long-term dialectic; 4. Showing respect in a practical way for theoretical plurality and togetherness among groups of researchers who have different theoretical standpoints.

To conclude, it should be underlined that to achieve a cohesive vision, the field is characterised by theoretical and thematic renewal and must face two key challenges: an academic exchange with English-speaking countries and the recognition of the value of the History of Education as a disciplinary field.



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