

Special Section

INTELLECTUALS AND HISTORY OF EDUCATION: CHALLENGES TO RESEARCH AND CURRENT EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the current study is to present elements for reflections about the growing circulation of category “intellectuals” in research conducted in the History of Education field in the Brazilian academic environment. The first part of it presents some evidence about this topics’ emergence topic and the importance acquired by it in this research field, based on the analysis of thematic axes guiding Brazilian Congresses on History of Education. The second part of it focuses on the historiographical operation associated with the use of analysis categories applied to intellectuals’ history, with emphasis on some of the challenges faced by researchers. The third part of it addresses aspects of likely contributions from research results about intellectuals in History of Brazilian Education to debates held in this field and to challenges faced by democratic education projects, nowadays.

Keywords: intellectuals, historical research, History of Education

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INTELECTUAIS E HISTÓRIA DA EDUCAÇÃO: DESAFIOS À PESQUISA E À ATUALIDADE EDUCACIONAL

RESUMO

O presente texto procura trazer elementos para a reflexão a respeito da crescente circulação da categoria “intelectuais” na pesquisa em História da Educação no meio acadêmico brasileiro. Na primeira parte, apresenta alguns indícios que marcam a emergência da temática e a importância que adquiriu nessa área de pesquisa, a partir da análise dos eixos temáticos norteadores dos Congressos Brasileiros de História da Educação. Na segunda parte, concentra-se na operação historiográfica associada à utilização de categorias de análise da vertente da história dos intelectuais, enfocando alguns dos desafios que se apresentam ao pesquisador. Na terceira parte, aborda aspectos da possível contribuição dos resultados da pesquisa sobre intelectuais na História da Educação brasileira para os debates e desafios que se apresentam aos projetos democráticos de educação na atualidade.

Palavras-chave: intelectuais, pesquisa histórica, História da Educação

INTELECTUALES Y HISTORIA DE LA EDUCACIÓN: DESAFIOS À LA INVESTIGACIÓN Y A LA EDUCACIÓN ACTUAL

RESUMEN

El presente texto coloca elementos para la reflexión sobre la creciente circulación de la categoría “intelectuales” en la investigación en Historia de la Educación en el ambiente académico brasileño. En la primera parte, presenta algunas indicaciones que marcan el surgimiento del tema y la importancia que adquirió en esta área de investigación, a partir del análisis de los ejes temáticos que guían los Congresos Brasileños de Historia de la Educación. En la segunda parte, se centra en la operación historiográfica asociada al uso de categorías de análisis de la línea de la historia de los intelectuales, centrándose en algunos de los desafíos que se presentan al investigador. En la tercera parte, aborda aspectos de la posible contribución de los resultados de las investigaciones sobre intelectuales en la Historia de la Educación Brasileña a los debates y desafíos que se presentan ante los proyectos de educación democrática en la actualidad.

Palabras clave: intelectuales, investigación histórica, Historia de la Educación

INTELLECTUELS ET L'HISTOIRE DE L'ÉDUCATION: DÉFIS À LA RECHERCHE ET À L'ÉDUCATION ACTUELLE

RÉSUMÉ

Ce texte cherche à apporter des éléments menant à la réflexion à propos de la croissante circulation de la catégorie «intellektuels» dans la recherche de l'Histoire de l'Éducation au milieu académique brésilien. La première partie présente quelques indices qui marquent l'émergence de la thématique et l'importance acquise dans ce domaine de recherche, à partir de l'analyse des axes thématiques directeurs des Congrès Brésiliens de l'Histoire de l'Éducation. La deuxième partie se concentre sur l'opération historiographique associée à l'utilisation des catégories d'analyse du volet de l'histoire des intellectuels, tenant comme foyer quelques-uns des défis qui se présentent au chercheur. La troisième partie évoque des aspects de la possible contribution des résultats de la recherche sur des intellectuels dans l'Histoire de l'Éducation brésilienne pour les débats et défis qui se présentent face aux projets démocratiques de l'éducation dans l'actualité.

Mots-clés: intellectuels, recherche historique, Histoire de l'Éducation

Intellectuals and the history of education have always been inseparable. As we know, our area of studies and research has its identity built over the effort to understand the ways, the criteria of selection and organization, and the materials and places mobilized in the mediation processes historically built in the formation of new generations in their social and cultural contexts. In the center of this historical construction, there were individual and collective subjects, appropriating themselves with and circulating specific knowledge to fulfill an endless array of intellectual roles.

Though we are collectively identified with the grand denomination “History of Education,” we know that the enormous expansion of research, allowed by the increase of graduate studies and higher education – mainly but not exclusively public – and the organization of the study area, allowed and incentivized research strands, with specific themes, to gain relative autonomy. Thus, the histories of subjects, manuals, educational institutions, education levels, school architecture, educational thought currents, educational printed materials, etc., reached a volume and an identity, with the ability to create events, propose interinstitutional research nuclei and projects, and create important archives of sources, articles, and books.

The theme regarding intellectuals emerged in this historiography initially in isolated works or intertwined in studies of the strands already organized. In fact, no research line can be thought of without a relationship with many others, as the themes interconnect, entangle, and demand data associated with the different angles of approach. Hence, intellectual agents were indispensable when considering different educational processes from a historical lens. How do we talk about manuals without focusing on their authors? Or architecture without referring to the project planners? Lines of pedagogical thought were announced, defended, combated, and disseminated by intellectualized people eager and able to propose experiences and action pathways, even if starting from very different assumptions and values. The pedagogical press, as the press in general, became a medium to express debates and schooling projects from diverse levels and types. Regarding non-institutionalized experiences, the actions of planners and makers, men and women, were needed to turn them into facts, brought to the historical narrative through the work of historians.

There was a qualitative change imposed in this scenario as a strand with some specificity, requiring a reflection about the categories, the ways of approach, and the dialogue with the sources. Narratives emerged that brought to the limelight the concern to understand how and why certain subjects played such characteristic and crucial roles in building history.

THE CATEGORY “INTELLECTUALS” IN THE EDUCATION HISTORIC RESEARCH

The theme of intellectuals started to raise a strong interest in Education historical research, resulting in an expressive production of studies, such as theses and dissertations, and specific projects led by well-known historians in the area. Faced with this context, in this collective, which counts with a great organization in specific forums, we have started attempts to evaluate the impacts of this production on the knowledge created about the history of education in Brazil.¹

It seems important to distinguish what marks this inflection, even if not in detail. If the intellectuals had always been present, in some way, in the historical research in Education, what characterizes this renewed movement to approximate this category? The answer to this question demands extending the observation field towards renovation efforts, deepening the research in the History of Education in Brazil, and the fields of dialogue open to the international sphere and to other areas of study, circulation, and appropriation of approaches that brought new questions to the historical research as a whole. These areas intercross in the transits operated in the History of Education in Brazil, establishing the emergence of a research strand that focuses its concerns on the intellectuals.

We chose to start from one evidence among many that could be taken as an expression of this transit. We sought the theme axes of the *Congresso Brasileiro de História da Educação* [Brazilian Congresses of History of Education], an event organized by the *Sociedade Brasileira de História da Educação*² [SBHE-Brazilian Society of History of Education], an entity that emerged from this collective of historians of education. The theme axes result from collective deliberation, debated, and voted in assemblies or forums from the suggestions of the historians present. Through the review we conducted on the web page of SBHE, we found that the word “intellectuals” does not appear in the axes of the *I Congresso Brasileiro de História da Educação*³. However, it does appear on the *II Congresso*, at the axis “Intellectuals and memory of Education.”⁴. It also resulted in a book entitled “*Intelectuais, Estado e Educação*”⁵[Intellectuals, State, and Education].

1 As examples, we cite in the references some collective works on the theme: FREITAS and KUHLMANN JR. (2022); LEITE and ALVES (2011); VIEIRA, STRANG and OSINSKI (2015); VIEIRA, OSINSKI and BENCOSTTA (2015); VIEIRA, OSINSKI and OLIVEIRA (2019); VIEIRA, BONTEMPI JUNIOR and OSINSKI (2019); VIEIRA, OSINSKI and GONDRA (2019).

2 The *Sociedade Brasileira de História da Educação* was founded in 1999 and held the *I Congresso Brasileiro de História da Educação* in 2000 (SBHE, Sobre. Available at <https://sbhe.org.br/sobre>)

3 Information available at the webpage of Sociedade Brasileira de História da Educação (<https://sbhe.org.br>), at link: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1c-edYbu1KS1Z2wc-WTTFXlfP5gNPYriF>. Accessed August 12, 2022.

4 Information available at the webpage of Sociedade Brasileira de História da Educação (<https://sbhe.org.br>), at link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1GxyMblNGO_uBPsn_H9icczOFj3IQq55M. Accessed August 12, 2022.

5 ARAÚJO, Marta Maria de; XAVIER, Libânea Nacif; CARVALHO, Marta Maria Chagas de; MORAIS, Maria Arisnete Câmara de; PAIVA, Marlúcia Menezes de; STAMATTO, Maria Inês Sucupira (Eds.). *Intelectuais, Estado e Educação*. Natal: EDUFRN, 2006.

The word disappears in the axes of the III CBHE and returns at the *IV Congresso*, in the axis “Intellectuals, social thought, and education.” There are no records of the V CBHE axes on the webpage. The axis “Printed material, intellectuals, and History of Education” continues in the three following congresses, from VI to VIII. The words “Intellectuals and educational projects” were added to one of the theme axes in the last three congresses.

The choice of this indicator can seem restricted. Reviewing articles published in specialized journals, texts from collections and single-authored books, and events on the theme could bring more consistent elements. However, as I have no time for such grand research and considering my experience accumulated in these discussions, I believe that the theme axes of our main congress do show the tendencies of the concerns and focus that gain steam in our research area.

So, based on this data as a support, I take the liberty to approach what I bring here as a “transit” observed by various historians. From this point of view, the distance of the title used for the axis on the *II Congresso* – “Intellectuals and memory of Education” – seems quite significant compared to what continued in the last years: “Intellectuals and educational projects.” The wordings that associated “Intellectuals, social thought, and education” and “Printed materials, intellectuals, and History of Education” were dropped on the way.

We will start from the publication resulting from the *II Congresso*, the book “Intellectuals, State, and Education,” organized by six important historians in our area.⁶ The publication occurred in 2006, gathering the presentations from the 2002 congress. The event’s theme was “History and memory of Brazilian education.” The texts gathered were part of different tables: one celebrating the 70th anniversary of the 1932 *Manifesto dos Pioneiros*, another entitled “Intellectuals and memory of the Brazilian education,”; another with the theme “State, nation, and education” and a fourth on the categories “Race, gender, and ethnicity.” One last text reflects on the relation of historiography with history and Brazilian education memory.

Certainly, all texts bring great contributions and intellectual figures – men and women-expressing consistent research pathways and unveiling new analytical angles. However, we want to highlight what this publication takes as a transit indicator. The focus on individualized subjects only appears in two texts, one about the trajectory of the intellectual Armanda Álvaro Alberto, researched by Ana Chrystina Venancio Mignot (2006); another focused on Bergström Lourenço Filho, written by Carlos Monarcha (2006). Traces of the biographies of Fernando de Azevedo, Manoel Bonfim, and Anísio Teixeira appear in the texts of Luiz Antônio Cunha (2006) and Marcos Cezar de Freitas (2006), following teachers from a Japanese community in São Paulo (Akama, Celina, Ercília), researched by Zeila Demartini (2006).

⁶ Their names appear in the reference indicated in the previous note.

What can we already observe in this publication, taken here as a source for our proposed research question about the transit in our historiography? We see prominent names in our historiography, intellectuals who held important positions in constructing and implementing projects that gained spaces in the state spheres and kept their place in the “Brazilian education intellectuals” gallery. However, the pedestal they could reach is demolished, and questions about their contradictions go to the forefront of the analyses without questioning their contributions’ historical importance.

Hence, Luiz Antônio Cunha focused on the autonomization of the education field, using the *Manifesto dos Pioneiros* as a source due to its sociopolitical dimension, reiterates his questions about the exclusive authorship of the *Manifesto* assumed by Fernando de Azevedo (2006, p. 45-46). Cunha indicated names of intellectuals associated with a socialist base who could have influenced the most radical terms of the text (2006, p. 47). The protagonism of Anísio Teixeira (p. 50), on the one hand, and Francisco Campos (2006, p. 55), on the other, is resumed as indicators of the disputes in that historical context. Biographical information from Fernando de Azevedo and Anísio Teixeira are part of the arguments that support the hypothesis on the efforts to seek the autonomization of the educational field.

Anísio returns, together with Manoel Bomfim, in the text by Marcos César de Freitas. The author focuses his analysis on both intellectuals’ “difficulty to make conceptual transpositions” (2006, p. 85)– Anísio, from the American paradigms, and Bomfim, from the French ones (2006, p. 86). Freitas dedicates himself to the ideas of both intellectuals, focused on the “analytical contradictions” (p. 86) they were entangled when facing Brazilian reality. His interest is mainly in these intellectuals’ reading itineraries and appropriation of interpretative strands.

Carlos Monarcha analyses Bergström Lourenço Filho’s report based on his trip to Juazeiro in 1923, when he worked in the education reform for the government of Ceará (2006, p. 110-112 e 114). The historian seeks elements in the intellectual formation of the São Paulo reformer (2006, p. 112-113) and presents how he interpreted the reality of the Northeast city and the leadership of Father Cícero Romão Batista (2006, p. 117-123). He valued the intellectual exchange with various Ceará intellectuals, adding to the contact with a different social reality as part of a “formation trip” (2006, p. 119). However, he understood that the mark of the dominant social thought in the Brazilian intellectual context since the late 19th century, associated with the repertoire from the scientific naturalism that grounds the perspective of the modernizing debate, forged the foundation for the interpretation in his texts and the warm reception they received (2006, p. 122-125).

Ana Chystina Venancio Mignot’s text, a result of her doctoral research, goes in another direction, towards the transit I want to highlight. Besides focusing on a woman, Armanda Álvaro Alberto, her approach is guided by an issue that moves from the sphere of ideals to the construction of the intellectual place (2006, p. 63). The sources are emphasized due to

her access to Armanda's archive. In the text, guided by the inclusion of the three women who signed the 1932 *Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educação*, the historian shows that the founder of the *Escola Regional de Merity* was already a prominent personality in the 1920s, part of sociability networks associated with the fights of popular classes and, in particular, women to expand their citizenship rights (2006, p. 66 and 68-75). The researched sources provided access to the names of many men and women, some very close to the intellectual, others participating in entities and instances of political leadership in which Armanda Álvaro Alberto acted and interacted as an engaged intellectual.

The last text we present here, from the collection we are using as a source, was written by the historian Zeila de Brito Fabri Demartini, entitled "Inter-ethnic relationships in the pedagogical practice." The title indicates her research concern: the schooling experiences of immigrant groups in the state of São Paulo, seeking to understand the emerging senses in the exchanges and cultural appropriations allowed in school, in its specificities (2006, p. 163-164). The path to this historical experience in the text is through the biography of three teachers who worked in schools in Japanese communities before the Second World War (2006, p. 166). One Japanese teacher, another a nissei (daughter of Japanese, born in Brazil), and a third with German and Italian origins. For our analysis, the inter-ethnic issue is not central. We focus on the inclusion of these elementary school teachers in the publication of the II *Congresso Brasileiro de História da Educação*, which discussed the relationship between intellectuals, the State, and education in Brazilian history. We want to highlight to what extent this inclusion can be considered an indicator of a tendency in the historiography of education in the last decades, which is the broadening of the "intellectual" concept. In the teachers' bibliographical data, Zeila Demartini identifies that the first one, trained in Japan, created a school in São Paulo with a project to form Japanese women from the new generations born in Brazil (2006, p. 167-169). The second one wrote and published poems praised by the poet Guilherme de Almeida (2006, p. 170-174). The third appears with her work on the learning and presence of Portuguese teaching for Japanese immigrants (2006, p. 175-183).

I will detail the texts that compose this collection, aiming to highlight the authors' choices regarding the aspects to be selected when approximating the focused intellectuals. Considered here as a sign of a time in the historicity of our collective text production, the book resulting from the II CBHE announces, from our perspective, some tendencies of the historical research in education in Brazil: the intellectuals already known for their prominent leadership in the educational field started to be questioned from new angles of their trajectories and the articulations that characterize them, in several scopes; intellectuals of smaller projection begin to receive attention for their initiatives; women receive a specific consideration in the historicity; the professional categories connected to teaching are analyzed from the great array that encompasses the name "intellectuals."

Though the word “intellectuals” disappeared in the theme axes of the III CBHE⁷, many works in the Congress, in coordinated sessions or not, had certainly presented aspects of this analytical category. The theoretical movement that led historians of education to study this segment tended to grow and gain consistency. The current formulation, present since 2017, which associates “intellectuals” and “educational projects,” shows the widening of the scope of the questions that brought to the center of studies the individual actions, inserted in collectives, of men and women that demanded an understanding that considered complex existence aspects, imbricated with the socio-historical circumstances in which they are immersed.

After the first works, written as theses, which challenged the structuralism framework and considered biographies of intellectuals from the educational field as study objects, a new productive path opened up, enriched with the new theoretical perspectives increasingly present in the Brazilian intellectual field. Education historians used this patrimony to enter into areas of the themes through different angles. They could also see possibilities to unveil forgotten projects and implementations that could be seen through articulating intellectuals’ trajectories.

Through this way, many actors were brought to the historical scene, profoundly transforming the general scenario of what we call “education intellectuals.” The territorial distribution of research groups was already redesigning the configuration of meaningful processes of this history. The attention that emerged from the focus on the category “intellectuals” acted as a stimulus to incorporate many agents, demonstrating the potential of local initiatives. The connections between the local and national dimensions emerged at different levels that could only be unveiled through monitoring the circumscribed individual paths. Unimagined subjects, such as black people, women, Indigenous, immigrants, etc., started to take the scene in historical narratives through the register of their unsuspected protagonism.

Nonetheless, besides this enlargement, what seems more meaningful in this transit is the set of new questions or the new places from which the questions to be researched started to be asked. When bringing to the subjects the perspective that can lead the investigation, the history of education researchers was faced with the opportunity to review interpretative lines and reading keys grounded on historiography. Surprising facts in this challenging novelty enriched the possibilities that confronted, in diverse historical contexts, the hegemonic tendencies, dominant projects, and rooted sociocultural standards.

On the other hand, we should be careful not to deflate such a strand, with great potential, in apparently consensual formulas that weaken the research results. Aiming to maintain the fruitfulness of this path, which will undoubtedly contribute to instigating historiographical production, I bring some challenges from my research practice surrounding the category “intellectuals.”

⁷ Information available on the website of *Sociedade Brasileira de História da Educação* (<https://sbhe.org.br>), at the link <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1XMEqQ5DYh9U5zJFoF7xi4quuvOiG86hSR>

THE RESEARCH PATHWAYS WITH THE HISTORY OF INTELLECTUALS

The studies of the last decades of the 20th century aim to understand the specificities of the social relationships regarding the category “intellectuals” from new angles and conceptual tools that helped to perceive them beyond the aura built in the social imaginary since the 19th century around those figures.

Undoubtedly, the responsibility to profit from a privileged position of managing more sophisticated forms of thought, which include not only knowledge but a set of mental operations that are not available to a large part of humanity, pressures for an ethical and inevitable reflection. The relationship between ideas and social reality revolves the soil of history movement, questioning the interferences in the flow of events. The approximation or distance from mechanisms involving power and force relations hunt intellectual activity in different ways. Life is at risk, more or less consciously, as if it were fundamental to make it worthwhile. (CHOMSKY, 1969; BASTOS and RÊGO, 1999; LOURAU, 2001; SAID, 2005)

It is not about having a romanticized view of intellectuals that we know are often coopted, manipulated, incoherent, competitive, and eager for a power greater than the one from their words. We must recognize that the risk of exile, prison, physical death, demoralization, confusion, and oblivion surround the intellectual trajectories as an intrinsic part of its implementation in the social world. In the webs of power, the use of arguments, the search for new angles, and the revelation of realities that want to be hidden become threats and instigate retaliations. Today, as in the past, intellectuals committed to values and proposals associated with humanizing ethics are at risk and persecuted.

During the expansion of these new research fronts, several theoretical-methodological strands were useful and are present in academic productions, texts with the research results, and articles on the concepts and how to operate them in dialogue with the sources. I have been focusing my studies and research practices on the history of intellectuals from a French base, mainly using their methodological indication.

Based on the authors of this strand, mainly Jean-François Sirinelli, three categories have been organizing my research steps (ALVES, 2017 and 2019): formation itineraries, sociability networks, and generation. I wrote about them in published articles. At this conference, we have opted to bring some reflections on its operationalization in the research action from the experience I am currently living. Right now, together with two colleagues from the research line *Intelectuais, Juventudes e Educação Democrática* [Intellectuals, Youth, and Democratic Education], from the Education Graduate Program at *Universidade Federal Fluminense*, where I work, I have been participating in a significant experience for me, as a researcher and a person.

Prof. Elionaldo Fernandes Julião, Prof. Marcos Marques de Oliveira, and I have been helping Prof. Osmar Fávero, now 89 years old, to write his autobiography. It is an oral history work as we are recording his testimony during meetings in his home, each dedicated to a moment in his life. We rely not only on his personal memory but also on his archive, gathering photos, printed materials, and memory objects. You may imagine how rich and fascinating this opportunity is.

In this presentation, I chose to share some learnings and theoretical-methodological exercises that this endeavor has allowed me to experience and that can be useful for the colleagues I meet. I will not deal with the methodology of oral history, though it is pertinent to assume that we are dealing with it (FERREIRA & AMADO, 2005). My attention will be focused on the three categories I listed previously. I will seek to identify how they help us read the data presented in the testimonies and the challenges we find in their operationalization. We should remember these categories' general treatment lines so we do not lose sight of what each term refers to.

We can start with the category related to formation itineraries, which Sirinelli recognizes originate from René Remond's perception of the need to collect intellectual itineraries from a significant number of individuals in representative positions to have more precision when approaching thought tendencies (SIRINELLI, 1986, p. 101). Sirinelli considered the power of this path to understand how intellectuals are constructed, to avoid projecting a subject representation from the present to the past, as if the future had already been determined and the researcher would only need to seek the elements that confirmed this becoming. The reconstitution of itineraries also escapes the simplification of change, as it relies on contextualizing moments in this path. Many aspects of daily life are valued for historical research to understand the construction of interests and sensibilities from the individual's insertion in multiple space-time dimensions.

There is an event in Osmar Fávero's biography project that helps us see this in the research practice. In his first testimony, he stated: "I grew up in a house with no books." However, in the following meeting, he resumes the theme rectifying: "I said I grew up in a house with no book, but my grandfather read the newspaper daily and commented on the news." The correction brings a critical piece of information, which the intellectual was aware of: the presence of the written text since his early childhood in the family environment. A fact that could have been ignored acquires, in the history of intellectuals, a significant place in the study of the formation itinerary of the intellectual.

However, for the analysis to make sense, it needs to be associated with a series of traces that historicize it. Osmar's grandfather was a rural worker who produced food for a nearby market, a position that, in the mid-20th century Brazil, would not guarantee a reading habit.

The position of an Italian immigrant should be added to compose the scenario to access literacy and the interest in the events that involved, mainly, his home country, where the fascist movement and tensions were growing, leading to World War II. We should also highlight that the reader of the daily newspaper was a man in the patriarch position. These symbols cross the daily event, occupying a place in the individual memory of the subject that cannot be detoured, raising the historian's attention for the role they played in the formation itinerary of this intellectual.

Thus, the reconstruction of formation itineraries cannot be restricted to the school experience, but the school is a critical space. However, this institution needs to be historicized so that its presence in constructing the intellectual subject is not insignificant. It is not enough to name the schools without situating the schooling process among the most general processes and the framework of similar schools. School formation should be added by the one from the social and family environment, enriching the perception of the social origin impact and the groups of belonging when guiding individual's quests, choices, and affinities (ALVES, 2017, p. 116).

In Osmar Fávero's testimony, we can perceive families' strong expectations to reach the public gymnasium in the city where he grew up, in the countryside of São Paulo. Considering the previous lack of these institutions, he was part of the first generation that had this opportunity. It was not enough to exist this type of school in that urban area. Besides waiting for its establishment, years after the end of primary education, the young people in the city had to prepare themselves to face the admission test for that education level. Though more disseminated, the gymnasium preserved its characteristics as a space for the intellectual elite. To many young people, work imposed itself as a means of survival. Thus, it was impossible for them to fully dedicate themselves to studying for the admission process.

Beyond the difficulties experienced by some families living in the city and the surrounding area, the conflict with political forces opposed to public school growth was also present in youth experiences. In Favero's testimony, the memory of the Sunday sermons given by a Catholic priest criticizing the future gymnasium is very clear, even before its implementation. The Catholic Church's fight to preserve its privileged space of providing secondary education, extensively shown in the historical education research in Brazil, can be seen through this persistent memory that marked the formation itinerary of our intellectual. We can even raise the hypothesis – demanding great care from the researcher – that the priest, contrary to his intentions, has planted a question in the spirit of the future intellectual: “Why is the priest so strongly against something that is a strong wish for the community he should care?”. As part of his formation itinerary, that confrontation could have contributed to raising a critical spirit rather than planting an agreement with that world perspective.

Formation itineraries intertwine with sociability networks, though there are different analytical categories (ALVES, 2017, p. 117). The itineraries follow the individual trajectory, while the sociability networks emerge from the meetings, establishing collective practices and group identities. To do so, mapping bonds that connect people and places emerges as a powerful research pathway, aiming to question what attraction forces guided the collective organization and move the actions of intellectual groups. In this sense, we must identify the representations around which common projects were organized, such as correspondences, the presence in certain places, publication in journals, etc. (CHAUBET, 2003, p. 186).

In the example of gymnasium frequency in the city, we can identify the interrelation among three categories created in the history of intellectuals: formation itineraries, sociability networks, and generation. The formation itinerary contains spaces and constitution of sociability networks contextualized within a generational history (SIRINELLI, 1994 e 2008). The gymnasium took to the city a series of teachers who started to socialize with young people beyond the classrooms because most of them were people who moved there or temporarily lived there during the working days. An example of this crossing is how young Osmar's taste for reading attracted a teacher's attention, who presented him with works for Brazilian authors. In the gymnasium, a new sociability network establishes itself, enriching the formation itinerary, but it cannot be understood only from the historical experience of a generation.

In this memory, we can also identify the finesse of the generation concept. As the historians of this strand point out, a generation is more than just delineated by an age range (ALVES, 2017, 119-121). When dealing with an intellectual generation, we are delineating a group with its collective action provided by historical circumstances of different dimensions. Hence, in the particular experience of an intellectual, we find common events in many trajectories of men and women who lived at a specific time and were part of collective groups engaged in a specific conjecture. For example, the dissemination of public gymnasiums delineated an inflection in the family history of Brazilian workers, in which parents, grandparents, and even older children ended their schooling early or could not even learn how to read and write. It is an event that could not be ignored, considering the broad political and economic changes, which earned its place in the analysis of history research about intellectuals, contextualized in the relationship with socio-political, cultural, and socioeconomic arenas.

In the Brazilian scenario, we should observe the recent presence of an expressive amount of young black and Indigenous intellectuals to see the role of schooling in the design of political culture. The democratic fights from the majority sectors of the Brazilian working class historically converged to school demand, reaching the conquest level configured by the access quotas to higher public education. The history of intellectual generations is marked by the most diverse, complex, and movement conflicts, making it extremely interesting to understand the present and the challenges we experience nowadays.

HISTORY OF INTELLECTUALS: REFLECTIONS FOR THE PRESENT TIME

Adding to the voices and concerns of other intellectuals, Jean-François Sirinelli expressed in 2010 his observation regarding the “unprecedented cultural mutation” because it passes by the intellectual panorama in the world, crossed by processes resulting from the change in the forms of knowledge circulation. He reflected on the increasing penetration of digital media, magnifying the space for orality and image and reducing the space for the written text. He was mainly concerned with the destabilization of the French academic context due to the penetration of Anglophonic standards associated with researchers’ evaluation mechanisms while reducing working positions and tearing up the relationships in the intellectual community of his country (SIRINELLI, 2011). His critical perspective is grounded in the historical perception consolidated after years as a leader in an important research front about this theme.

Twelve years later, re-reading his words, I feel induced to take them as a starting point for an unavoidable reflection on what we are experiencing today. A repercussion unfolded from what was already presented as a threat to this contemporary configuration that assumed a place in history: the intellectual character. Brazil, this country that attracts the attention of a significant part of the intellectual world in this historical moment, transformed itself into a type of laboratory in which the experience related to the processes that concerned Sirinelli assumed a radical form.

Contradictorily, this radicalness occurred exactly from the potential of resistance traced here and surprised the world. I will explain my perception better (which is not exclusively mine, but I am not taking it from anyone in particular). When I read Sirinelli’s text in 2010, during a post-doc period in Paris with a CNPq grant, the reality of the Brazilian academic context seemed very different from what I saw in France. The distance of our position in the global South compared to the imperialist North, which always kept a connotation that placed us into a negative, disfranchised, and diminished pole, acquired a new and unexpected shape.

I understood Sirinelli’s concern from what I witnessed in that experience, years after experiencing a sandwich doctorate in the same Paris. For example, it was clear the damage caused by the Bologna Process that unified the structure of the universities in the European Union countries – imposing a model that we will not deal with here – promoted in the French university environment. Student participation decreased immensely in the Sorbonne classes and the seminars of *École de Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* in Paris. The enthusiasm that amazed me years earlier gave way to a lack of interest, apathy, and ignorance demonstrations previously unthinkable in those institutions, marked by a historically recognized rigor.

However, while Sirinelli observed the decrease in work positions in French universities, in Brazil, we experienced the admission of young researchers through exams in public universities, old and new ones. A new intellectual generation was on stage to succeed my

generation, composed of those who survived the dictatorship, fulfilling the achievements we dreamt of. In our new generation, the ethnic-racial characteristics finally acquire new hues with the emergence of Black and Indigenous intellectuality, which could enter the debate, not only academic and cultural but also social and political, with extensive qualification. Journals, books, and scientific events multiplied, consolidating research areas, among which History of Education, harvesting the fruits of previous years, and planting for the future. Relying on public funding, the research conducted in Brazil by researchers formed here in different areas of knowledge gained new circulation spaces and international recognition.

We knew such conquests did not materialize as a privilege of intellectualized sectors. They were articulated to a broader national project that, though subject to criticisms and showing themselves problematic in several aspects, evidenced undeniable advances, mainly regarding education in the broader sense of the term. The space given to research acquired its more significant symbolic expression outside the universities. What do I mean by that? We know that public universities are the most prominent research network in the country, followed by some important institutes and foundations. However, the research result that synthesized the new time and, at the same time, called attention to the threatening dimension that could assume the project as a whole was, undoubtedly, the discovery of petrol fields on the Brazilian coast by Petrobras researchers. The discovery in 2006 presented an unimaginable reserve of the most coveted product on the planet.

Why am I talking about petrol? How does that relate to the discussion on intellectuals? I take the pre-salt discussion as a type of icon that simultaneously synthesizes the potential of conquests and the wish of destruction projected over what was under construction. The pre-salt results from intellectual work and long-discredited research hypotheses gained permission, funding, and publicity. Knowing that the central motivation for the 2016 coup was the greed for these reserves and the imperialist need to stop Brazil from moving its insertion in the power relations internationally, it seems possible to measure from a new angle the concern expressed by Sirinelli in the recent past.

Nowadays, the corrosion experience of intellectual work seems to have assumed the shape of a project that connects all ends of a plot for an intended foreseen end. To deepen this reflection, we need to resume the historical elements present in the emergency of the intellectual category, as identified in contemporary research.

As a historical construction recognized by scholars on this theme, the intellectual figure arose in the context of the emergency of bourgeois society. The 18th century is considered a crucial moment in this process by French-based researchers of intellectuals' history, which recognize a new type of transit.

Schooling and the emergency of intellectuality are historical processes that connect in different ways. The most evident one refers to the role of school, not only as an agency that introduces the individual into the ‘world of letters’ but also legitimizes its participation in social life at a different level, granted by the mastery of the linguistic code, as well as other codes that unfold from it or related to it. Therefore, when choosing the 18th century as the moment we can see a meaningful change in the relationship between the producers of intellectual materials and the social spaces, we need to remember that, in that century, the school also started to be conceived under a new light, associated to the State role and the notion of public, disseminated in the citizenship concept.

The formation of intellectuals became increasingly more associated with schooling trajectories because school imposed itself as a mediator in accessing cultural archives. Besides being a mediator, it earned an essential place in legitimating what was worthy of being considered representative, meaningful, and able to be incorporated into the selected and hierarchical cultural archive. Logically, this history is marked by many disputes, where the conflicts occupied a considerable space because there is no possible legitimation without exclusions, erasing, and subordination because they are always merged with power relations. School education legitimatizes while certifying, legitimizes while selecting, and legitimatizes when circulating knowledge.

But, perhaps, the most intense dimension in which schooling and intellectuality intertwine is audience formation. In this dimension, the research in the history of education is committed and significantly contributes to the history of intellectuals as a field of study. In fact, the intellectual activity and the place intellectuals started to occupy in the contemporary historical scene were closely connected to their capacity to influence the events through their relationship with an audience of readers and listeners. School is a great creator of this audience that started to consume and interact with texts, images, and artistic forms with an increasing interest.

In the center of this intense activity, catalyzing the efforts of creating, circulating, and appropriating these products, is the imaginary of the nation to where the representations in dispute should flow. They were intense disputes that encompassed different levels of violence, unveiled by historians. In no way the intellectual activity was apart from them. The notion of “engagement” brought by the historical analysis, as part of the characterization of the category “intellectuals,” shows this. Intellectual work and political culture compose a type of mass to be shaped, acquiring complex forms, not necessarily predictable, of variable stability, always imbricated with confronts of varied dimensions.

Focusing on what interests us in this scenario, the historical research of education in Brazil has already gathered an extensive memory patrimony on the relationship between intellectuals and nation projects, enough to put down any simple formulation. Even before the 19th century (when the country broke away from the Portuguese Empire), but especially after it, many women and men acted to create possible projects of a nation, which required the education intellectuals.

Obviously, I will not list here the historical research findings because it would be impossible. I am also sure that each person in this audience can access their private repertoire of readings and studies, which bring to mind an immense multiplicity of reports of experiences in the educational field, conducted in the most diverse points of our inherited national territory, in different times and circumstances, always amid conflicts and difficulties, with achievements and frustrations, enabling projects associated with pedagogical strands, political and social forces, religious groups, economic interests, i.e., a historical panorama increasingly more challenging to be submitted to a narrative synthesis.

Among this multifaceted set, I am interested in the unity conferred by the disputes around the projects of the nation and the symbolic place that knowledge started to occupy in this construction. Undoubtedly, this seems to be a point that can be brought to the limelight, not only the broader historical process but also the specificity of its implementation in Brazil. My objective is to seek among our studies on the relations between intellectuals and education – from different angles - possible contributions to the readings about the weaves involving the intellectual work today. After all, our engagement as intellectuals establishes us as historical subjects.

I previously referred to my experience as a researcher who has had opportunities of formation and exchange in a global North country, in a fertile moment for a specific national project. Funding education and research, as we know, is a political decision that was never a consensual agreement among the ruling classes of our country. However, it is a consensus that a fast and staggering dismantling followed the historical moment when we had the most funding.

My interest here is not connected to a possible evaluation. I wish to call attention to the connection of our present experience with the observation of Jean-François Sirinelli (2010) regarding the mutation the intellectual work was experiencing and the risks it brought. We know this reflection did not start there and continues after that moment. I selected this author's observation mainly due to his connection with the theme we are interested in: the history of intellectuals. Nonetheless, I think we have our contribution to add to our concerns from the recent experience in the global South. Maybe what we experience does not find comparison parameters in other countries because of the radicalness and speed we experienced from one pole to the other.

We lived in a historical moment in which the school system, not only public, clearly broadened. As we deal with the intellectual context, I will focus on the evidence experienced by education historians. In the early years of the 21st century, we became a numerically superior community compared to other countries that are members of the leading organisms and events in this research area. In the Iberoamerican events, the difference is staggering. At the 2007 International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE), the number of Brazilian researchers was already double that of the second most-represented nationality, the French. I have no research that can bring more current data. However, a general view, even if superficial, shows the circulation intensity of Brazilian researchers and their workers in the international community.

Perhaps we did not even know the power we became! Then came the 2016 coup d'état, and one of the new government's first measures was the "spending cap" that directly influenced education investments. Organized civil society movements gained power in their attacks against schools, represented by the "*Escola sem partido*" [Partyless School] movement. Other reforms followed, affecting the content of K-12 education and teacher training. However, many intellectuals did not seem to perceive the risk that loomed. The plan would only be revealed entirely in 2019. The attacks on public universities were unleashed from the beginning, starting a cycle of political measures that, besides withdrawing resources, wanted to shake the institutional grounds resulting from decades of public investments. I will not list here the facts that are widely known by our scientific community.

For our reflection, I will stress two facts among the many pointed out by the education intellectuals that have analyzed the threats projected over school education in Brazil: the first of them is the dissemination of civic-military schools; the second is the penetration of digital platforms for in-person and distance courses, which took over the educational market. I selected these two elements to identify their potential to reveal an aspect to which the History of Education, on its strand focused on intellectuals, can bring a particular contribution.

In our studies, the intellectuals are taken as historical subjects who played fundamental roles in a process that presents itself as cultural but is also thought of as political, social, and economical (ALVES, 2019). However, there is an imperative assumption to understand this centrality regarding the place assumed by knowledge. The disputes that crossed the historical construction of school subjects, established in privileged spaces for intellectual intervention, were moved by a value attributed to knowledge that confronted the narratives grounded on traditions, mainly religious ones.

We should remember the confrontation between Charles Darwin's evolution theory and the biblical narrative of human beings' creation, which still disputes legitimacy concerning what should be taught to the new generations in the 21st century. As we know, the question of reality

and the intention to understand the experience from a perspective free of sacred explanations are the foundations of what was established as science in modern times. Historical research about education has shown how the school spaces not only encompassed but provided fertile soil for knowledge production at different levels.

When learning overcame catechism, it generated a whole field of creation and formulation of hypotheses and experiences about what, how, when, and why to learn. Education intellectuals were historical subjects who felt impelled, committed, attracted, surprised, and provoked by the rupture of frontiers. Regardless of what army they were fighting for, they wanted a slice of influence power in the debate pathways

However, the image of “armies” here keeps a fundamental distance from the civic-military schools that multiply in the country. Besides the figurative sense, the metaphor refers to modern armies that also act as agents of scientific knowledge while playing their role of repression (ALVES, 2010).

The current civic-military schools – which undoubtedly use the elegy to repression – do more than recede to discipline methods tirelessly criticized for their psychological and physical violence. In fact, this project displaces the knowledge value to a level of disqualification. At the same time, disciplined behavior is taken as an ideal per excellence and in itself to be reached in school. A set of meanings emerges from this configuration, pointing to this non-place of that intellectual agent characterized by asking, contradicting, arguing, doubting, disorganizing, creating, inventing, testing, and experiencing. Summing up, the many and varied movements triggered by thinking. The most profound message of the educational projects of these schools is: “Don’t think! Obey!”.

On the other hand, we have seen the increasing penetration of a product that, mainly after the coronavirus pandemic and taking advantage of it, enters schools at various levels, mainly the most advanced levels, such as high school and higher education. These digital platforms offer ready-made classes as products to be consumed, and that are not restricted to distance education courses. Even in-person ones started to use these tools, including at higher education levels. Under the wave of class unification, the impoverishment effect can be immediately perceived.

Knowledge loses its dynamic dimension, the uncertainty found in the base of questions that provoke the resource to mental activity. The approach is pre-determined. The contents were selected separately from the interaction between teachers and students. The limits were established from the outside, even of the country, without any adequacy to a pedagogical reality considered as an open experience in time.

Consequently, this product generalizes the representation of education as a good. Not by chance, it gains a greater circulation in the private education system, shaping itself and attending expectations to reach markets.

For us, education historians, it is easy to understand the consequences for the future history of education intellectuals, as well as intellectuals in general, if these tendencies reach the consolidation level that we can seek. In the “new forms of knowledge circulation,” we seek new strategies for denying access to knowledge. The equation that guided the historical process of expansion of school knowledge in the wake of the modern method of building knowledge, which took its most finished form in science.

Such knowledge will continue to be built through even more sophisticated ways, but some procedures that dismantle the incorporation of massive numbers in the possibility of its creation are emerging. Therefore, the space for intellectualization is reduced, assuming it as a privilege for a few people. We, education historians, can measure the effect of disqualifying teachers’ image as an intellectual. Our studies show the importance of Normal and secondary schools, vocational institutions, primary, elementary, and higher education in forming intellectual generations.

The precarization of teachers’ work, as part of work precarization in general, presents itself as an issue not limited to the loss of rights – which it does – but the corrosion of civilization standards, in which education intellectuals played a central role.

I want to go back to the laboratory metaphor. I chose this image because it replaces our national experience in a broader plan, which integrates a field of international capitalist relations. Only from this point of view it is possible to measure the inflection degree for an intellectual work and, within it, the intellectual subject.

Positioned in the periphery of capitalism, the place of the intellectual in Brazil was historically proportional to the limited extension of schooling and, therefore, the access to reading and writing for a reduced public. The education historians, though bringing to the limelight the initiatives of many men and women, our education intellectuals, have also confirmed the experienced obstacles and setbacks. The urgency to destroy the means of intellectual production in the scope of arts, education, or research is connected to the need to destroy any regulatory forms of work in general as part of the horizon demolition of any democratic project.

Thus, education intellectuals’ memory has a political dimension that needs to be under perspective. We are not filling reports for a collection to be exhibited to a passive audience. Our meeting with these women and men, subjects of the fights of their times, shed light on the fights of our own time. We are also committed and find, in their lives, the motivation and power for our resistance, our generation, and the generations to come. We continue in the fight for a democratic education!

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