



Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill: a cross-border intellectual in the education of the blind¹

Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill: uma intelectual transfronteiriça na educação dos cegos

Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill: una intelectual transfronteriza en la educación de ciegos

Fernanda Luísa de Miranda Cardoso

Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense Darcy Ribeiro (Brasil)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5075-7509>

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/4285586505085027>

fernandaluisa@gmail.com

Silvia Alicia Martínez

Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense Darcy Ribeiro (Brasil)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9612-6924>

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/5294209683122265>

silvia-martinez@hotmail.com

Abstract

This paper aims to revisit the actions of the blind Brazilian female teacher, Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill, in her activism and protagonism for the education of the blind and people with impaired vision. It strives to, go beyond a restrictive philanthropic perspective, especially in relation to her contributions to the implementation of public policies and the diffusion and transmission of cultural practices. The historical sources consulted allow Nowill to be recognised as an intellectual creator and mediator and highlight her central position in the promotion of knowledge circulation about and for the education of the blind; in the training of technical professionals and teachers; in the production of cultural objects; in translation of material about or for the blind into Portuguese and/or Braille; and by her capacity to influence national public arenas and her impact on the international associative movement of the blind, “dissolving” borders.

Keywords: Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill. Education of the blind. Transnational History. Special Education. Intellectuals.

¹ Supported by National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). English version by John Marr Ditty. E-mail: john_ditty@hotmail.com.

Resumo

Este estudo objetiva retomar as ações da professora brasileira cega, Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill, em seu ativismo e protagonismo pela educação dos cegos e das pessoas com visão “subnormal”, para além da perspectiva restritiva da filantropia, principalmente em relação às suas contribuições para a implantação de políticas públicas e para a difusão e transmissão de práticas culturais. As fontes históricas consultadas permitem reconhecer Nowill como uma intelectual criadora e mediadora tendo em vista a sua posição central na promoção da circulação do conhecimento sobre e para a educação dos cegos; na formação de profissionais técnicos e professores; na produção de objetos culturais; na tradução de publicações para o português e/ou para o braille de conteúdos sobre ou para os cegos; na sua capacidade de influência no espaço público nacional e na sua repercussão no movimento associativo internacional dos cegos, diluindo fronteiras.

Palavras-chave: Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill. Educação dos Cegos. Educação Especial. História Transnacional. Intelectuais.

Resumen

Este estudio tiene por objetivo conocer las acciones de la profesora brasileña ciega, Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill, en su activismo y protagonismo en el área de la educación de ciegos y de las personas con baja visión, más allá de una perspectiva restrictiva a la filantropía, especialmente en relación a sus contribuciones en la implementación de políticas públicas y en la difusión y transmisión de prácticas culturales. Las fuentes históricas consultadas permiten reconocer a Nowill como una intelectual creadora y mediadora, considerando su posición central en la promoción de circulación de conocimientos sobre y para la educación de ciegos; en la formación de profesionales técnicos y profesores; en la producción de objetos culturales; traducción de publicaciones para portugués y/o braille y contenidos sobre o para ciegos; así como su capacidad para influenciar en el espacio público nacional y su impacto en el movimiento asociativo internacional de ciegos, diluyendo fronteras.

Palabras-clave: Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill. Educación de los ciegos. Historia Transnacional. Educación Especial. Intelectuales.

Introduction

The motive of this study² has resulted from the historiography of education's silencing or omission of the work of a blind Brazilian female teacher who developed and engaged in diverse productions, actions, campaigns, movements, and institutional representations in public and private spaces, in both the Brazilian and international contexts, in favor of the education and full rights of the blind. Her name is Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill³. An investigation conducted by the authors at the Capes⁴ Journal Portal, Google Scholar, and the principal Brazilian journals in the scientific fields of the History of Education and Special Education (CARDOSO; MARTÍNEZ, 2022) revealed a limited number of scientific publications dedicated to in-depth study of her evolution and professional endeavors related to one of the central themes of her career: the education of the blind.

With respect to a review of the journalistic press, however, the majority of material published and identified with Dorina feature the philanthropic nature of her activities, characterizing her either as an important and meritorious person or one who has overcome great adversity as a blind woman, as in the examples: "The admirable Dorina, a blind woman who can see" (CORREIO PAULISTANO, 1945, p. 19, *our translation*); "A golden beam of light in the darkness" (CORREIO PAULISTANO, 1945, p. 19, *our translation*); "A figure of singular exceptional importance, due to the fact that she lost her sight, of only seventeen years of age, in a radiant moment of her existence when she brilliantly concluded her junior high school course" (JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS, 1947b, p. 2, *our translation*); "Friend of the blind" (DIÁRIO DA NOITE, 1979, p. 4, *our translation*); in addition to being featured in fundraising tea parties and social events. The reports that presented her work within the field of education typically upheld Dorina as an example of one who has overcome adversity.

Yet, at the end of the day, and setting aside her philanthropic efforts, who is Dorina? What are her contributions with respect to the development of political and cultural practices concerning the education of the blind? Based on these questions, the present study aims to reframe Dorina's endeavors within the context of her activism⁵ and protagonism in favor of education for the blind, not merely restricting itself to a philanthropic perspective while investigating her role as an intellectual creator and mediator. Dorina's action dissolved frontiers, extending from São Paulo throughout all of Brazil and, in this multi-directional way, toward a global context.

² This work presents the preliminary results of a broader set of doctoral research carried out since 2019 by the *Programa de Pós-Graduação em Políticas Sociais* of the Darcy Ribeiro North Fluminense State University (PPGPS/UENF) on the education of the blind from an analytical perspective within Transnational History.

³ Name adopted after her marriage in 1950. Her maiden name was Dorina Monteiro de Gouvêa.

⁴ CAPES (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior*) is a Brazilian foundation linked to the Ministry of Education that acts on the expansion and consolidation of *stricto sensu* graduate studies in Brazil. CAPES Journal Portal is an online archive of scientific information that gathers and provides full journals; references and abstracts of master's thesis and doctoral dissertations, audiovisual content, patent content, technical regulations; and various content such as books, reports, yearbooks, and manuals. Available at: <https://www.periodicos-capes.gov.br.ezl.periodicos.capes.gov.br/>.

⁵ Dorina has been recognized for her efforts for other social rights, besides those of education, such as the prevention of blindness, the hiring of the blind, and the participation in plebiscites of the blind and, to use a term common at the time, those with low vision. The term "low vision" has been maintained due to the historical context of this text.

Analytical and methodological aspects

The fields of Cultural History, Sociology, and Anthropology have a research tradition that has prioritized the study of “Intellectual” protagonists, with male figures generally featured most prominently as geniuses of their specialities and who are characterized as having made significant contributions towards the formation of the so-called erudite culture or original aspects with regard to the creation or production of cultural goods. According to Sirinelli (1998), the intellectual can be classified among cultural creators and mediators: “the first category belongs to those who participate in artistic and literary works or the development of knowledge, while the second comprises those who contribute to the spread and circulation of these works and knowledge sets” (p. 261, *our translation*). Gomes and Hansen (2017) emphasize that not every cultural mediator is an intellectual mediator. The authors assert that the intellectual mediator is a historical subject, but one generally unrecognized as such, due to being a disseminator, a common person exclusively or occasionally involved in the production of cultural goods, the handing over of knowledge and values to a wide-ranging public, all while at the junction of a pedagogical and political dimension.

It is worth noting that scientists have considered the cultural actions of a mediator/disseminator simpler, easier, more repetitive, and requiring a “lower” level of knowledge, a situation which has accentuated a hierarchy among intellectuals. However, Sirinelli (1998) called attention to the fact that the elites of cultural mediation possess the power of influence. Thus, while the dissemination of knowledge has no less value than the production of knowledge, the two activities possess an interdependent relationship (SIRINELLI, 1998). In addition, it should be emphasized that academic training is not necessarily a requirement for being an intellectual and that the cultural practices and coverage developed should be guided by the same scientific criteria and ethics required for scientific production (GOMES; HANSEN, 2017, GOMES 2020). With regard to the History of Brazilian Education specifically, Xavier (2017, p. 473) warns that universalist perspectives regarding the concept of “intellectual” can be encountered, while asserting the necessity to reflect and analyze the “functions that [educators] perform during their professional trajectories, [...] the institutional, social, political, cultural places they occupy, [...] and] the contribution of their efforts” (*our translation*).

A sexist and racist society, such as Brazil’s, enhances barriers against the identification, recognition, and appreciation of women and Blacks as intellectuals (GOMES, 2020). At the same time, an ableist society⁶, will also encounter difficulty in recognizing people with disabilities as intellectuals. The present study recognizes Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill as a creative and mediatory intellectual. This identification relates to a series of actions for and about the education of the blind, favored by their strategic position and their commitment to the production of cultural objects and the circulation of knowledge, mainly through the positions they held. It is also due to her commitment to the translation of

⁶ “Ableism” is society’s conception of people with disabilities as somehow unequal, less apt, or incapable of leading their own lives. According to Campbell (2001, 44), ableism is defined as: ‘a network of beliefs, processes, and practices producing a particular type of understanding of oneself and one’s body (body standard), projecting a typical standard of the species that is, therefore, essential and fully human. The disability for an ableist is a diminished state for a human being’ (*our translation*). Fiona Kumari Campbell asserts that “ableism for people who have disabilities is akin to racism for those descended from Africans or sexism for women, and it is linked to the production of power” (DIAS, 2014, p. 5, *our translation*).

publications into Portuguese and/or Braille⁷, as well as her influence and the promotion of debate within public, private, national, and international spaces, reaching a wide audience, including non-specialized ones, in political and pedagogical dimensions linked to groups and social and support networks. Furthermore, Dorina was involved with the training of professionals, educators, and technicians working in the fields of education and the rehabilitation of the blind. As a blind woman, Dorina was a creative and mediatory intellectual promoting issues related to the blind and people with “low vision” – a category to which she belonged. Alves (2019) contends that creation and mediation are treated by Sirinelli as complementary aspects and not as opposite or exclusionary ones and there may be a shift “from primarily mediator to engaged actor and vice versa” (p. 48, *our translation*).

Aspects of Transnational History (RABELO; VIDAL, 2020; VERA; FUCHS, 2021) emerged with investigations into the professional trajectory of Dorina Nowill. Her endeavors were not limited to the city or state of São Paulo, extending to other states and the international stage, and thus went beyond a unidirectional flow between the center and the periphery into a transnational one. The period with the greatest concentration of activity promoting the education of blind people occurred between 1940 and 1980. This study uses critical analysis and is of a historical and documental nature with diverse sources such as correspondence (letters and telegrams), institutional documents (ordinances and memoranda), and periodicals (Government Gazettes - *Diários Oficiais da União* and *Diários Oficiais do estado de São Paulo*-, newspapers, and magazines). As it was located in American collections, a portion of these sources was written in English. Some sources contain registers stating that the original version was written in braille, as some kinds of correspondence were exchanged between blind individuals.

The Brazilian collections consulted were the *Centro de Memória Dorina Nowill* (São Paulo) and the *Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira da Biblioteca Nacional*. The United States digital collection the Helen Keller Archive, linked to the American Foundation for the Blind (New York) was also consulted. Digital archives called “non-present” should not be seen as a refutation of conventional ones, but as a means of recovery, preservation, and expansion of access to documents of a complementary and not substitutive nature. They aid in overcoming the barriers between research conducted in the countries of the center and the periphery, and, by “deterritorializing the collection” (CASTRO, 2017), expand access to a greater number of researchers and foster interaction among distant research institutions. In addition to the sources cited above, the study also made use of the autobiography of Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill, an audiobook recorded by the author on sixty-six cassette tapes, portions of which were transcribed, resulting in a printed book entitled “...*E eu venci assim mesmo – Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill*” (NOWILL, 1996).

Who was Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill?

Dorina was a Brazilian from São Paulo, a blind person, educator, specialist in issues related to the education of the blind, and activist. One year after completing high school, Dorina was stricken with a hemorrhage of the eyes that caused her to lose vision in 1936 at the age of 17. She learned braille (1939) at the *Instituto de Cegos Padre Chico*⁸. The first book she read in

⁷ Braille is a tactile system of reading and writing for people with impaired vision whose name honors Louis Braille, the system’s inventor. The *Comissão Brasileira do Braille* recommends the use of the spelling “braille” when referring to the braille system, although the Portuguese spelling cited by the *Vocabulário Ortográfico da Língua Portuguesa da Academia Brasileira de Letras* is “braille”. The authors of this work have opted for the spelling “braille” throughout the text.

⁸ Vincentian philanthropic institution, specialized in the education of the blind, founded in 1928 in the city of São Paulo.

braille, and introduced her to the braille system, was Helen Keller's *Histoire de ma vie*, written in French. During this period Dorina received and learned to use her first braille slate⁹.

During the 1940s, through contact with Regina Pirajá¹⁰, Dorina was introduced to the principal at the *Escola Normal Caetano de Campos*¹¹, Carolina Ribeiro, who invited Dorina to attend the school as an unenrolled student. Dorina's first demand within the context of the social integration of blind people was for her own benefit. It was a letter written in Braille to the Minister of Education and Culture, Gustavo Capanema, requesting her certificate of conclusion about the educational period before high school¹². As no specific law existed at the time, this certificate was issued by decree, and allowed Dorina to take the entrance exam for the Normal School and become the first blind student in São Paulo to receive a diploma in a regular public course dedicated to the training of teachers. "It was during this period that I established the foundations for all of the work that I would later develop. This was when everything began," Dorina wrote (NOWILL, 1996, p. 21, *our translation*). While studying to be a teacher, and still unknown to the public and devoid of social prestige, her opinion about the teaching and educational context for the blind was registered in a São Paulo newspaper:

Many people believe teaching a blind person merely involves getting to know the raised dots of Braille. This, however, is simply a great misconception. Without careful and extensive psychological and pedagogic training teaching objectives will never be reached. [...] This is my viewpoint as a student. I am not yet a competent teacher who can make such a judgement, and I also think that one should not criticize without making some kind of contribution. Yet being aware of these matters, and having visited our best institutions for the blind, I have concluded that, for the time being, due to various circumstances - it is still not possible to carry out in Brazil what is carried out with excellent results in Argentina, France, and in the United States, where there are much more specialized teachers, equipment, and many more resources (CORREIO PAULISTANO, 1945, p.19, *our translation*).

Perrot (1998, p. 108) asserts that education has paved the way for women to achieve the status of intellectuals, and that Normal Schools were the first "universities for women"¹³. In this way, the knowledge and experiences Dorina gained from the Normal School gave her access to spaces where she could obtain intellectual training, i.e., a "university." One of her experiences with other normal students as an intern helped lead to the creation of the section for blind children of the Children's Library within São Paulo's municipal Department of

⁹ A braille slate is an instrument used for writing in braille in which holes are made with the stylus, normally made of wood, with a needle at the tip marking the points of the system. Due to shortages caused by the First World War, it was difficult to acquire a slate and stylus in Brazil, and there were few books written in Braille. Most of those available had originated in Europe, most notably in France (NOWILL, 1996).

¹⁰ Dean at the *Escola Normal Caetano de Campos*.

¹¹ The *Escola Normal Caetano de Campos* was a Normal School – a kind of institution created to train high school graduates to be teachers by educating them in the norms of pedagogy and curriculum.

¹² On the advice of Carolina Ribeiro, Dorina had sent her solicitation to the Ministry of Education when his wife, Maria Capanema, was visiting the Normal School.

¹³ Although the approach outlined by Perrot (1998) was created for the French context, the notion of the Normal School as a "university for women" also applied to the Brazilian context. As an example, see the research performed by Fraga (2017), which analyzes the intellectual, social, and professional trajectory of female educators who graduated from the Normal School to become teachers or technicians in Education, forming a significant part of the public functionaries in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. This research also documented the written intellectual production of these individuals from 1920 to 1960.

Culture. The section was inaugurated in 1946 under the immediate direction of Lenira Fracarolli, as well as the director of the Municipal Department of Culture, Mário de Andrade, and offered blind children books in Braille, music, and recreational activities¹⁴. Renamed after the writer Monteiro Lobato, the library was recognized as Brazil's first public initiative to offer specialized services for blind people. In 1947, to honor her, the blind section received Dorina's name (FRACAROLLI, n.d.¹⁵; JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS, 1947b).

Dorina also contributed to a campaign stimulating volunteers to transcribe books and spelling books for children and adults by hand in order to organize a library. The first copies were made in the offices of the Brazilian Red Cross by volunteers of this organization as well as students of the *Instituto Caetano de Campos*. This material later formed a portion of the initial archives of the *Fundação para o Livro do Cego do Brasil* (FLCB), an institution created in 1946, through the combined efforts of Dorina and Adelaide Reis de Magalhães, with the objectives of transcribing books to Braille and promoting educational activities and events. As Dorina said, "the desperate desire for books is great, as books for educating the blind are in very short supply" [...] "As I was blind, I closely identified with the need to transform things so that blind people could get educated, learn, and study" (NOWILL, 2010, p. 185, *our translation*).

Adelaide Reis de Magalhães was the president of this foundation from 1946 to 1951. For her part, Dorina became the president (1951- 2000) after returning from a period of studies in the United States of America, a trip that will be discussed later in this text. Later, the FLCB broadened its activities with programs designed to rehabilitate the "visually deficient"¹⁶, advise parents; offer a mobile library, offer professional training for blind people, train teachers, and make knowledge and practical information available for the education and rehabilitation of the blind through courses and events. The FLCB's initiatives served to establish a network of support and international cooperation. This institution was later renamed the *Fundação Dorina Nowill para Cegos*, or the Dorina Nowill Foundation for the Blind (1990).

After receiving her diploma from the *Escola Normal Caetano de Campos*, Dorina began her career as a primary teacher at the *Instituto de Cegos Padre Chico*. She also participated in a variety of special education training courses, particularly those focused on the education of the blind, educational psychology, blindness prevention, social work, and legislation. Once she received a leave of absence from her teaching duties at the *Instituto de Cegos Padre Chico*, together with her friend Neith Moura¹⁷ and Regina Pirajá, Dorina participated in a special project designed for professionals working with blind people in Brazil in order to embark on a pedagogic trip. Grants were provided by the U.S. State Department and the American Foundation for the Blind¹⁸, through the mediation of the Institute of International Education of New York and the *União Cultural Brasil-Estados*

¹⁴ These works were coordinated by Anita Amoroso Barros, a member of Dorina's normal school study group.

¹⁵ This document deals with the goals and development of children's libraries by the São Paulo Municipal Department of Culture, located in the library referenced above.

¹⁶ "Visually deficient" was the usual term used in Brazil during that period for referring to blind or visually impaired people (currently called people with low vision). These terms have been maintained in the text due to their historical context.

¹⁷ Dorina considered Neith Moura "her eyes," as she accompanied Dorina wherever she went and dictated the raised dots of Braille in normal school lessons.

¹⁸ The American Foundation for the Blind is a non-profit organization founded in 1921 in New York. It took part in the production of publications for teachers and other professionals dedicated to the blind or those with low vision. It also worked to provide educational and legal resources for the visually impaired to help them achieve independent and productive lives. They included audiobooks, products offering technological assistance, braille writers, and magnifying glasses.

Unidos. A scholarship was created for academic study at the Teachers College (TC) of Columbia University, in New York (USA) from May, 1946 to July of 1947, considered an epicenter of the internationalization and legitimization of educational affairs.

Since the 1920s and 1930s Brazilian educators had already been sent for specialization at the Teachers College, financed by Brazilian state governments and private foundations in the US. They included Anísio Teixeira, Ignácia Guimarães, and Noemy Silveira Rudolfer. Sent by Francisco Campos, Benedicta Valladares Ribeiro, Lúcia Schimidt Monteiro de Castro¹⁹, Amélia de Castro Monteiro, and Alda Lodi received specialized training at the TC (1927-1929) with the goal of working at the *Escola de Aperfeiçoamento de Belo Horizonte*, in Minas Gerais State, the workplace of the Russian educator and psychologist Helena Antipoff linked to the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute (Geneva, Switzerland) after receiving an invitation from Francisco Campos, the Secretary of Education and Public Health of the State of Minas Gerais. After the establishment of the International Institute at the TC (1923), the number of international students at the institution increased (WARDE, 2016; WARDE, ROCHA, 2018). The Teachers College was part of a network of organizations, most notably New Education - the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute, including the International Bureau of Education of Geneva; New Education Fellowship (known in Latin America as the *Ligue Internationale pour l'Éducation Nouvelle*) and the Institute of Education of the University College London - which promoted activities and programs fostering, at times collaboration, at times competition, as well as educational internationalism (WARDE, 2016; HOFSTETTER, 2017; RABELO; VIDAL, 2020; CARDOSO; MARTÍNEZ, 2021).

Another grant Dorina received was for a summer study program at the Michigan State Normal School, partially supported by the *União Cultural Brasil – Estados Unidos* (THE RECORD, 1946; JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS, 1947a; SÃO PAULO, 1952; NOWILL, 1996). Dorina's farewell, attended by friends, students, and representatives of institutions for the blind, took place at the airport and the União Cultural Brasil-Estados Unidos. The press reported that: "Yesterday three teachers from São Paulo selected for study grants took off for the USA," stating that "along with Dorina, they form a true working group dedicated to the blind, and whose unity should be maintained for a successful study trip" (DIÁRIO DA NOITE, 1946, p. 10, *our translation*).

Speaking to reporters at her departure, Dorina emphasized the need and her commitment for the promotion of expanded cultural opportunities for blind people which would result from knowledge obtained during the specialization course:

Our farewell is different, because it represents a message of hope. We will return with the obligation to transmit to all blind people all the results of efforts spent to dominate the means that can contribute to enhanced cultural opportunity. Blind people must continue to have the freedom to act. They are, as I have always said, and only because I believe it needs to be said, people like any other, who deserve to live the life common to all humans [...] creatures that are neither wretched nor geniuses, [...] but who need the opportunities and means to obtain their education (DIÁRIO DA NOITE, 1946, p. 8, 10, *our translation*).

Dorina also participated in various internships and events carried out by public and private institutions dedicated to the education and health of blind people. She observed the full-time education of visually impaired children in regular schools (called mainstream schools) through organizations such as the State Commission for the Blind (New Jersey), Perkins Institute for the

¹⁹ Later known by her married name, Lúcia Casasanta.

Blind²⁰ (Boston, Massachusetts), New York Institute for the Blind, Overbrook School for the Blind (Philadelphia), Canadian Institute for the Blind, and New York Guild for the Jewish Blind. During this period, when not in class or performing internship duties, Dorina participated in the World Congress of the Council for Exceptional Children, held in Canada (NOWILL, 1996). Her pedagogic trip to the USA and involvement with courses and internships marked the beginning of Dorina's ongoing specialized training and professionalization within the field of special education, most notably, the education of the blind. These activities helped enhance career path opportunities, including in the public sector and allow access to networks of sociability and support and to transnational campaigns working for the rights of the visually impaired.

In this context, in addition to Europe, the USA was considered not only a reference for the progress, civilization, democracy, and pedagogic and scientific modernity of Brazilian education (CARDOSO, 2015; WARDE, 2016), but one specifically related to the education of blind people. The course Dorina took at the Teachers College provided a basis for the *Curso de Especialização em Ensino de Cegos* of the *Instituto Caetano de Campos*. While still a student in the normal course, Dorina had organized a group of eight fellow students²¹ who developed a method for teaching blind children based on pedagogic experience gained at the *Instituto de Cegos Padre Chico*. As a result, she participated in and contributed to the organization of a high school Experimental Course for the Specialization of Teachers for the Teaching of the Blind (1945), whose first class, in which she participated, was formally recognized by the Secretary of Education of São Paulo and licensed for instruction in regular schools, a first in Latin America, according to Dorina (NOWILL, 1996).

As soon as she returned from the USA, the course began to be offered at the *Instituto de Educação Caetano de Campos* (IECC)²² as a regular specialization course (1948), and was, in Dorina's words, "a first step, a real, concrete, and objective one towards making the process of educating the blind an integral part of Brazilian education itself" (NOWILL, 1996, p. 26, *our translation*). The course was initially coordinated by teacher Zuleika de Barros Martins Ferreira (1948-1955), making use of contributions and orientation provided by Dorina, who later assumed the coordination of the course (1955-1966) upon Zuleika's retirement.²³ At the same time, Dorina was also a member of the teaching staff, teaching the course on Braille as an IECC Education Technician, a post she held beginning in 1947. With Dorina's orientation, the course adapted a curricular model similar to that of the Teachers College. Noemy Silveira Rudolfer, a renowned teacher in the field of Educational Psychology with training at the T.C., participated in the course by providing lectures (MARQUES, 2021). While an educational technician at the IECC, Dorina taught the courses "Special Methodology for the teaching of the blind" and "Psychological effects of blindness".

Dorina's knowledge and experience from the USA allowed her to balance issues related to both the theory and practices of socially integrating blind people²⁴, and this directly influenced the development of her thinking and the trajectory of her professional endeavors. She was thus an influencer and intermediary during the creation of the first Special Service for the Integrated Education of the Blind in regular schools at the São Paulo Secretariat of Education. In addition, she was involved with the creation of the first production facility for equipment used in blind and

²⁰ Founded in 1829, Perkins is the oldest school for the blind in the USA.

²¹ Neith Moura, Dayse de Almeida Malpighi, Cecília Ticianelli, Therezinha Fleury de Oliveira, Anita Amoroso Lopes de Barros, Layris Bittencourt de Carvalho, and Thereza Lopes Ablas.

²² In 1947, the *Escola Caetano de Campos* became the *Instituto Caetano de Campos*.

²³ For more on the course of Specialization in the Teaching of the Blind, see Marques (2021).

²⁴ According to Olívia Pereira (1983), social integration was a complex phenomenon. Beyond maintaining exceptional students in regular classes (mainstream schools), a discussion that achieved prominence in Europe and the USA during the 1960s and 1970s, it questioned the medical monopoly and strong tendency toward institutionalization. It defended a more human school system, rights instead of charity, and the participation of the visually impaired in decisions through transdisciplinary working groups.

visually impaired people's personal and professional lives, teacher and education specialist training, initiatives designed to arouse the interest of society and public authorities with respect to the importance of combating and preventing blindness, and the development of Braille Classes and Educational Service for the blind and deaf (SÃO PAULO, 1976; 2003).

Endeavors promoting the prevention of blindness and the rehabilitation and education of the visually impaired

After returning from the USA (1947), Dorina acted with the FLCB in the creation of an ongoing initiative, the Campaign for the Prevention of Blindness. Dorina and the FLCB were active in the Ophthalmological Clinic, the *Escola Paulista de Medicina*²⁵; o *Centro de Estudos de Oftalmologia*, and the *Centro Acadêmico Pereira Barreto*. The objective was the dissemination of instructions designed to aid in the preservation and treatment of healthy and affected eyes, as well as offering free clinical services. In addition to other articles in smaller magazines and newspapers, the *Diário da Noite* newspaper (1947) reported on these initiatives taking place in schools, parishes, cultural associations, and worker's unions (DIÁRIO DA NOITE, 1947).

While the president of the *Fundação para o Livro do Cego do Brasil* (Foundation for Books for Brazil's Blind), Dorina inaugurated the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind within this institution in 1962. The Education Minister, Darcy Ribeiro (1962-1963)²⁶, was present, as was the Governor of São Paulo State, Cardinal Dom Carlos Carmelo de Vasconcelos Motta, and the Secretary of Education for São Paulo State, Euvaldo de Oliveira Melo. On the occasion Darcy Ribeiro typed the first letters of a spelling primer in Braille, symbolically initiating the material's printed production (CORREIO PAULISTANO, 1962, p. 3). It was during this period that Dorina also took on a leadership role in the National Campaign for the Education of the Blind, hosted by the Ministry of Education and Culture (CNEC/MEC), which offered financing and technical guidance to that Rehabilitation Center.

Later, the Rehabilitation Center for low vision people (1974) was created, a private initiative launched by a society with Dorina (coordinator), Jurema Lucy Ventura (visual rehabilitation counselor), and Armando Arruda Novais (medical ophthalmologist), working to offer training services through the use of optic instruments, medical assistance, pedagogic guidance, specialized staff training, human sciences and technical field research designed for the rehabilitation and personal, professional, and cultural enhancement of the visually impaired, and courses for the dissemination of research and experiences. To help achieve these ends, some of the professionals took part in internships at the *Light House*, New York, USA (SÃO PAULO, 1974; NOWILL, 1996).

Engagement in processes producing cultural goods

Dorina's involvement in the production of cultural goods designed to disseminate knowledge and values within the society at large, bearing pedagogical and political dimensions, is marked by the inauguration of the Braille Press in the FLCB, where the magazines *Revelo* and *Revelinho* were produced. While the former was created in 1950 with the objective of transcribing into Braille articles published in magazines and newspapers throughout Brazil and from other collections, the latter was created for blind children and was

²⁵ Currently linked to the *Universidade Federal de São Paulo*.

²⁶ The same year, anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro founded the *Universidade de Brasília* (UnB) (1962), which he helped idealize along with educator Anísio Teixeira.

oriented by the *Editora Melhoramentos*²⁷ with the collaboration of writer Francisco Marins. All the materials needed for the Press, including the press itself and specific paper, was donated by the American Foundation for Overseas Blind in conjunction with the Kellogg Foundation (1948). The Braille Press then produced books for Brazil and other Lusophone countries (REVISTA DA SEMANA, 1949; NOWILL, 1996).

The FLCB also produced the professional magazine *Lente*, dedicated to teachers, ophthalmologists, and other professionals, inaugurated in 1957. Printed in ink, and in Braille during a certain period, most of the articles printed in the magazine were translations from the American magazine *The New Outlook for the Blind*, of the American Foundation for the Blind. Dorina was responsible for each issue of the magazine's opening article. In 1971, Nowill participated in the formation and became a member of the Association of Ibero-American Publishers (Colombia), and was elected its president that year, and re-elected in 1973. In 1972, the FLCB launched a production center of so-called "speaking books" (recorded in audio) and a mobile library that sent and lent books for the blind throughout the country.

Due to a delay when returning from a trip, Dorina did not arrive in time for the inauguration, which was attended by two major public authorities: the Minister of Education and Culture, Jarbas Passarinho, and the Mayor of São Paulo, Paulo Maluf, the latter of which, according to Dorina, slated funding for the project. She publicly thanked the two men, stating that she did so "free of interest, simply showing the fact that through them much was achieved" (NOWILL, 1996, p. 134, *our translation*). Because she was the director of the National Campaign for the Education of the Blind (1961-1973), the Minister of Education at this time was Dorina's immediate superior.

Dorina wrote that investments in books in Braille were essential, for "education, reading, and counseling make up the most important avenues by which blind people can attain integration" (CORREIO BRAZILIENSE, 1980, p. 6, *our translation*). During the 1980s, two investments took place that enhanced the FLCB's productive capacity. One was the inauguration of the Electronic Braille Press (1980), attended by João Figueiredo, the President of Brazil (1979-1985) and Paulo Maluf, Governor of the State of São Paulo (1979-1982). Dorina thanked the two for their attendance that day, stating that "municipal, state, and federal funding [...] contribute significantly to the institution" (CORREIO BRAZILIENSE, 1980, p. 6, *our translation*). Dorina's influence within political affairs was apparent, as was the intertwined relationship of private and public planning with respect to the trajectory of Brazilian special education.

The other investment was the inauguration of a computerized system for printing braille (1984), reported by the press at the time as something unprecedented in the country, which made it possible to reduce the printing of a book in Braille from 60 to 45 days. "Professor João Antônio Zuffo, of the Polytechnical School at USP²⁸ developed the interface, which transformed the alphabet into Braille characters and activated a matrix printer," tripling the capacity to produce metal matrices at the time (JORNAL DO BRASIL, 1984a, p. 6, *our translation*). The "speaking books," which were initially recorded on cassette tapes, began to be produced with CDs in 2002, while in 2008 the Daisy Accessible Digital Book (Livro Digital Acessível Daisy), the international format of accessible reading, was launched.

²⁷ The *Editora Melhoramentos* was known for publishing Brazilian pedagogic collections and translations, such as the works of Claparède and Durkheim, those of Dewey, and those of Ferrière e Kilpatrick, translated by Lourenço Filho, Anísio Teixeira, and Noemi Silveira, respectively (VIDAL, RABELO, 2019, p. 215, 216).

²⁸ With financial support from the *Financiadora de Estudos e Projetos* (Finep), of the *Serviço Federal de Processamento de Dados* (Serpro), and in collaboration with Prológica, the entity that donated the equipment (JORNAL DO BRASIL, 1984b).

Protagonism and role in the circulation and dissemination of knowledge

“Dear Mr. Boulter, this is to let you know that we have already given the first steps to prepare Miss Keller’s visit to Brazil” (NOWILL, 1952). Dorina thus began a letter to Boulter, Field Director of the American Foundation for the Blind, informing him that she had sent a document to the Itamaraty Palace²⁹, in Rio de Janeiro, requesting the Brazilian Government to consider Helen Keller’s visit an official visit to the country.

Helen Keller³⁰, an American, was a blind and deaf social activist, suffragist, pacifist, feminist, writer, world conference member, honorary member of various scientific societies and philanthropic organizations, and a recognized activist for the social well-being of blind and deaf people. She was also a counselor in the international relations of the American Foundation for the Blind (1924-1968), the same institution that provided Dorina with a grant for her studies and with which she would later form partnerships.

Dorina had met Keller in 1945 while a student in New York. Dorina wrote, “[Keller] put her fingers over my lips in order to understand my name and where I was from. She repeated very clearly ‘Brazil’, and added: ‘I have a dream: visiting Brazil and South America.’ This sentence stayed with me, and I felt at the time that I would do everything I could to make her dream a reality” (NOWILL, 1996, p. 38, *our translation*). Nine years later Keller wrote about this meeting with Dorina and mentioning a trip to Latin America in an essay for the magazine *The New Outlook for the Blind*. “I had met her years before in the United States at a meeting of *Home Teachers*³¹, but had never dreamed what a harvest of friendship and service would sprout from our casual interview” (KELLER, 1954, p. 134). In 1953 Brazil welcomed Helen Keller for an official visit. Dorina assisted Keller during her travels in Latin America, helping her participate in conferences and meetings, visit institutions specialized in education and rehabilitation in the states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, in the of which Keller was accompanied and followed an agenda coordinated by Nowill³².

After her visit to Brazil, Helen Keller continued her mission to Latin America in Peru where she received a telegram from Eric Boulter, the Field Director of the American Foundation for the Blind, with the news received from Dorina Nowill telling Keller she had been decorated by the Brazilian Government with the Order of the Southern Cross (BOULTER, 1953). Even before Keller’s trip to Brazil, the Brazilian press had started calling Dorina as the “Brazilian Helen Keller” (JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS, 1947b, p. 2).

That same year (1953), a state law in São Paulo (L. 2.287/1953) established Braille Classes³³ in pre-primary, primary, secondary, and professional courses in the state, and Dorina had collaborated in both the elaboration and evaluation of this law while it was still a Law Project. The Braille Classes had already been implemented on an experimental basis since 1950 at the *Instituto Caetano de Campos*, and teachers Zuleika and Dorina had worked

²⁹ The Itamaraty Palace, in Rio de Janeiro, was the headquarters of the country’s Ministry of Foreign Relations at the time.

³⁰ Helen Keller graduated in Philosophy at Radcliffe University and, at the recommendation of Alexander Graham Bell, was educated by a tutor named Anne Sullivan, a graduate of the Perkins School for the Blind (Boston, USA). After Sullivan’s death, Keller began to use the assistance of Polly Thompson, her interpreter, with whom she traveled to Brazil. Keller was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953.

³¹ A home teaching modality for children with disabilities.

³² One of the main events was a meeting with the *Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo* which helped stimulate the eventual creation of a Guidance and Professional Placement Service for the Blind at the SENAI (National Service of Industrial Apprenticeship) (GIL, 2012).

³³ “Article 3 - Students of the Braille Classes will attend regular classes of their respective courses, with materials whose matery does not require vision. Sole Paragraph - In the subjects in which learning cannot take place according to the letter of this law, students of the Braille Classes will receive assistance and special guidance from those responsible for these classes.” Available at: <https://www.al.sp.gov.br>. Retrieved 03 Nov. 2020, *our translation*.

to make them into law. The year was ripe for doing so, as Carolina Ribeiro was the Secretary of Education in the State of São Paulo (MARQUES, 2021).

This law was noteworthy for being quite advanced in terms of promoting integration while reducing segregation. It is clear that Carolina Ribeiro was an important part of a support network for Dorina, one that had been active since her posting as the director of the *Escola Normal Caetano de Campos*. Later, partnerships were established between the Educational Business Secretary of the State and the FLCB for the coordination of implementing the Braille Classes and organization of specialized teaching and educational school services for the blind and vision impaired (MAZZOTA, 2011). Two partnerships between the FLCB and the Education Secretary of the state of São Paulo are particularly noteworthy. One was signed in 1949, creating a department of education for the blind; the other was signed by Dorina in 1960 and designated the FLCB as “a special institution for the stimulus, planning, and guidance for the network of Education school units and those offering specialized instruction for the blind and those with amblyopia” (l. 5989/1960 - first clause), designed to execute the referenced law creating Braille Classes.

Dorina participated in many conferences and congresses both in Brazil and abroad, often as Brazil’s official representative. The first, the Regional Congress on Spanish and Portuguese Braille organized by UNESCO and held in 1951 in Montevideo, Uruguay. Other important examples were the 2nd International Congress of Educators of Blind Youth, held in Oslo, Norway (1957) and that held in Boston, USA (1967). Dorina emphasized that these events helped promote her contact with educators from diverse countries who were discussing current topics related to the education of the blind worldwide, as well as fostering an international network of educators and specialists in the education of the visually impaired. One example was the event held in Norway:

I had the opportunity to meet great European educators. Most of my specialized training took place in the USA, even though my advisor and supervisor was Austrian [...] there were Americans, Canadians, and people from all over Europe and from India. I got a global view of the diverse types of education for the blind being used (NOWILL, 1996, p. 82, *our translation*).

Dorina’s circulation in institutional and scientific events was widespread. She participated in various events, including the First International Congress of Braille Presses for Spanish Speech, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1966 (BRASIL, 1966), the Seminars on Exceptional Childhood organized by Helena Antipoff for the committee of the blind (1951,1952,1953), the 3rd National Congress of Private Teaching Institutions, organized by Carlos Pasquale (1962), where she presented her first work on the Braille Classes and school integration, and the National Weeks for Exceptional Students. In 1966, the Ministry of Education and Culture held a Preparatory Seminar for the 1st National Congress on the Education of the Disabled. It was opened at the Benjamin Constant Institute, bringing together “specialists in the teaching of the visually impaired, deaf and mute people, and those with locomotive and mental disabilities” (BRASIL, 1967, p. 68, *our translation*). Dorina participated in the organizing of the working groups³⁴. At the Symposium on the Integrated Teaching of Sciences (1968) Dorina presented a work entitled “The visually deficient child

³⁴ The working groups were organized by Dorina Nowill (CNEC/MEC), Olívia Pereira (INES) and Hilton Batista of the *Associação Brasileira Beneficente de Reabilitação* (ABBR), and by the psychiatrist Guálter Doyler Ferreira. Teachers from the Guanabara Secretary of Education, the Teaching Boards of the Ministry of Education and Culture, and student representatives also took part (A LUTA DEMOCRÁTICA, 1966).

and the pre-primary school,” whose abstract was published in the *Revista Ciência e Cultura da Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência* (SBPC) (NOWILL, 1968).

She also took part in the *Conferencia Latinoamericana sobre Educación de niños y jóvenes ciegos*, in Bogotá, Colombia (1971), the Seminar on the University and the preparation of specialized personnel in the education and rehabilitation of the exceptional, as a rapporteur, promoted by the *Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro* (1973); the 2nd Brazilian Congress of Pre-School Education with the work “The visually deficient child and the pre-primary school” (1976), as a rapporteur in the 1st Brazilian Seminary on the Education of the Audiovisually Disabled (1977), the 1st Meeting of Special Education (mental and visual disability) of the Education College of the *Universidade de São Paulo* (1982), among others in the area of blindness prevention and the professionalization of blind people. In addition, she organized the Panamerican Congress of Assistance and Education of the Blind (1954), the Congress and Assembly of the Panamerican Committee of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind (WCWB), in São Paulo (1954), the World Congress and the 5th Assembly of the WCWB (1974), and the 1st Latinamerican Congress of the WCWB (1975), the last two of which were held in São Paulo.

She was a member of the executive committee of the National Campaign for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired of the Ministry of Education and Culture (1958-1960) in conjunction with the Instituto Benjamin Constant, the first Brazilian national public policy for the education of the blind. In a letter sent to the State Secretary of Business Education of São Paulo, Alípio Correa Neto, when Dorina was a Technician for the Education of the Blind at the *Instituto de Educação Caetano de Campos*, she requested permission to develop campaign activities. “My participation on this committee is as a representative of São Paulo, and [I am] a technician on the matter, for São Paulo has a very high level of scientific achievement that can contribute to the development of efforts in all the other states of Brazil” (NOWILL, 1958, *our translation*).

In 1960 this policy was restructured and renamed to National Campaign for the Education of the Blind (*Campanha Nacional de Educação dos Cegos - CNEC/MEC*) when Dorina, a blind woman, was made the executive director in charge of the first Brazilian public policy for the education of the blind. “This position will require me to travel often to Brasília and Rio de Janeiro,” Dorina told the Superintendent Director of the *Instituto de Educação da Caetano de Campos*, Raul Schwinden, formally requesting to be dispensed from her activities there in order to dedicate herself more fully to the campaign (NOWILL, 1961, *our translation*).

The scientific fields of the History of Education and Special Education in Brazil had developed very few studies for the National Campaign for the Education of the Blind, a fact that restricted interpretations such that the CNEC/MEC would not have been considered a type of public policy³⁵ and/or failed to develop policies relevant to Brazilian education due to the context of its scope (something that certainly does not preclude a critical analysis of the policy and its limitations). Taking this gap into account, Cardoso and Martínez (2019) expanded the study of the institution’s objectives, endeavors, and alliances.

³⁵ As a model for emergency social policies, “[...] o ‘campaignism’ is characterized by a vertical and centralized structure composed of agencies which, while independent of each other, are subordinate to the central entity, in this case MEC” (Xavier, 2008, p. 130, *our translation*). From the 1950s to the 1970s, MEC develop various campaigns in the area of education through the *Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos* (INEP) and the *Centro Brasileiro de Pesquisas Educacionais* (CBPE). Specifically with regard to special education, MEC promoted the Campaign for the Education of Brazilian Deaf People in 1957, the National Campaign for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired (1958), which was later renamed the National Campaign for the Education of the Blind in 1960, and the National Campaign for the Education of the Mentally Disabled in 1960. The campaigns promoting the education of the deaf and the mentally disabled have also received little study (CARDOSO, MARTÍNEZ, 2009a).

This period was an important one for Dorina's professional activities, for it was when her public career she achieved national recognition, culminating in her selection by representatives and authorities of primary and secondary teaching associations in the state of São Paulo with the award of "Educator of the Year" (1961) (SÃO PAULO, 1961). During the 13 years she was the director of the CNEC/MEC (1961-1973)³⁶, Dorina organized various congresses on special education, such as the Special Education Symposium in Brasília (1963), the 1st Brazilian Congress in Education for the Visually Impaired (CBEDV) in São Paulo (1964), the 2nd CBEDV in Brasília (1968), when the Brazilian Association of Visually Impaired Educators, with which she was a member, was created, and the 3rd CBEDV in Rio de Janeiro (1971) (CARDOSO; MARTÍNEZ, 2019). With the Brazilian Association of Visually Impaired Educators, Dorina participated in the 4th IV CBEDV in Curitiba, Paraná (1975), the 5th CBEDV in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina (1986), and the 7th CBEDV in Campo Grande, Mato Grosso do Sul (1993).

Dorina's significant, ongoing, and near permanent role in the public leadership of CNEC/MEC (1961-1973) is a testament to her prestige and political influence, especially against the backdrop of political instability, most notably the civil-military dictatorship in power in Brazil from 1964 to 1985, when many heads of the executive branch of government were shuffled, including seven presidents and fifteen education ministers³⁷. It is important to note that Dorina, like other public executives, received training in the Superior School of War (*Escola Superior de Guerra*) course³⁸.

Diverse partnerships with state education secretaries and universities were forged while Dorina was with CNEC/MEC. To cite an example, at the invitation of the Education and Culture Service for the Exceptional of Paraná, in conjunction with the freshmen class in Pedagogy of the *Universidade Católica do Paraná*, Dorina taught the Course of University Outreach "Aspects in the Education of the Exceptional" with emphasis on teaching the visually challenged (DIÁRIO DO PARANÁ, 1970, p. 8; CARDOSO; MARTÍNEZ, 2019).

In order to create a policy of social integration for exceptional people, including gifted ones, a working group (WG) was created by the Ministry of Education and Culture's Department of Complementary Teaching in 1971 to implement a teaching system, present a budget proposal, collect information and data on the state of exceptional people in the country, investigate possibilities for implementing teaching programs in underserved areas, and create structural conditions for the creation of an entity charged with assistance program policies and activities. Dorina was a member of this WG of education specialists under the direction of Sarah Couto César (of the National Campaign for the Mentally Disabled of MEC – CADEME/MEC)³⁹ (CORREIO BRAZILIENSE, 1971, p. 11; CARDOSO, 2018).

As a result of the work of this WG, the National Center for Special Education of MEC (CENESP/MEC) was created in 1973. While this decision dissolved the CNEC/MEC and

³⁶ Notwithstanding the three previous years (1958-1961) when Dorina was on the executive board of the campaign. In all, 15 years in the National Campaign were dedicated to the blind. For a policy originally conceived as a temporary one (cf. footnote n.32), the enduring nature of this institution is noteworthy, especially when compared with its corresponding institution, the National Center for Special Education (CENESP), which was active for approximately 13 years (1973-1986).

³⁷ Based on information retrieved from: <https://www.gov.br/>.

³⁸ The Superior School of War was created as an Institute of Higher Learning, initially with the mission of creating a National Security Doctrine and for the exclusive training of military personnel. During the civil-military dictatorship it was specifically charged with preparing civilians for "relevant action and guidance and the execution of national policy" (ARRUDA, 1983, p. 116, *our translation*), i.e., to disseminate and standardize its concepts and values through intellectuals. The relationship between the civil-military dictatorship and Special Education in Brazil is being investigated in another study being developed by the present authors.

³⁹ Other members of this WG included pedagogy assistants Ana Amélia da Silva (of the Foundation for Books for the Blind in Brazil and Specialist in Education for the Blind at the *Curso da Caetano de Campos*), Jurema Lucy Venturini (Specialist in Education for the Blind at the *Curso da Caetano de Campos*), Olívia da Silva Pereira, and administrative aids Raphael Valentini and José Teixeira Dias (CARDOSO, 2018).

CADEME/MEC, the CENESP continued and expanded the work they had been engaged in. As the president of the FLCB, Dorina also forged more partnerships with the CENESP.

Dorina participated in the associative movement through organizations representing the blind at the national and international levels. These included the World Council for the Well-Being of the Blind (as vice president from 1964 to 1969 and 1974 to 1979, and president from 1979 to 1984), which she stated led to her travels to 27 countries, participation in many meetings and congresses, and position as the first woman to assume the presidency of this council (NOWILL, 1996). In addition, Nowill was a member of the Brazilian Council for the Well-Being of the Blind (founding member, 1954), the International Council for the Education of the Visually Impaired, the World Braille Council, the Latin American Union of the Blind, and the World Union of the Blind. She also founded and presided over the Ibero-American Association of Publishers for the Visually Impaired (ADEVIA) and, together with Helen Keller, was co-president of the Panamerican Association of Ophthalmology Committee.

The cultural practices Dorina developed extended to and were related to the United Nations Organization. Her participation in these and other spaces was significant because, as a blind woman, Dorina was seen as a representative for blind girls and women. As an example, working to eliminate discrimination against disabled girls and women, Dorina was a member of the Brazilian delegation at the UN Assembly during the International Year of the Woman in Mexico (1975), along with Maria Alice Silva (Secretary General of the Ministry of Labor) and Berta Lutz, a founder of the Brazilian Federation of Female Progress (1922) and the Brazilian Association of Education (1924). To commemorate the year, Dorina was one of the ten women honored by the Brazilian Women's Council for her work related to integrating women into the sociopolitical and economic development of the country.⁴⁰

Later, at the UN General Assembly in 1980, Dorina presented her work "The contribution of disabled people to society through full participation". The UN General Assembly had designated 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons under the theme "Full participation and equality" in all aspects of life within society where they lived, with equality defined as life conditions equal to those of other citizens of the same society and equal sharing of life conditions benefiting from social and economic development (SÃO PAULO, 2011). Representing the FLCB, Dorina participated in the *Comissão Estadual de São Paulo de Apoio e Estímulo ao Desenvolvimento do Ano Internacional das Pessoas Deficientes*.⁴¹ In 1981 she participated in the World Conference on Actions and Strategies for Education, Prevention, and Integration of UNESCO (Torremolinos, Spain), and the elaboration committee of the conference document, the Sundberg Declaration, representing Brazil.

Through presidential decree, Dorina was named to the National Committee for Special Education (1985) charged with "developing a policy of united action designed to improve special education and integrate people with disabilities, behavioral problems, and the gifted

⁴⁰ The other women honored were Ambassador Perla de Benites (diplomacy), Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill (integration of the blind), Flora Morgan Snell (arts), Heloneida Studart (journalism), Ilka Rodrigues (Family Planning), Lucy Bloch (tourism), Meryan Benassuly Fialho (education), Rosah Russomano (law), Tereza Raquel (theater), and Vilma Guimarães Rosa (literature) (MANCHETE, 1976, p. 104).

⁴¹ Committee member representatives were from public agencies, private institutions, such as José Geraldo Silveira Bueno, Director and representative of the *Divisão de Educação e Reabilitação dos Distúrbios da Comunicação da Pontifícia Universidade Católica* of São Paulo (DERDIC/PUC-SP), philanthropic institutions like the *Associação de Pais e Amigos dos Excepcionais* (APAE) and the *Associação de Assistência à Criança Defeituosa* (AACD), and representatives of the *Movimento pelos Direitos das Pessoas Deficientes* (SÃO PAULO, 1981). In 1980, at the meeting of the *Movimento de Defesa das Pessoas Portadoras de Deficiência* (MDPD), in Ourinhos, SP, a committee had been created for the sole purpose of organizing the activities of the AIPD, of which Dorina was a member along with Romeu Kazumi Sasaki and others. The complete list of members can be found in Lanna Junior (2010).

into society”⁴², perform a study on priorities and means of promoting the universalization of rights for people “with disabilities,” as well as forging a national plan for them, especially in the face of limited statistical data in the country. This committee recommended transforming the CENESP into the Special Education Secretary, which was done in 1986. Another result of the committee’s efforts was the creation of the *Coordenadoria Nacional para a Integração da Pessoa Portadora de Deficiência* (CORDE)⁴³, also in 1986.

Dorina worked on this committee along with other specialists in special education, such as Sarah Couto Cezar and Olívia da Silvia Pereira (LANNA JUNIOR, 2010). “I was part of the first team that created the CORDE. I was called by the Ministry of Education and we had a meeting, and then more meetings, and we prepared the CORDE documents. [...] I thus participated in this whole movement. We all had the same goal, a patriotic desire to make contributions for Brazil” (NOWILL, 2010, p. 187, *our translation*). Dorina wrote, “what is truly important are life experiences! And we can only offer blind people life experiences if they are able to study in the same schools as those who are not blind” (NOWILL, 2010, p. 186, *our translation*).

In 1987 Dorina received the Order of Educational Merit from the Presidency of the Republic. Over her career she also received various titles and honors from public and private institutions in public recognition for her endeavors and efforts to establish methods and means for identifying social support networks to which she was associated. Dorina’s activities were instrumental in the promotion of policies and the dissemination of knowledge throughout both the Brazilian and international contexts.

Dorina passed away after an episode of cardiac arrest in 2010. Honors continued to flow in after her death, including the post mortem 11^o *Prêmio USP de Direitos Humanos*⁴⁴ in 2010, the installation of a totem in the tactile gallery in the *Pinacoteca* of São Paulo (2010), the *Comenda Dorina Nowill* (2015), by the Brazilian Senate, which honored Dorina during its first session and is awarded to those with outstanding work in the defense of persons with disabilities in Brazil, and the elaboration of the documentary “*Dorina – Olhar para o mundo*” (2016).

Final Considerations

The professional accomplishments and pedagogic efforts carried out by Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill discussed in this article lead to certain conclusions. The considerations featured in this study bring into stark relief the lack of knowledge and/or academic non-recognition related to Dorina’s contributions to special education, especially to the education of the blind and their near almost invisibility in the historiography of Brazilian education, especially within the realm categorized in this article, that of the creative and mediating intellectual. One explanation may relate to the fact that Dorina was a blind person closely associated with philanthropy. In addition, if on the one hand Dorina’s high school education at the highly esteemed *Escola Normal Caetano de Campos*, a space recognized at the time as a “women’s university,” i.e., for the education of female intellectuals, may have placed her in a socially privileged position at the time, on the other the fact that she never received a degree in higher education in Brazil may have helped contributed to a certain invisibility within the scientific community as an intellectual in Brazilian education. Her educational achievements, however, did not restrict her from specializing in the teaching of the blind in universities in the United States, nor from forging partnerships with public or

⁴² Decree n° 91.872 of 4 November, 1985.

⁴³ Law n° 7.853 of 24 October, 1989.

⁴⁴ Nominated by UNESCO through its Education Director, Kishore Singh, in individual and institutional categories. The annual award takes place on the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

private Brazilian universities when the director of the Brazilian Foundation for Books for the Blind or while occupying public postings.

Despite this silence or oblivion within the scientific community, her experience was extensive in the education of the blind fostered by training in teaching institutions in the USA, her organization and participation in scientific events and Brazilian and international institutions, her participation in the leadership of international organizations representing the blind, her work as executive director over 13 years of a public policy initiative, the National Campaign for the Education of the Blind, of support and participation in the elaboration of legislative initiatives, all of which contributed to her visibility, status, and intense efforts in Brazilian and international arenas in favor of networks for the sociability and support of the blind, both politically and pedagogically, from São Paulo and throughout Brazil in multidirectional paths internationally.

We reaffirm, however, that an intellectual does not simply arise through training and cannot exist without social and/or support networks. There is no doubt that Dorina's pedagogic travels forged opportunities for these national and international networks she was a part of and that fostered her efforts. Those efforts included the dissemination of knowledge and values, the divulging within wider arenas of cultural practices concerning those who are blind and visually impaired, the production and mediation of cultural goods, the development and establishment of political action, and the raising of public monies and grants. To achieve all of this, Dorina leveraged her privileged position and was untiring in her efforts to interact with and mobilize blind people, education and health professionals, institutions, associations, public agencies, and private organizations from all around Brazil and the world groups.

Her representation is significant not only because she was a specialist in the education of the blind, but, above all, due to the representation that she symbolized as a blind woman, a pioneer in this regard who demanded that her perspective be considered. The attendance of public authorities in the events Dorina promoted demonstrate the prestige she enjoyed within political circles. One observes the constant negotiations taking place between the state and private philanthropic institutions, in both directions. The public-private relationship, a striking, frequent, and tense aspect of Brazilian special education until today, is highly visible and must be analyzed in light of the cultural, social, political, and economic contexts of each period, as well as the permanence and consequences of these relations from the period studied onward.

The specialized educational training of technicians and teacher, using methods tailored for the education of the blind, is particularly noteworthy, and represented a strategy for disseminating the principal of social and scholastic integration of blind people (mainstream education) that Dorina promoted. It strove to do so by modifying social and cultural practices within the Brazilian educational system. Finally, this investigation has identified other aspects and tensions that merit further study, interpretation, and investigation, an endeavor already underway in a broader study by the authors.

Historical sources

A LUTA DEMOCRÁTICA. *MEC encerra o Seminário de Educação do Deficiente*. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. p. 5. 14 dez. 1966.

BOULTER, Eric. [Correspondência]. Destinatário: Helen Keller. New York, 28 mai. 1953. 1 telegrama. Disponível em: <https://www.afb.org/HelenKellerArchive>. Acesso em 6. mai. 2020.

BRASIL. Ministério da Educação e Cultura. *Declaração*. Brasília, DF, 7 mai. 1966. Assunto: Declara que Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill é diretora da Campanha Nacional de Educação dos Cegos e representará o Brasil no I Congresso Internacional de Imprensa Braille.

BRASIL. Ministério da Educação e Cultura. *Principais atividades e realizações - 1930-1967*. Rio de Janeiro: MEC, 1967.

BRASIL. “MEC-CENESP - Extrato do convênio n.º 126”. *Diário Oficial da União*. Brasília, Distrito Federal. p. 1. 30 out. 1978.

CORREIO BRAZILIENSE. *Fundação do cego*. Brasília, Distrito Federal. p. 6. 14 mar. 1980.

CORREIO BRAZILIENSE. *MEC debate ajuda ao excepcional*. Brasília, Distrito Federal. p. 11. 30 jun. 1971.

CORREIO PAULISTANO. *A admirável Dorina, uma cega que vê*. São Paulo, São Paulo. p.19. 11 nov. de 1945.

CORREIO PAULISTANO. *Inaugurado pelo Ministro da Educação – Centro de Reabilitação para Cegos*. São Paulo, São Paulo. p. 3. 24 nov. de 1962.

DIÁRIO DA NOITE. *Empenham-se numa obra grandiosa em benefício dos cegos no Brasil*. São Paulo, São Paulo. p. 8 e 10, 4 mai.1946.

DIÁRIO DA NOITE. *Homenagem a Dorina, essa amiga dos cegos*. São Paulo, São Paulo p. 4. 7 set. 1979.

DIÁRIO DA NOITE. *Iniciada ampla campanha de prevenção à cegueira*. São Paulo, p. 7. São Paulo. 22 nov. 1947.

DIÁRIO DO PARANÁ. *Inscrição aberta para curso sobre os excepcionais*. Curitiba, Paraná. p. 8. 20 set. 1970.

FRACAROLLI, Lenira. Departamento de Cultura da Prefeitura de São Paulo. *Bibliotecas infantis*. s/d.

HELEN, Keller. My Experiences in Latin America. *The New Outlook for the Blind*. Vol. 48, n.5. 1954. p. 129-149.

JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS. *Associações*. São Paulo, São Paulo. p. 7. 18 set. 1947a.

JORNAL DE NOTÍCIAS. *Uma Helen Keller brasileira*. São Paulo, São Paulo. p. 2. 22 mai. 1947b.

JORNAL DO BRASIL. *Livro de cegos será impresso mais depressa*. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. p. 9. 4 ago. 1984a.

JORNAL DO BRASIL. *Micro imprime livro de Sabino em Braille*. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. p. 24. 9 ago. 1984b.

MANCHETE. *As 10 mais do Ano Internacional da Mulher*. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. p. 104. 3 jan. 1976.

NOWILL, Dorina de Gouvêa. *Ofício*. São Paulo, SP. 4 abr. 1961. Assunto: Comunica designação pelo Ministro da Educação para dirigir a Campanha Nacional de Educação dos Cegos.

NOWILL, Dorina de Gouvêa. *Ofício*. São Paulo, SP. 5 dez. 1958. Assunto: Comunica nomeação pelo Ministro da Educação para integrar a Comissão Executiva da Campanha Nacional de Educação e Reabilitação dos Deficitários Visuais.

NOWILL, Dorina de Gouvêa. ... *E eu venci assim mesmo. Dorina de Gouvêa Nowill*. São Paulo: Totalidade, 1996.

NOWILL, Dorina de Gouvêa. [Correspondência]. Destinatário: Eric Boulter. São Paulo, 12 mai. 1952. 1 carta. Disponível em: <https://www.afb.org/HelenKellerArchive>. Acesso em: 6. mai. 2020.

NOWILL, Dorina de Gouvêa. [Entrevista concedida a] Deivison Gonçalves Amaral e Corina Maria Rodrigues Moreira. *História do Movimento Político das Pessoas com Deficiência no Brasil*. Compilado por Mario Cléber Martins Lanna Júnior. Brasília: Secretaria de Direitos Humanos. Secretaria Nacional de Promoção dos Direitos da Pessoa com Deficiência. 2010. p. 443. Disponível em: <http://www.pessoacomdeficiencia.gov.br/app/publicacoes/historia-do-movimento-politico-das-pessoas-com-deficiencia-no-brasil>. Acesso em: 3 dez. 2020.

NOWILL, Dorina de Gouvêa. A criança deficiente visual e a escola pré-primária. *Revista Ciência e Cultura* (SP), vol. 20, n.º 2, 1968, p. 482.

REVISTA DA SEMANA. *Relêvo*. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. p. 51. 1949.

SÃO PAULO (Estado). 1ª sessão solene em homenagem à professora Dorina Nowill, presidente emérita da Fundação Dorina Nowill para cegos. *Diário Oficial do Estado de São Paulo*, São Paulo, p. 13.10 abr. 2003.

SÃO PAULO (Estado). Centro para treinamento de visão sub-normal S/C Ltda - Extrato para registro de pessoas jurídicas. *Diário Oficial do Estado de São Paulo*, São Paulo, p. 2. 06 set. 1974.

SÃO PAULO (Estado). Decreto n.º 16.742, de 5 de março de 1981. Cria a Comissão Estadual de Apoio e Estímulo ao Desenvolvimento do Ano Internacional das Pessoas Deficientes. Disponível em: <https://www.al.sp.gov.br/norma/69843>. Acesso em: 29 jan. 2021.

SÃO PAULO (Estado). Discurso pronunciado na sessão do dia 24-9-1952. *Diário Oficial do Estado de São Paulo*, São Paulo, p. 50. 7 out. 1952.

SÃO PAULO (Estado). Requerimento n.º 385 de 1976. *Diário Oficial do Estado de São Paulo*, São Paulo, p. 99. 29 abr. 1976.

THE RECORD. *Special Project for training Brazilian workers for the blind*. Vol. II, n.º 3- march. 1946.

References

ARRUDA, Antonio de. A Escola Superior de Guerra. *Revista da Escola Superior de Guerra*, v.1, n.1, p.113–122, 1983. Disponível em: <https://revista.esg.br/index.php/revistadaesg/article/view/25/8>. Acesso em: 24 mar. 2022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47240/revistadaesg.v1i1.25>

CARDOSO, Fernanda Luísa de Miranda. *O Educandário para Cegos São José Operário: políticas educacionais e cultura escolar - Campos/RJ (décadas de 1960 e 1970)*. 2018. 245f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Políticas Sociais). Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense Darcy Ribeiro, Rio de Janeiro.

CARDOSO, Fernanda Luísa de Miranda; MARTÍNEZ, Silvia Alicia. A Campanha Nacional de Educação dos Cegos: uma leitura a partir da imprensa jornalística dos anos 1960 e 1970. *Revista Brasileira de História da Educação*, v. 19, p. e051, 18 abr. 2019. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4025/rbhe.v19.2019.e051>

CARDOSO, Fernanda Luísa de Miranda; MARTÍNEZ, Silvia Alicia. Conferencias de la Oficina Internacional de Educación durante la dirección de Jean Piaget: Panorama de la enseñanza especial (1929-1967). *Revista Cabás*. n.º 25. 2021. p. 89-106. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35072/CABAS.2021.35.20.005>.

CARDOSO, Fernanda Luísa de Miranda; MARTÍNEZ, Silvia Alicia. História e Historiografia da Educação Especial Brasileira: um balanço da produção em artigos científicos (2015-2020). *Revista História da Educação*. v. 26, 2022. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/2236-3459/113783>.

CARDOSO, Silmara de Fátima. “Viajar é ser autor de muitas histórias”: experiências de formação e narrativas educacionais de professores brasileiros em viagens aos Estados Unidos (1929-1935). 2015. Tese (Doutorado em Educação) - Faculdade de Educação, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2015.

CASTRO, Cesar Augusto. Arquivos e fontes na História da Educação. In: GONDRA, José Gonçalves; MACHADO, Maria Cristina Gomes; SIMÕES, Regina Helena Silva. *História da Educação, matrizes interpretativas e internacionalização* (Org.). Vitória: EDUFES, v. 13, 2017, p. 226-252.

DIAS, Adriana. Por uma genealogia do capacitismo: da eugenia estatal à narrativa capacitista social. In: *Anais do II Simpósio Internacional de Estudos sobre Deficiência*; 2013; São Paulo.

FRAGA, Andréa Silva de. *Trajetórias de alunas-mestras a professoras intelectuais da Educação no Rio Grande do Sul (1920 a 1960)*. 2017. 215f. Tese (Doutorado em História). Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), Rio de Janeiro.

GIL, Marta. *Caminhos da inclusão: a história da formação profissional de pessoas com deficiência no SENAI-SP*. São Paulo: SENAI-SP, 2012.

GOMES, Angela de Castro. O lugar dos “Intelectuais mediadores”. [Entrevista concedida a] Bruno Leal Pastor de Carvalho e Ana Paula Tavares Teixeira. *Café História*. 31 ago. 2020. Disponível em: <https://www.cafehistoria.com.br/intelectuais-mediadores-entrevista-angela-de-castro-gomes/>. Acesso em: 30 out. 2020. ISSN: 2674-5917.

GOMES, Angela de Castro; HANSEN, Patrícia Santos. Intelectuais, mediação cultural e projetos políticos: uma introdução para a delimitação do objeto de estudo. In: GOMES, Angela de Castro; HANSEN, Patrícia Santos (Orgs.). *Intelectuais Mediadores: Práticas culturais e Ação Política*. 1.ª Ed. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2016.

HOFSTETTER, Rita. Matrizes do internacionalismo educativo e sua primeira institucionalização em uma escala global: o exemplo do Bureau Internacional de Educação no entreguerras. In: GONDRA, José Gonçalves; MACHADO, Maria Cristina Gomes; SIMÕES, Regina Helena Silva. *História da Educação, matrizes interpretativas e internacionalização* (Org.). Vitória: EDUFES, v. 13, 2017, p. 47-98.

LANNA JÚNIOR, Cléber Martins (Org). *História do Movimento Político das Pessoas com Deficiência no Brasil*. Brasília: Secretaria de Direitos Humanos. Secretaria Nacional de Promoção dos Direitos da Pessoa com Deficiência. 2010. Disponível em: <http://www.pessoacomdeficiencia.gov.br/app/publicacoes/historia-do-movimento-politico-das-pessoas-com-deficiencia-no-brasil>. Acesso em: 3 dez. 2020.

MARQUES, Josiane Acácia de Oliveira. *O curso de Especialização para o Ensino de Cegos do Instituto Caetano de Campos e o método Decroly no ensino da matemática (1945-1966)*. 2021. 236 f. Tese (Doutorado em Educação) – Faculdade de Educação. Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo.

MAZZOTTA, Marcos José da Silveira. *Educação Especial no Brasil - História e políticas públicas*. 6. ed. São Paulo: Cortez Editora, 2011.

PEREIRA, Olívia. Princípios de normalização e de integração na educação dos excepcionais. *Em Aberto*. Ano 2, n.º 13, fev. 1983.

RABELO, Rafaela Silva; VIDAL, Diana Gonçalves. A seção brasileira da New Education Fellowship; (des) encontros e (des) conexões. In: Diana Vidal; Rafaela Rabelo. (Org.). *Movimento Internacional da Educação Nova*. 1.ª ed., Belo Horizonte: Fino Traço, 2020, v. 1, p. 25-48.

SIRINELLI, Jean-François. As elites culturais. In : RIOUX, Jean-Pierre; SIRINELLI, Jean-François. *Para uma História Cultural*. Lisboa: Estampa, 1998.

VERA, Eugenia Roldán; FUCHS, Eckhardt. O transnacional na história da educação. *Educação e Pesquisa [online]*. 2021, v. 47. Tradução de Ana Carolina de Carvalho Guimarães; Alexandre Ribeiro e Silva. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1517-97022021470100301trad>

VIDAL, Diana Gonçalves; RABELO, Rafaela Silva. A criação de Institutos de Educação no Brasil como parte de uma história conectada da formação de professores. *Cadernos de História da Educação*, v.18, n.1, p.208-220, 31 mar. 2019. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14393/che-v18n1-2019-12>

WARDE, Mirian Jorge. O International Institute do Teachers College, Columbia University, como epicentro da internacionalização do campo educacional. *Cadernos de História da Educação*, v.15, n.1, p.190-221, 9 jun. 2016. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14393/che-v15n1-2016-7>

WARDE, Mirian Jorge; ROCHA, Ana Cristina Santos Matos. Feminização do magistério e masculinização do comando educacional: estudos no Teachers College da Universidade de Columbia (1927-1935). *Educar em Revista [online]*. 2018, v.34, n.70 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/0104-4060.58725>

XAVIER, Libânia Nacif. Interfaces entre história da educação e social e política dos intelectuais: conceitos, questões e apropriações. In: GOMES, Angela de Castro; HANSEN, Patrícia Santos (Orgs.). *Intelectuais Mediadores: Práticas culturais e Ação Política*. 1.ª Ed. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2016.

XAVIER, Libânia Nacif. Qualificação de professores em três campanhas do Ministério da Educação no decênio 1950-1960. In MENDONÇA, Ana Waleska; XAVIER, Libânia Nacif. (Orgs.). *Por uma política de formação do magistério nacional: o Inep/MEC dos anos 1950/1960* (Coleção Inep 70 anos, Vol. 1). Brasília, DF: Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira, 2008.