

History of education in Brazil: the construction of a knowledge field

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This article analyses the general characteristics of the construction of the field of history of education in Brazil. To do so, it highlights the existing historiography and aims to describe the process of institutionalisation of this knowledge field, which, in general terms, has been focused on the area of teacher training. Since the nineteenth century, however, it has also been possible to identify systematic historiographical efforts in Brazil that are not directly related to the school system, but rather to the teaching of and research into the history of education within Brazilian universities. The article addresses the organisation of the field, the ways in which it has been structured and the strategies of academic legitimisation employed to achieve this. These include the regular production of dissertations and doctoral theses, the publication of books and journals, academic events and the creation of research groups and scientific associations, through which research findings have found national and international circulation. This set of indicators creates conditions for an understanding of the expansion and reconfiguration of the field of history of education that began in the 1980s, as well as of the challenges this phenomenon presents to current historiography and teacher training in Brazil.

Keywords: education; Brazilian; history; twentieth century; educational historiography; social aspects of education; study and teaching

Introduction

Census and analysis of the intellectual output of any given knowledge field enables an understanding of its characteristics and an evaluation of its results. Viewed by Certeau¹ as the only means of making them accurate, this process of extracting the procedures practised by a science also reveals the processes carried out in the act of extraction itself – that is, the conditions that guide any statements made – and the conditions that then reorganise these statements to form a certain view of the “state of the art”. This point highlights the complexity of attempting to represent the territory of a recently reconfigured field of study (an attempt to which the authors are committed) – a complexity that only increases

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¹Michel de Certeau, *A escrita da história* (Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 1982).

when one combines the output of other researchers and their diverse theoretical foci.

From the Brazilian experience, it is possible to paint a scene in which we see polymorphous reflections emerging from investigations into the history of education. These can be seen, simultaneously, as both diagnosis and problem. In the light of earlier research reports we identified a range of operational procedures, document bases and specific traits, each of which are indicative of the conditions under which they were devised and conform to the writings and concepts of history present in the field.² The surveys and analyses produced enable neither conclusions nor generalised syntheses; they do, however, make visible the continuities and discontinuities in the intellectual history of the field, the peculiarities of individual research institutions and the various authors' affiliations in the course of their investigations. Besides these aspects, the very existence of these historiographical surveys, whose systematic organisation commenced during the 1990s and achieved conformity in the 2000s, represents an important moment in the development path of history of education in the country, because they questioned all previous output and became fundamental to the understanding of the field, stimulating new teaching and research projects and creating a set of conditions for the training of historians.

For the purposes of this article we engage with the historiography of Brazilian education produced to date. This field is predominantly linked to teacher training, though we have also identified narratives which, since at least the last quarter of the nineteenth century, have aimed to represent aspects of the history of education in Brazil that do not have direct links with education. Over the first half of the twentieth century, literature on the history of education was firmly embedded within programmes of teacher training. In the second half of the century, this training and editorial undertaking grew in stature, associated with the emergence of research and academic writing on the history of education in Brazilian universities which, from the end of the 1960s, gradually expanded as part of the national system of postgraduate study. Thereby, rigorous knowledge has been gathered regarding the history of institutions, ideas, policies and educational projects across multiple contexts. Within this wide time frame, we have attempted to identify the relationships established between research into and teaching of history of education, bearing in mind the process of specialisation of research projects developed within graduate programmes and the challenges raised by the inclusion of history of education as a discipline in teacher training courses at both high school and undergraduate level.

History of education and teacher training

In the context of teacher training, professional guidelines and directives have conditioned the formulation of policies and initial teacher training programmes

²In the scope of the Working Group in History of Education of ANPEd, cf. the set of works collected in José Gondra, ed., *Pesquisa em História da Educação no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: DP&A, 2005). The most recent work to which we had access was Diana Vidal's chapter, "Écrire l'histoire de l'éducation: Le champ et la carte (1880 2010)," in *Le Brésil territoire d'histoire: Historiographie du Brésil contemporain*, ed. Denis Rolland, Marie José Ferreira Santos, and Simele Rodrigues (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013), 201–214.

and their take-up and retention in the body of the profession, all anchored in and legitimised by the acceptance that there is a shortage of teachers and that they are generally poorly prepared. It is impossible to explore this process in detail here; instead, we have outlined some of the main points to show the internal and external complexities of this training network and to reflect upon what, why and how certain knowledge has been incorporated into training matrices, including a model shared by several other professions: that of “learning by doing”.

Throughout the history of the teaching profession in Brazil, modes of teacher training have taken four main formats: training in practice (teaching practice), secondary standard (normal school), undergraduate courses, and postgraduate courses. But rather than looking at these as a kind of line of progression, we take as our hypothesis coexistence of and competition between the modes. Dealing with the process of professionalisation is made especially complex by this variety of different professional training programmes and is further complicated by the tensions that exist within and between the various teacher training strata. Taking into account the quantity and quality of the available studies, the challenge consists of capturing and defining the variations, compromises and configurations of teacher training in Brazil at different times and in different contexts.

The strong links between the history of education, the concepts forged and the different models of training employed which are seen at the end of the 1920s offer us clues to understanding how this knowledge came to be a necessary element to the performance of the teaching profession. It could be said that history of education forms part of teacher training as a tool that should be able to provide a catalogue of examples and counterexamples concerning educational practice. It would be a history viewed as a repository of lessons, a kind of manual of pedagogic life (*historia magistra vitae est*), the contents of which would tend to adjust to different teaching and school models, rooted in certain perspectives of life in society. As to the question of whether these perspectives lead to useful or applicable knowledge, to best develop this it falls to us to question which repertoires and solutions teachers should learn/know. In this case it is useful to point out the existence of two great traditions that converged in the early days of defining this knowledge: first, history seen as the “daughter of philosophy”, or of a certain history of philosophy reduced to a history of pedagogical doctrines, of educational thought and of great educators, in which teachers would have access to a general reference system that would serve as a guide for their everyday actions; second, history as the “daughter of sociology”, using a way of thinking taken from the social sciences. This comprises a record of history of education models, systems, policies and legislation that is disseminated to future teachers, equipping them with knowledge of educational experiences that, within the doctrinaire tradition, would serve as markers or examples for pedagogic interventions. Evidence of these traditions and of the debate that they express can be found widely in documentation such as teaching programmes, manuals and educational journals, publications in the mainstream press, autobiographies, photographs, biographies and school notebooks. From the 1990s onward a significant historiography can be identified that questions these concepts in the writings on

history of education.³ Over the twentieth century a hybridisation of the two traditions can be observed, so that pluralistic forms of conceiving and teaching history have become fixed in the field. Currently, a tendency can be seen in the main Brazilian universities to aim to anchor the discipline in the examination of specific historical problems, supported by documentation and specialised bibliographies; however, there are no contemporaneous studies that permit them to establish this tendency in the methodologies and concepts of the discipline offered in high schools, even though the teacher training programme at this level brings together about 100 schools and more than 30,000 students in three years of full-time training in the state of Rio de Janeiro alone.

In what are referred to as normal school teaching programmes, created in Brazil from 1835, the initial objective was to prepare teachers to perform in primary schools, teaching reading, writing, mathematics, national history and Catholic doctrine. It was a formal structure that for many years ran alongside “learning by practising”.⁴

Initially high school and higher education teachers, selected by decree or specific public competitive examinations, were not submitted to initial training in education. The requirement for prior training for teachers changed significantly over time, seeing the incorporation of actions aimed at continuous professional development and at a vertical training model. Conferences, associations, journals and editorial projects can be linked to policies of continuous improvement of the body of the profession. Higher education courses had already taken responsibility for teacher training for secondary courses, including those in normal schools. This last requirement became subject to regulation in 1939, more than 100 years after the foundation of normal schools in Brazil, with the creation of colleges of philosophy, sciences and letters where pedagogy undergraduate courses were established.⁵

Currently there are more than 2000 pedagogy courses on offer in Brazil – about 20% maintained by the government and 80% by private institutions – enrolling a total of 199,799 students. In these courses knowledge of history of education is compulsory, although differentiated curricula exist as a result of general policies, guidelines and institutional traditions. In other undergraduate courses, history of

³We extracted the following pioneer works on systematisation of Brazilian education’s historiographical tendencies: Clarice Nunes, “A instrução pública e a primeira história sistematizada da educação brasileira,” *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, no. 93 (May 1995): 51–9; Clarice Nunes, “Ensino e historiografia da educação: Problematização de uma hipótese,” *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, no. 1 (January–April 1996): 67–79; M. M. C. de Carvalho, “A História da Educação no Brasil,” in M. M. C. de Carvalho, *A escola e a república e outros ensaios* (Bragança Paulista: EDUSF, 2003), 281–312; M. M. C. de Carvalho, “L’histoire de l’éducation au Brésil: Traditions historiographiques et processus de rénovation de la discipline,” *Paedagogica Historica* 36 (2000): 909–33; Mirian Jorge Warde and M. M. C. de Carvalho, “Política e cultura na produção da história da educação no Brasil,” *Contemporaneidade e Educação* 5, no. 7 (1st semester 2000): 9–33; Mirian Jorge Warde, “Questões teóricas e de método: A História da Educação nos marcos de uma história das disciplinas,” in *História e história da educação: o debate teórico metodológico atual*, 3rd ed., ed. Dermeval Saviani, José Claudinei Lombardi, and José Luis Sanfelice (Campinas, SP: Autores Associados: HISTEDBR, 2006).

⁴José Carlos Souza Araújo, Anamaria Gonçalves Bueno de Freitas, and Antônio de Pádua Carvalho Lopes, eds., *As Escolas Normais no Brasil do Império à República* (Campinas, SP: Alínea, 2008).

⁵C. S. Bissolli da Silva, *Curso de Pedagogia no Brasil: História e identidade* (Campinas: Autores Associados, 2003).

education appears in a sparse way, as compulsory or optional in some and absent as a specific discipline in others, although in some disciplines the historical perspective is present in relation to themes such as childhood, curriculum and literacy. When looking at all history courses – the distribution of which amounts to 46% public and 54% private sector, with a total of 13,178 students – history of education does not often appear, although educational themes are permeated by historical issues of politics, culture, economics or society.⁶

History of education and research

Similar to undergraduate level, history of education is also firmly fixed in postgraduate programmes of education, with a lesser incidence in history programmes or in other areas. This is reflected in the scientific associations, research groups, books and specialised journals around which educational historians organise themselves. In this set of teacher accreditations and academic output, the tradition of teaching and research is more intensely centred on the educational domain, although dialogues and hybrid objects are easily spotted in the academic offerings of some actors in the field.

Studies on the historiography of education in Brazil generally explore theses and dissertations,⁷ manuals of history of education,⁸ syllabi and programmes,⁹ journals and proceedings of specialised conferences¹⁰ and testimonies from historians of education. Such exercises give visibility to different aspects of the field that, taken together, show the links between the teaching of and research into history of education in Brazil, the professionalisation of the field of pedagogy and the process of teacher training.

As to the history of education as a field of investigation, the greatest increase in knowledge production stems from the organisation and expansion of the postgraduate national system, notwithstanding the evaluated production of studies, reports and surveys supported by the government and by agencies such as the Instituto Nacional

⁶The school census collects data about establishments, enrolments, teaching functions, movement and school performance: www.inep.gov.br (accessed September 5, 2014).

⁷Cf. Mirian Warde, “Brincando nos campos do senhor: Anotações para uma história da formação de professores e do ensino da História da Educação no Brasil,” in *O Ensino de História da Educação*, eds. Marta Maria Chagas Carvalho and Décio Gatti Jr (Vitória: EDUFES, 2011), 305–35; Luiz Carlos Barreira, “Ensino de História da Educação na Pós Graduação em Educação no Brasil, na década de 1980: Uma experiência revisitada,” in *O Ensino de História da Educação*, eds. Marta Maria Chagas Carvalho and Décio Gatti Jr (Vitória: EDUFES, 2011), 211–41.

⁸Carlos Eduardo Vieira, “A escrita da História da Educação no Brasil: formando professores através de noções de história,” in *História da educação na América Latina: Ensinar & escrever*, eds. José Gondra and José Cláudio Silva (Rio de Janeiro: EDUERJ, 2011), 83–113; José Gondra and José Cláudio S. Silva, “Textbooks in the History of Education: Notas para pensar as narrativas de Paul Monroe, Stephen Duggan e Afranio Peixoto,” *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos* 92, no. 232 (September–December 2011): 702–22; <http://rbep.inep.gov.br/index.php/RBEP/article/viewFile/1875/1743> (accessed September 5, 2014).

⁹Luciano Mendes Faria Filho and José Roberto Gomes Rodrigues, “A História da Educação programada: Uma aproximação da História da Educação ensinada nos cursos de Pedagogia em Belo Horizonte,” *Revista Brasileira de História da Educação*, 3, no. 2 [6], (July–December 2003): 159–75; <http://www.rbhe.sbhe.org.br/index.php/rbhe/article/view/221> (accessed September 5, 2014).

¹⁰Ana Maria de Oliveira Galvão, Dislane Zerbinatti Moraes, and José Gonçalves Gondra, “Difusão, apropriação e produção do saber histórico,” *Revista Brasileira de História da Educação* 8, no. 1 [16] (January–April 2008): 171–234; <http://www.rbhe.sbhe.org.br/index.php/rbhe/article/view/113> (accessed September 5, 2014).

de Estudos Pedagógicos (INEP, The National Institute for Pedagogic Studies) and the Centro Brasileiro de Pesquisas Educacionais (CBPE, Brazilian Centre for Educational Research). As far as education is concerned, the first graduate courses were organised at the Pontifícias Universidades Católicaas in Rio de Janeiro (1966) and in São Paulo (1969). From the 1980s, a major expansion occurred, both in public and in private education. Currently, Brazil has 3337 graduate programmes.¹¹ In education there are 148 programmes (210 courses), and in history 71 (104 courses). Furthermore, the expansion of the national postgraduate system coincided with the end of the civil–military dictatorship in Brazil (1964–1985), a moment in time that triggered the revitalisation of educators in scientific communities, unions and other similar associations, together with a review of the administrative apparatus that had arisen from national policies during the dictatorship. From within this broad movement of change the creation of the Associação Nacional de Pós-graduação em Pesquisa em Educação (ANPEd, The National Postgraduate Association for Research in Education) and the creation within it of the History of Education Working Group, followed by the establishment of other research groups and associations nationwide, must be highlighted. In 1999, the Sociedade Brasileira de História da Educação (SBHE, Brazilian History of Education Society) was created; since then, it has mounted ever more significant national conferences and developed a publishing policy resulting in a journal and two book series.¹² It has also broadened international relations with Portuguese and Ibero-American research communities, and extended its scope through regular participation at the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE).

In January 2014, education gained 62 doctorate courses, 122 academic masters courses and 26 professional masters courses, registering the presence of researchers of history of education in more than 60% of these programmes both in specific research groups in history and wider cross-thematic investigations in the field.¹³ The regular academic output, from about 90 education programmes, has generated a significant number of academic results, the full appreciation of which becomes increasingly difficult to follow and systematise.

In terms of dissemination, there have been a number of important publications in specialised journals of history of education,¹⁴ along with a number of publications

¹¹The 3,337 graduate programmes total 5,082 courses, made up of 2,903 masters degrees, 1,792 doctorates and 397 professional masters degrees. The graduate courses currently have 56,890 permanent professors and 1.5 million articles, books and technical productions have been produced. To have an idea of the impact of the graduate system, according to official data, between 2002 and 2011, the number of those achieving a masters degree increased by 75.2% (from 24,444 to 42,830) and the number achieving a doctorate increased by some 77.2% (from 6894 to 12,217). See Pedro Matos, “Resultados da Avaliação da Capes revelam que pós graduação teve crescimento de 23% no triênio,” December 10, 2013, http://www.capes.gov.br/36_noticias/6689_resultados_da_avaliacao_da_capes_revelam_que (accessed September 5, 2014).

¹²Cf. “Sociedade Brasileira de História da Educação, 1999 2014,” www.sbhe.org.br (accessed September 5, 2014).

¹³Cf. “Capes,” http://www.capes.gov.br/avaliacao/dados_do_snpq/cursos_recomendados_reconhecidos (accessed September 5, 2014).

¹⁴“Revista História da Educação,” <http://seer.ufrgs.br/asphe> (accessed September 5, 2014); “Revista Brasileira de História da Educação,” <http://www.rbhe.sbhe.org.br/index.php/rbhe> (accessed September 5, 2014); “Cadernos de História da Educação,” <http://www.seer.ufu.br/index.php/che/> (accessed September 5, 2014); “Revista Histedbr On Line,” <http://www.fe.uниcamp.br/revistas/ged/histedbr/index> (accessed September 5, 2014).

in academic periodicals in the field of education, such as the *Revista Brasileira de Educação* and the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos*.

These seem to be consistent indicators of the current state of history of education in Brazil. These indicators depict a situation that remains a long way from fulfilling the present demand for these qualifications, especially in terms of public schools. Considering just the discipline of history of education, questions remain regarding how to fulfil the demand for high school, undergraduate and postgraduate teacher training programmes, especially considering the lack of studies and of systematic information regarding the profile of the profession and the institutions that currently produce and disseminate historical knowledge.

Based on the available information about graduate programmes, it is clear that teachers and researchers of history of education are a hybrid group, in terms of gender, age and training. They are professionals whose specialisation arose from diverse undergraduate origins: pedagogy, history, psychology, physical education, literature, biology, philosophy, law and theology. They arrived at history of education through personal experience and through professional experience in basic education, some in normal schools. There are also a number that came to the field through experience in the teaching of history of education on undergraduate courses. Still others became involved during graduate training in education, or in history and other social sciences.

We find a heterogeneous community, with different degrees and nuances of participation: one group dedicated exclusively to teaching (high school and higher education) and another operating in the junction between teaching and research, whose intention is to challenge the conventions that aim to control this process. It is a field that seeks to organise itself autonomously but in continuous dialogue with other knowledge fields, as demonstrated by the appropriations and diverse theoretical and methodological choices observed in the intellectual output of Brazilian education historians.

Final considerations

In summary, this essay continues a reflective process regarding the “state of the art” of the historiography of Brazilian education over the past three decades, defining key markers regarding themes of study, journals in the field, explored sources, social theories and preferred methodologies at different moments in the field’s intellectual history of the field. In this sense, analysis of the history of history of education in Brazil meets two main objectives: to contribute to the enhancement of memory and identity processes in the field and to carry out a critique of the knowledge through the analysis of work procedures, objectives, places and conditions in which the historiography of Brazilian education has been produced.

The history of teaching and research in history of education in Brazil attests to how different senses of the field have marked the ways in which teachers and researchers approach the subject. From textbooks to theses and academic articles, from essayists to specialists, from history of pedagogy to history of education, a rich and multifaceted picture has been produced, of which this attempt at synthesis or extraction can be seen as an expression.

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