

# Models of Teacher Education and shifts in politics: a note on Brazil<sup>1</sup>

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The narrative aim of this chapter is to sketch the evolution of the models of teacher education in Brazil at different times – which were characterized by different politics. Thus the analytical aim of the chapter is to illustrate the relations between patterns of Brazilian teacher education and external and internal politics. There is nothing particularly subtle about the analysis, or the realities: the changes in politics were large and the impact on teacher education provision was typically dramatic, sometimes at the level of intentions and but often in practice, also. The story in other contexts, such as the former USSR or Nazi Germany or in the UK recently, is familiar and equally dramatic but in these countries the developments were peculiarly idiosyncratic and autarchic. Brazil is an interesting case in that the international (as well as the domestic) shifts in politics can be made visible in their relation to reforms of teacher training.

## **The Early Model of Training Teachers**

The early model was remarkably colonialist, in that it drew very directly on the experience of Portugal. Initially, in the eighteenth century, teachers in Portugal and in all its colonies were offered no formal training. Teachers were selected through examinations. The Portuguese 1772 Regulation of 6 November was crisp and definitive:

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I declare that the exams for teachers which will take place in Lisbon to be attended by the president; in his absence a member of parliament must be present, together with two examiners appointed by the president... In the overseas domains such exams will follow the same principles. (*Primitivo, 1936, p.24*)

This was not then merely a centralised model – it was a confident monopolistic metropolitan definition of a universal solution for problems of teacher training in an entire Empire. The solution in one sense highlights the colonising confidence of Europe in this period and, in another sense, the relative unimportance attached to teacher training. Certainly a solution, of a sort, was found.

However a subsequent shift in the external politics of Brazil produced another remarkable compression of political power into educational formations: the choice of the metropolitan model of a good educational system shifted from Portugal to France. The scenario began to develop at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with the transfer of the Portuguese Royal Family to Brazil. Paradoxically, France – the country which had produced disturbance in Europe and a shift in colonial relations across the globe – was taken as the example of good educational practice. Institutions of higher education were established on the Napoleonic model of the French *Grandes Écoles*. Under French influence, radical new principles started to frame discussions of education. It will be recalled that in France after the 1789 Revolution, arguments for a national system of education and the provision of normal schools under the responsibility of the State were put forward. In Brazil, following these principles, it was argued that primary education ought to be provided to all and ought to be secular (a policy which Napoleon, given his willingness to work with the Catholic Church in the provision of elementary education, had not adopted).

As in France, these principles for the expansion of education led to the need to provide institutions for the training of teachers. Thus, around the 1830s, efforts were made to create normal schools in the different provinces. The model reflected the cultural and political agenda of elites who were themselves influenced by European, particularly French, culture (Castro, 1983; Tanuri, 2000; Villela, 1992). Centralisation – as in the French model – was a powerful motif. Each province in the colony was given the power to legislate about public education but at the primary and secondary levels only. The central government was to be in charge of education at all levels in the capital and higher education in the whole country. This motif of centralisation, which reflected initial Portuguese assumptions and the subsequent example of France, continued to characterise a fairly permanent definition of the distribution of power in the educational system in Brazil. The system remained heavily centralised until a few years ago.

However even heavy centralisation is not enough to invalidate some of the principles of good comparative education as these were beginning to be defined in the late nineteenth century and in particular in Sir Michael Sadler's later and famous view, in 1900, that the world is not a garden from which educational snippets may be taken for

easy and successful transplantation: in Brazil the implementation of normal schools was not successful. It has become apparent how fragile the schools were. About twenty-five years before Sir Michael Sadler came up with his metaphor, the President of the Province of Paraná had pointed out in 1876 that Normal Schools are “...exotic plants: they are born and they die almost at the same day” (Primitivo, 1940, p.239). Nevertheless, what was emerging was a clear social location for teacher training which reflected the political principles of class formation in Brazil. Curriculum content was very simple: it was of primary school level, with only one subject devoted to teacher training. Teachers were badly paid and there were few of them. Preference was given to men (only at the end of the nineteenth century were women very gradually accepted into teacher education) and teaching was accorded little social prestige even in the late nineteenth century.

It took a new internal political agenda to revitalise teacher training – a process which overlapped with the end of the Imperial period and the beginning of the Republican period. The ideological, cultural and political debates and struggles, which led to this political shift, had produced new aspirations for nation building, in which education was increasingly seen as a fundamental instrument for social and economic change. This affected the institutionalisation of teacher education. Curriculum content was reformulated. Though there were regional variations, a typical curriculum structure for teacher education in a normal school at the end of Empire is shown below:

**Table I: Teacher Education curriculum structure**

Year	Subjects
1	Grammar and National Language Arithmetic French grammar and language Christian principles
2	Grammar and National Language Geometry French grammar and language
3	Geography and History Chemistry Didactics and methodology

Source: Tanuri, 2000, p.67.

With the foundation of the Republic, and during the next thirty years, different Brazilian states reformulated their normal schools following mainly the model implemented in São Paulo. No major changes took place, except for two innovations. First, under the influence of the philosophy of positivism, the teaching of sciences was introduced into the curriculum for teacher education. Second, although there was normally only one subject, called Pedagogy and Headship, which was directly

addressed to the pedagogical training of the teacher, other subject areas specifically aimed at those going into teaching took an increasing emphasis: for example, methods of observation, and learning methods.

The next major policy intent was signified by the (educational) Reform Law of 1892. In teacher education, two innovations were particularly relevant. The first was the institutionalisation of a dual track-system for the preparation of teachers: some normal schools, located at the lower secondary level, aimed at the training of primary school teachers; and other normal schools, located at the upper secondary level, were devoted to the training of teachers for secondary schools and even for the preparation of teachers for normal schools themselves. The second signifier of the intent to innovate was the creation of a Normal School at higher education level – again following the example of the French *École Normale Supérieure* (Tanuri, 2000). This model was clearly a vision of a particular future, but the class base of the educational system was already clear and the systems for preparation for the other professions was already powerful. The proposal was never implemented.

## **The Interwar Period**

However, the next layer of exposure to international ideas was indeed important in its effects. Brazil participated in the flurries of new optimism about the necessity for, and potentials of, good education that marked this period. Also Brazil was urbanising and as it did so its class base was changing – paradoxically highlighting the need to do something about rural education. There was clearly a political and social need for more attention to the provision of education and its expansion, preferably by using fresh ideas about teaching and learning.

After World War One, during the late 1920s and early 1930s, a series of reforms of teacher education took place in a number of states. Some state governments (Minas Gerais, for example) took the initiative to bring in missions of European educators and to send Brazilian teachers for study visits to the USA (mainly to Teacher's College, Columbia University, New York). A series of seminars, publications, and national debates on education were part of the so-called New School Movement. Academics who had been in close contact with John Dewey and were inspired by this philosophy discussed issues such as the kind of knowledge teachers should have, the role of the State in education, the universalisation of education, and the expansion of the public schools system (Cury, 1978; Lima, 1978; Mendes, 1986).

Part of this discussion included proposals for shifts in the role of teachers and new ways of educating them. There were claims for the revision of traditional patterns of teaching which were considered inflexible and divorced from children's developmental needs. Teaching methods were criticised for excessive verbalism and more active teaching methods were advocated. The debate included a concern for details, such as a practical approach to the teaching of sciences and mathematics.

Not surprisingly, this active and stimulating debate produced new models for teacher education which emerged in different states, especially in those which had distinguished comparative educationists and sociologists of education as Secretaries of Education or as Advisers to the government: persons such as Anísio Teixeira in Bahia, Mário Casassanta in Minas Gerais, Lourenço Filho in Ceará, and Fernando de Azevedo in the Federal District and in São Paulo. The interesting singularity was the creation of rural normal schools, aimed at reinforcing rural values and at keeping rural workers in rural areas. Clearly this in one sense was part of a democratising movement. But of course the sociological implication in the short term was that the class base of Brazilian education was not going to change quickly.

Although the new institutional structures of teacher education remained basically the same, there were innovations, with regional variations. Curriculum content, for example, was widened to include a range of new pedagogical and professional subjects: in addition to didactics, pedagogy, psychology, history, philosophy and sociology of education, there were biology, hygiene, drawing, crafts, and teaching practice for the different school subjects. However, a typical normal school curriculum (for primary school teachers as in Rio and in São Paulo) was still centred around the so-called pedagogical subjects, emphasising the 'sciences of education' (Tanuri, 2000; Villela, 1992). There were also two institutional innovations, one of which was parallel to the existing normal schools: the Institutes of Education. Curriculum content remained the same, i.e. centred on the pedagogical subjects. The other innovation was the creation of INEP (*Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos* – National Institute of Educational Research). INEP was originally intended to provide training courses for schools administrators, school headteachers and school inspectors. It gradually developed into a famous centre for educational research in the country and

recently INEP became the main institution for the evaluation of education in Brazil.

As a reflection of the development of the urban school system and its expansion there now developed courses of Pedagogy in the Faculties of Philosophy, Sciences and Languages in the University of São Paulo (USP) in 1938, and in the University of Brazil in 1939. These courses initially trained, at undergraduate level, the so-called specialists in education, i.e. school inspectors, school administrators, school pedagogical counsellors, and school supervisors. The courses also trained teachers for normal schools (in the didactics and foundations of education: psychology of education, philosophy of education, sociology of education). The Faculties also trained lower and upper secondary school teachers who were to teach specific subject areas such as the arts, biology, chemistry, physics, geography, history, languages, mathematics, music and sciences.

These educational innovations and new projects in teacher education were, however, framed within authoritarian educational laws especially under the Getúlio Vargas government. Educational legislation emphasised the power of the central, federal, government in the formulation of general guidelines for education which were to be implemented in individual states. Governmental policies reinforced the existing socio-economic power structure and had a direct impact on the social control of education (and on higher education particularly). In such a context, educational institutions had little autonomy. All State services were highly centralised, and all educational institutions were subject to legal control, including teaching certification (Tollini, 2002).

### **The Post-war Conservative Model**

This political control was accompanied by a *de facto* and subtle institutional confirmation of the class base of the educational system. In the early 1960s, after Law 4,024 of 1961, the dual-track system for normal schools was gradually replaced by a single one: primary school teachers were trained in normal schools, at the secondary level. But an emergent and different dual-track system was already being magnified: the Faculties of Philosophy, Sciences and Languages, founded in the 1930s, expanded considerably in the 1960s and in the 1970s. These Faculties of

Philosophy, Sciences and Languages become very popular because they permitted the expansion of higher education at low cost. They were also considered a good and reliable instrument for social and professional mobility of existing or potential members of the politically conservative middle classes (Figueiredo, 1987).

Within the non-university sector of teacher education there was confirmation of the domestic politics of class and teacher education stratification in 1971, with Law 5,692. Secondary education was divided up in different vocational streams which would train young people for the world of work. Thus, secretaries, laboratory technicians, and primary school teachers, for example, were trained in secondary schools. Through Law 5,692 teacher education became another vocational stream in secondary education; consequently it lost prestige and professional status. Even the Institutes of Education were abolished; as a result, teachers for normal schools and educational specialists were to be trained only in the courses of Pedagogy, located mainly in the Faculties of Education or in the Faculties of Philosophy, Sciences and Languages.

The stratification was clear: teachers for grades 1-4 were to be trained in secondary education (3 years minimum), although little change occurred in curriculum: with a common core of general training that included Portuguese, social sciences and sciences, teacher training centred around the so-called foundations of education (biology, psychology, sociology, history, and philosophy), school administration, and organisation and teaching practice. Teachers for grades 5-8 and for secondary education were to be trained at higher education level. Curriculum content remained the same.

Criticisms of the consequences of the new legislation for teacher education emerged. It was argued, for example, that normal schools lost their particular specificity and became merely another branch of the secondary school. Also central to the debate was the question of the kind of knowledge teachers were supposed to have (Santos, 2002).

This critical movement was part of a political struggle. The domestic stratification of teacher education was linked to the particular sources and politics of educational advice which the Brazilian government had sought overseas. As had happened with the University Reform of 1968, the criticisms of the 5,692 Law of 1971 originated in reactions against the economic and political ideology of the military government under the influence of American technical assistance.

After 1963, close relations between Latin American governments and the USA had developed, based mainly on geopolitics. The American Department of State through the United States International Development Agency (USAID) reformulated its policy in Latin American, particularly in education. Various agreements were signed and technical assistance from the USA increased. The human capital theory,

favoured and disseminated by international organisations, replaced the concepts of citizenship and equality, developed by previous liberal and populist political movements. Governmental policies and strategies were heavily based on planning, notably of higher education for the labour market (Figueiredo, 1987).

The criticisms of Law 5,692 and other major educational reforms in Brazil, and elsewhere in Latin America, emphasised the strong influence of USAID experts who favoured a specific model for economic and social development. Within this ideological frame, education was conceptualised as a tool for development and the schools were supposed to train the work force. The Brazilian military government had shifted to techno-bureaucratic solutions in all public policies.

Consequently, teachers were expected, in vocabulary familiar in English educational discourse right now, to be ‘competent’, that most chilling and limiting of visions. They were supposed to use a range of new techniques and new technologies in teaching, especially audiovisual technologies. The reorganisation of the Pedagogy Courses, initiated in the 1960s, broke any potential emancipatory versions of the ‘good’ knowledge of educators as this had been defined by the New School reformers. The reorganisation of the Pedagogy Courses emphasised training in the different specialised areas, i.e. school supervision, administration, inspection, and counselling (Silva, 1999; Santos, 2002). The educational profession became very fragmented and teacher training became de-professionalised. There was a loss of quality especially in the training of primary school teachers: teacher education was like any other stream in secondary education and with the expansion of courses, mainly on an evening shift model, teacher education was affected by a diffuse and unevenly educated intake of new students, who were seeking to change their existing jobs (as domestic helpers or factory workers) for white-collar work.

## **The Contemporary Debate**

These new patterns of teacher education soon became the centre of national debates in the 1980s and 1990s. These debates, coordinated nationally by the National Movement for the Reformulation of Teacher Training, were very important. They represented a social as well as a professional struggle. With the new kinds of recruits to the cohort of working teachers and with the new opportunities in a freshly democratised Brazil, there were new possibilities for effective protest and change. Overall, the context in which the new Brazilian Constitution was promulgated and Law 9,394 was passed was very favourable for educational reforms. In the early 1990s, education gained a new momentum. Diversified social movements tried to build and redefine social and political spaces. In addition to various professional



associations (teachers, academics, scientists, workers), other organisations emerged: shantytown movements, (urban and rural) land occupation movements, and consumer movements. Gradually these movements and professional associations gained political significance (Figueiredo, 2002).

Classic problems, however, remained. There was concern with the gradual loss of social prestige by teachers, and loss of professional identity. Very worrying were falling numbers of applicants mainly for primary school teaching and the ways in which intellectual training was becoming dissociated from some of the practical and craft knowledge needed in school contexts. Available bibliography was of poor quality.

But this time, in a new domestic political context, the debate was different. Everywhere there were arguments for reforms to be preceded by discussions about the re-definition of the role of teachers (Mello, 1984). Thus the national debate about teacher training at major conferences and in the organisations discussing graduate education (CUT) was informed by a strategic and political concern: to ask what teachers were doing in a socio-economic and political sense. The major principle that emerged emphasised the relationship of education with the less privileged social classes and the need to take this principle into reforms of teacher training. Since the 1980s, Courses of Pedagogy, throughout the country, have been changing in course structure and course content.

Paralleling these discussions about the new 'culture' of teacher education, since 1995, the educational system as a whole has gone through a series of changes. A new Law of Directives and Basis for National Education was approved in 1996, and Law 9,394 produced a major change in teacher education. By 2007 all normal schools ought to have been abolished. The present aspiration for teacher education is an all-graduate profession to be achieved by 2006, with the creation of Higher Education Institutes for Teacher Training (Aguilar, 1997).

What exists now in Brazil is a proliferation of new initiatives in teacher education courses provided by universities in partnership with the State Secretariats of Education or by the universities themselves. There are a variety of initiatives. For example, in the State of Paraná there is a huge programme to train a considerable number of teachers electronically and through video conferencing.

In such innovations, course design and curriculum content must follow guidelines from the National Council of Education and individual State Councils of Education. Thus although new partners such as the Secretariats of Education and the higher education institutions (single colleges or universities) are responsible for curriculum design, the curricula are subject to central surveillance and approval by the National Council of Education. Similarly, the National Council of Education approves the pedagogical subjects offered by the Faculties of Education or similar higher education institutions. Within in-service training courses, pedagogical subjects and teaching practice for elementary school subjects are compulsory. The study of school subjects (Portuguese, History, Geography, Mathematics and Sciences) is not legally compulsory but most programmes have made them compulsory in a practical sense.

Thus since the 1980s, there has been a new alertness to the politics of teacher education and an increasing interest in the sociological analysis of teacher training, within the frame of critical theory and theories of conflict. Central to the debates about teacher education is an awareness of the political nature of teacher's practices and the commitment of teachers to the poorer classes. In education, especially in universities with very strong programmes of graduate education, post-structuralism and post-modern theories (Foucault, Perrenoud, Derrida, Althusser, and Lacan) have been framing the academic production of books and articles and the theoretical approach of dissertations and theses. Educational research has emphasised issues such as gender (the feminisation of the teaching profession), class, race, how teachers' knowledge is created, the role of teachers as reflective practitioners, the power relationship between the State and education, the role of international agencies in educational projects (such as the large-scale educational projects in Brazil, in partnership with State Secretariats of Education). The World Bank concepts of equal rights have been an object of critical analysis, as has the priority given to in-service training if it is based on cost-benefit analysis. Anxieties have been expressed about ideas which suggest that the objective of teacher education is merely to produce technically competent teachers; that is to say in classroom management. Emphasis is now also given to strengthening teachers' subject knowledge and not merely to the provision of pedagogical knowledge and classroom control. However a partnership between educational research and school practices is yet to be established. Similarly, the extent to which these critical analyses of education (which

emphasise the political, sociological and cultural aspects of schooling) are having on educational policies is not very clear.

## **Conclusion**

Following Law 9,394, also known as the Darcy Ribeiro Law, by 2007, 768,000 primary and secondary teachers working in both municipal and state systems must have a higher education qualification. By 2007 all normal schools ought to have been abolished. The massive training programme for primary school teachers will certainly reach the targets. This in one sense is good news. It is also good news that the need to improve teacher education is at the centre of debates in education. However, Santos points out that:

There is a series of problems arising from this situation that will influence the prospects for improving teacher education system for the future in Brazil. These problems include linking improved performance to better salaries, reducing educational inequalities between rural and urban regions (by implementing experimental projects that combine work and study) and also making use of distance learning. Changing the structure of university courses for teacher training, even if this requires changing the structure of the university itself, is another problem. Establishing educational policies that are oriented more towards practical necessities, without losing sight of political, social, and cultural problems, is yet another issue. Finally, establishing a more productive partnership between educational theories, university research and the practical realities of teaching is also a key problem that needs solving. These are some of the challenges and prospects faced in teacher education in Brazil, which, despite the fact that they occur with great intensity and frequency here, are also part of the educational reality in most parts of the world (Santos, 2002, p.88).

What is not transparent are the procedures for quality control. This might impair the quality of education in the long term. We might be talking here of a neo-diploma disease particularly if we think of post-graduate training being offered in some universities. A number of institutions offering teacher training programmes are of a lesser status, with very little experience in research or of graduate education. This issue ought to be considered seriously by policy-makers and by academics. Overall then, Brazilian teacher education is at an interesting turning point. Its history is not necessarily a guide to its future.

Certainly Brazilian teacher education has some distinctive patterns and some new dangers:

- It has been affected by international influence (Portuguese, French, American). Currently a danger is that international influences stressing efficiency (such as international agency interventions or an excessive admiration for foreign models of ‘quality control’) will disturb its indigenous trajectory of reform;
- Teacher education in Brazil has been framed by some extreme domestic politics, notably in the period of the generals. Currently a danger is that the marked politicisation of educational studies will produce ‘correct criticism’ – and an inability to act.

Nevertheless, discursive space now exists in Brazil for a continuing debate about the future of teacher education, not least in relation to the socio-economic stratifications of Brazil and its emergent domestic politics. Brazil, with all its difficulties, is a country of open educational vision. This is probably preferable to the overconfident technocratic certainties about how to manage teacher quality (and university quality) which are so corrosive in countries such as England – which now needs a Freire of its own, a counter-vision. As Freire puts it:

When our task begins to become clear, we have to take charge of our praxis in a much clearer way. Then we discover the need to become more and more competent in order to do what we would like to do, to make what we would like to make. Along these lines, there is a Letter in which I discuss the qualities or the virtues of the progressive teacher. It is important to say that when I speak about qualities or virtues, I am not speaking about qualities we are born with. I am speaking about something which we make, we build by doing, by acting. I am sure that no one was born as she or he is; one becomes... Thus virtue means that I have to create quality by putting into practice the quality I would like to have (Freire, 1995, p.19).

At least the Brazilians are trying to formulate the questions. Unfortunately English policy makers for teacher education know the answers.

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