

## EDUCATION UNDER THE MARKS OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTALISM IN PARÁ (1957-1961): quality, assessment and expansion

O ensino no tempo do nacional-desenvolvimentismo no Pará (1957-1961):  
qualidade, avaliação e expansão

La educación según el marco del nacional-desarrollismo en Pará (1957-1961):  
calidad, evaluación y expansión

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the themes that stood out in the field of Brazilian education connected to the national-developmental project in the state of Pará. Aware of the rigors of historical research and the importance of the historiographic debate on the subject, we propose to analyze the sources, considering the discursive potential that they offer to our interpretative analysis. To this end, we will focus on the articles that were published in the newspaper *A Província do Pará*, between the years 1957 to 1961. Three important themes that were recurrent in the pages of this journal were analyzed: 'quality of education', 'assessment of education' and 'expansion of education'. We conclude that the published notes on quality, expansion and assessment of education highlighted the importance of this issue for the debate that boosted actions in the context of education in Pará, which in the light of our analysis, made sense in the local development project.

**Keywords:** history of paraense education; educational policies; school practices; press.

**Resumo:** Este artigo debate as temáticas que se destacaram no campo da educação brasileira conectadas ao projeto nacional-desenvolvimentista no Estado do Pará. Cientes dos rigores da pesquisa histórica e da importância do debate historiográfico sobre o tema, propomos analisar as fontes, considerando o potencial discursivo que elas oferecem à nossa análise interpretativa. Para tanto, privilegiamos as matérias que foram publicadas no jornal *A Província do Pará*, entre os anos de 1957 a 1961. Concluímos que os três temas mais recorrentes foram: 'qualidade do ensino', 'avaliação do ensino' e 'expansão do ensino' revelam a importância que tiveram no debate e nas ações empreendidas no âmbito da educação, considerando o destaque que possuíram nas notícias do jornal, o que, à luz de nossas análises, fez sentido no projeto desenvolvimentista local.

**Palavras-chave:** história da educação paraense; políticas educacionais; práticas escolares; imprensa.

**Resumen:** Este artículo debate los temas que se destacaron en el campo de la educación brasileña vinculados al proyecto nacional-desarrollista en el estado de Pará. Conscientes de los rigores de la investigación histórica y de la importancia del debate historiográfico sobre el tema, nos proponemos analizar las fuentes, considerando el potencial discursivo que estas ofrecen a nuestro análisis interpretativo. Para ello, privilegiaremos los artículos que fueron publicados en el diario *A Província do Pará*, entre 1957 y 1961. Analizamos tres temas importantes que fueron recurrentes en las páginas de este periódico: 'calidad de la educación', 'evaluación de la educación' y 'expansión de la educación'. Concluimos que las notas publicadas sobre calidad, expansión y evaluación de la educación resaltaron la importancia de este tema para el debate que impulsó las acciones en el contexto de la educación en Pará, que a la luz de nuestro análisis, tenía sentido en el proyecto desarrollista local.

**Palabras clave:** historia de la educación paraense; políticas educativas; prácticas escolares; prensa.

## INTRODUCTION

With effect from the Great Depression, which began in 1929, the term development became a buzzword among intellectuals not only in Brazil, but throughout Latin America. This concept of modernization came to replace the idea of progress, which was widespread in the preceding century (Prado, 2008). It brought the logic that in order to achieve a status of modernization, it would be necessary to create a direct relationship between industrialization and urbanization. And one of the strategies of this process was regional planning, conceived and organized by the Brazilian government, which was based on “[...] the identification, evaluation and diagnosis of problems to be addressed through the formulation of objectives and goals to be achieved [...]” (Batista, 2016, p. 16). This was the project that underpinned the government policies of the 1950s and 1960s, which makes it possible to understand the various measures adopted by the Federal Government in order to act in the regions considered to be on the fringe of the national economy<sup>1</sup>. At the national level, the issue that guided government policies was the need for state intervention in the economy, in order to promote the economic development of these regions. This economic policy became known as national developmentalism (Fontes, 2007).

In the Amazon region, the end of the so-called ‘Battle for Rubber’<sup>2</sup> caused fear that its fragile economy would become even more vulnerable. It was in this context that local political leaders began to think of Amazonian development in a different way and took advantage of the discussions around the 1946 Constituent Assembly to try to raise resources to guarantee regional development (Ferreira & Bastos, 2016).

As a result of the developmentalist policy, several governmental measures emerged<sup>3</sup> to try to integrate the Amazon region into the economic dynamics of the country. In the case of Pará, this political and economic option took place during the 1950s, as well as the following decade, in a scenario marked by antagonism in the disputes for the Pará state government<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In this period, several institutions were created in the State of Pará, especially the Office of the Superintendent of the Amazon Economic Valorization Plan [*Superintendência do Plano de Valorização Econômica da Amazônia*] (SPVEA), the University of Pará [*Universidade do Pará*], the Amazon Credit Bank [*Banco de Crédito da Amazônia*], among other institutions.

<sup>2</sup> The ‘Battle for Rubber’, as part of the Washington Accords, was the policy promoted by the Getúlio Vargas government to expand rubber production in the Amazon, through a call to North Eastern Brazilians to work there, offering these ‘Rubber Soldiers’ advantages such as food, schools, medical care. The intention was to produce rubber to meet the needs of the Allied countries during the Second World War.

<sup>3</sup> One of these measures was the inclusion of a provision in the 1946 Constitution that set aside 3% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the development of the Amazon.

<sup>4</sup> In this period, the 1956 Pará state elections are emblematic, due to the competition between the two major political blocs in Pará that disputed power: on one side, the coalition formed by the political parties supporting the candidacy of General Alexandre Zacarias de Assumpção, and on the other, the Social

In the field of debates on education, the prevalence of an ideology influenced by the conceptions of Anísio Teixeira is noticeable (Barreira, 2001), for whom education figured as the rebuilder of the nation. Aranha (2006) points out that the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a growing demand for schools, especially following the growth of industry and the demographic explosion, which resulted in the expansion of the education system.

The expansion of the three levels of education (primary, secondary and higher education), including the proposal for better integration between them, was due to the expansion of industry and commerce, the diversification of technical professions and bureaucratic cadres in the administration and organization of business (Aranha, 2006, p. 256).

The transformations in Brazilian society, fed by the new forms of material production, gave support to the integration of schools as a necessary mechanism for social subjects, as Xavier teaches us (2001, p. 72):

[...] the changes introduced in the media and industry, and the consequent generalization of the urban model of life, with its illusions of progress and its ills, increased the expectations of social ascension through education. The formation of a marginal population in the country's large cities and the need for their integration into urban and industrial society gave school education not only the attribute of a right for all, but, above all, the attribute of a need for all.

It is due to this logic of reconstructing society and the national economy that we see the relationship between education and social development deepen in the legal provisions of the Five-Year Amazon Economic Valorization Plan (*Superintendência do Plano de Valorização Econômica da Amazônia* [SPVEA], 1955a), that is, education as a conditioning element of the civilizing and modernizing process in the Amazon region. This can be seen in the official text.

Basic education was meant to bring a new mental facility to the people who lived in interior regions, and we believe that, to this day, they are left to their own devices. It reached both adults and the immature; in certain cases it took on functions of literacy, but in general it acted in broader fields, such as the

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Democratic Party [*Partido Social Democrático*] (PSD), which supported the candidacy of General Joaquim Cardoso de Magalhães Barata, the 'Charismatic Leader', who, victorious at the polls, took office as State Governor. His mandate lasted until May 29, 1959, the date of his death, when Luís de Moura Carvalho, of the same political party, took office and remained as Governor until 1961.

transformation of unhygienic habits, the renewal of obsolete techniques and the overcoming of psychological barriers that prevented integration within the community or with extraneous groups (SPVEA, 1955b, p. 15).

The focus of the SPVEA project was to implement an educational system adequate to capitalist demands. With this, it aimed to deconstruct the conception of backwardness attributed to the Amazon region, due to its low levels of economic and social development. This developmentalist character of the economy reverberated deeply in the education model planned for the region (Mesquita, 2013; Silva & Batista, 2015).

Public education was projected as a modernizing and integrating element of the country. Because of this, the 1950s became the stage for intense debates around what would result, in 1961, in the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education [*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional*] (LDB) (Dalabrida, 2014). This climate of discussions and the ongoing developmentalist project boosted the dissemination of certain themes and issues pertinent to education, which stood out in the debate on education in Pará and became public through the local press. Several stakeholders who participated in the debates in the press published countless aspects, values and conceptions about education that contributed to potentiate the developmentalist project in Pará. We consider it important, therefore, to analyze these singularities in the history of education in Pará, in dialog with social history, the object of study of which is society in all the dimensions that dialogue with each other (Barros, 2005). Therefore, education is situated as an important dimension of that society, in dialogue with politics, which consolidates our intention to discuss the themes that stood out in the field of Brazilian education within the framework of the national developmentalist project in the State of Pará during the period from 1957 to 1961, as found in the newspaper *A Província do Pará*, showing their singularities.

We conducted documentary research, understood as the method of investigation of social reality with which one seeks to establish relationships between the document and its context (Silva, Damaceno, Martins, Sobral, & Farias, 2009). The locus of investigation are the copies of the *A Província do Pará* newspaper over the period 1957 to 1961, available at the Arthur Vianna Public Library.

Considered as a historical source, the news items published in the *A Província do Pará* newspaper on basic education<sup>5</sup> in Pará are interpreted based on the conception that every document is a monument, being the result of the intentionality and choices of the individuals who produced or elaborated it. The monument is characterized as everything that, in one way or another, can reference or perpetuate the past (Le Goff, 1996).

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<sup>5</sup> Our study of the newspapers returned articles on primary and secondary education, which today corresponds to basic education.

We chose 1957 as the year to start the study, given that, in this period, education took on a strengthening role in the moral and economic structure, gaining national and scientific content, bringing organizational and pedagogical considerations to the reality of the State, as well as concerns with preparing youth for the future (Lombardi, 2014). According to Lombardi (2014), 1957 was a year of great importance for education, because it was on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1957, after a long period of shelving and debates, that discussions began on the LDB bill of law in the House of Representatives.

The press, in turn, seen as a place of construction and diffusion of multiple discourses, is understood as a space in which cultural and political debates are created and affirmed through writing (Sena, 2014); it is, therefore, yet another subject that forms part of history (Bissera & Costa, 2017). Undoubtedly, we consider the social and cultural context in which the press is situated, especially the links of its owners and editors with political and economic groups, when they use this instrument to spread their interests and circulate diverse political-ideological representations capable of influencing their readers in terms of building specific worldviews. The diversity of ideas, contents and expositions published in the pages of newspapers, as Luis Martins states, are configured as “[...] living and dynamic documents, reflecting and refracting various aspects of urban life that would be hard to find in any other documentary source” (Martins, 2018, p. 61).

Newspapers are also a privileged field of debates about education, in which it is possible to understand the movements taking place in society (Zanlorenzi, 2010). By reading them, we can find several approaches to a given situation, because they contain polysemic information that can be transformed into historical sources (Lucca, 2005, 2013), although this does not exempt us from taking a critical look at the object we will deal with, with the purpose of analyzing its predominant discursive approaches.

We chose the *A Província do Pará* newspaper because of its visibility in Pará society. Created in 1876, right from its foundation it was one of the main media outlets used by the State, with strong presence of governmental actions in its news, including frequently published debates and news items on educational policy. This diversity made our effort to measure the results of the discursive statements issued by it even more challenging, mainly because we did not consider it to be impartial. As stated by Maria Helena Capelato (1988, p. 21):

The press is an instrument of manipulation of interests and intervention in social life. Based on this assumption, the historian seeks to study it as an agent of history and capture the living movement of ideas and characters circulating through the pages of newspapers. The abstract category of the press is demystified when its producers emerge as subjects endowed with determined awareness in relation to social practice.

The patterns of argument found in the discourse of this source helped us to identify its ideological and political position, in agreement with what Mesquita states (2013, p. 13-14, author's emphasis):

The *Província do Pará* was a newspaper with the same standing as the *Folha do Norte* newspaper in terms of repercussion, but not for determining its influence on any issues of the time, because, according to Lucio Flávio Pinto (2012), its director general Frederico Barata had characteristics of extreme impartiality with regard to local politics, which was reflected in *Província do Pará's* quest for impartiality [...] In the view of Lúcio Flávio Pinto (2012), This made it a newspaper, apparently, 'without opinion', which is both positive, because its news sought not to 'take' sides explicitly, but also negative, because in order not to get involved in local politics its opinion columns expressed ideas of people from outside of Pará and on issues of national interest [...].

The *A Província do Pará* had a section entitled 'The Governor's Day', which published the agenda of the head of Pará's Executive Branch. It disclosed the ways in which Governor Magalhães Barata and his successor, General Moura Carvalho, dealt with educational issues, by means of visits, inspections and dispatches they made to State's primary and middle schools. These are clear indications that the newspaper's editors were interested in the order and power that was in force.

Taking a close look at this newspaper, supposedly neutral in relation to the local political debate, we found statements about education in Pará among the most frequent themes in its pages: quality of education, evaluation of education and expansion of education. These themes gave visibility to the ways in which they were constituted and their contribution to the formation of a republican school culture.

In order to facilitate the presentation of our arguments, we have structured this article in four parts. We begin with the historical context, in the scenario of the political motivations that guided the actions of the Pará government, with the intention of showing the singularities of the State in relation to national politics. Following this, we highlight the news items that pointed to the discussion on the quality of education; then, we deal with news related to the theme of 'evaluation of education'; and, finally, the news items on the expansion of education in Pará.

It is important to highlight that the debates on education do not end with these themes; they were brought up because of the centrality with which they were presented in the news items, which indicates their relevance for education in Pará.

## QUALITY OF TEACHING: A CROSS-CUTTING AND POLEMIC THEME

In the *A Província do Pará* newspaper, the debate about the quality of education provided by the state government was linked to several situations in local education, such as secondary school graduates failing to pass university entrance exams, low teachers' pay and teaching practices.

We emphasize that, at no time, the term 'quality of education' appears explicitly in the newspaper, but rather it appears in a cross-cutting way. Our thematization is based on the analysis of the content of the news, which, based on an interpretative exercise, we found to be in the midst of the debates in the newspaper that pointed to weaknesses in education in Pará.

Given the large number of students failing university entrance exams, the quality of education was often questioned. On March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1957, for example, the newspaper reported that approximately 50% failed to pass the Faculty of Law entrance exams. The principal of the Faculty of Law, Professor Miguel Pernambuco Filho, had been interviewed on the subject in the newspaper report. The newspaper dialogued in agreement with him, crediting the problem of failures, implicitly, to lack of quality in secondary education, in these terms: "As for the causes of failures, Professor Miguel Pernambuco Filho recognizes that the failures in secondary education greatly contribute to this [...]" (*O aluno passa sem saber...*, 1957, p. 10).

What is most significant in the principal's speech is the problematization of the issue based on what was happening in the United States of America. For him, "[...] the major cause is precisely going directly from middle school<sup>6</sup> to university, without an intermediate course, that is, an adaptation course" (*O aluno passa sem saber...*, 1957, p. 10). This proposal, influenced by the United States model, was highlighted in a positive manner by the newspaper.

Our interviewee visited the United States and during this visit he observed and studied North American colleges and universities. One of the best impressions that he brought back with him relate to courses called 'colleges', which are nothing more than adaptation courses, for a period of two or three years, taken by students who intend to go on to higher education. During this adaptation course students are guided by their teachers to the branches of knowledge they wish to study: medicine, engineering, philosophy, theology, journalism, agronomy, veterinary science, teaching, etc., according to natural tendencies rigorously observed and controlled. This is what we lack in Brazil. It may well be that the time has gone when

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<sup>6</sup> The 1946 Organic Law of Secondary Education provided that middle school education was the first cycle of secondary education; the second cycle was comprised of two parallel courses: the classics course and the scientific course. Middle school lasted for four years and corresponded to what is currently the second cycle of elementary education.

a father used to choose his son's career, however, without this adaptation course, without this test, as it were, the student goes from secondary school to university without knowing for sure what he wants to be (*O aluno passa sem saber...*, 1957, p. 10).

In these words, we find a conception of education based on North-American models, typical of that time. This logic is highlighted by Lombardi (2014) in his analysis of the 'New World configuration' built after the end of the Second World War, which made Brazil a region 'belonging' to the zone of influence of the United States. National developmentalism would be the materialization of this influence in the form of public policies adopted by the Brazilian State, making the field of education a strategic field. This news item indicates that, at least in the debates, these signs had echoes in Pará.

Still problematizing university entrance exam failures, on March 8<sup>th</sup> 1957 the newspaper published an editorial entitled '*A decadência do ensino*' [The decadence of teaching], an attempt to explain these failures, referred to as 'a disheartening fact'. To this end, it quoted university principals who, according to the newspaper, stated that "[...] the mass failure rates were due mainly to the increasingly accentuated shortcomings of primary and secondary education [...]", a problem they believed could be solved by means of basic reform, as well as by "[...] reinvigorating the teaching profession" (*A decadência do ensino*, 1957, p. 4).

When stating that exam failures that year had also happened throughout Brazil, the newspaper reported the problem of education associated with national events, recalling the words of the director of the Federal District Department of Education, who, in view of the large number of exam failures at the Pedro II College, "[...] declared that it was a consequence of the very difficult exams prepared due to the small number of places [...], according to the director the intention was to eliminate the largest possible number of candidates" (*A decadência do ensino*, 1957, p. 4).

The newspaper itself was opposed to this statement. The editor's divergence served to reaffirm that exam failures were a result of the low quality of education offered by primary and secondary schools, pointing to the need for a reform of education and investment in teacher training. In taking a position on this issue, the newspaper proclaimed the existence of a general unpreparedness in how education was being conducted in Brazil, both in primary and in middle schools and also in higher education. Therefore, it made public its doubts about the quality of the education offered.

The terms used by the newspaper, both in the title of the article and in the opinion attributed to university principals draw attention to the idea that education in Pará was losing the quality it once had. This leads us to assume that, surreptitiously, the newspaper was criticizing the education policy of the government of the time.

Another factor pointed out by the newspaper as a cause of the low quality of education was teachers' low salaries. On October 17<sup>th</sup> 1957 it published an editorial entitled '*Crise do ensino*' [Teaching crisis], about a bill of law proposed by federal representative Aurélio Viana, in which it stated that "[...] one of the causes of the decadence of primary education throughout the country is outdated teachers' pay [...] the result is that for this amount no one wants to dedicate themselves to this branch of education" (*Crise do ensino*, 1957, p. 4). To solve this problem, the representative's proposal consisted of a bill of law that would increase the salary of primary school teachers.

One can perceive in the words of the newspaper's editorial the problem of the low quality of education at the national level and in the pedagogical field – once again preserving local education policies – pointing out two causes for the phenomenon, namely, teaching methods and education reforms: "What mass failures indicate, here, there and everywhere, is a flagrant decadence of the methods and the failure of the successive reforms we have invented" (*A decadência do ensino*, 1957, p. 4).

The quality of teaching was also discussed in its pedagogical aspect. In 1958, the news item '*Necessidade de orientação psicopedagógica no ensino*' [The need for psycho-pedagogical orientation in teaching] written by a teacher, Durvalino Frazão Braga, severely criticized what he considered a disqualified practice on the part of teachers based on traditional theories and practices. According to Braga,

Teachers in Pará lack psycho-pedagogical orientation. In secondary schools, there is a predominance of 'odd job' teachers whose sole concern is to hastily get lessons over with in order to justify their salaries. [...] Today education is not only about developing students' intellectual capacities. It goes much further. It is responsible for the integral formation of their personality (*Necessidade de orientação psicopedagógica no ensino*, 1958, p. 5).

In line with the theoretical bases of his time, Braga was calling for quality of education associated with modern pedagogical practices, based on scientific knowledge, with emphasis on psychology. Content-based teaching was criticized. The emergence of educational psychology, one of the theoretical underpinnings of educational practices in the 1920s, was consolidated in the 1950s. Along with sociology and pedagogy, it became a form of knowledge considered fundamental for secondary education in constituting new knowledge (Mello, 2010). Quality of education was, therefore, associated with adherence to these new theoretical frameworks

The evaluation practices undertaken by educational and governmental institutions, widely published in the newspaper, suggested the demand for a type of school that, at the same time, could serve a larger number of people, provide

quantitatively positive results and correspond to the new demands of Brazilian society as it was at the beginning of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS OF SCHOOL LIFE

Between 1957 and 1961, evaluation was a school activity expressively announced by the governments of Pará and its municipalities, as well as by individual schools, given that 95 news items with this theme were found in the newspaper publications we analyzed. Most of them referred to the results of student examinations (final and partial); to tests for getting places in municipal or state schools; and to evaluations of education institutions.

It is important to emphasize that evaluations of policies on public education are recent in Brazil, becoming more robust with effect from the 1990s (Mello, 2010), which justifies the recurrence of student evaluation exams, rather than evaluation of the education system or its levels<sup>7</sup>. But it is certain that concern with the quality of education led to the need to quantitatively evaluate school education. As Mello describes (2010, p. 66),

[...] schools did not function alone, but through measurement and evaluation of elements that no longer allowed for mere 'uninterested' knowledge, since it was considered to be knowledge based on empiricism and more rigidly quantified values.

This evaluative culture gained visibility in the newspaper, in particular in December, January, February, June and July, these being months in which evaluations usually took place, in accordance with the school calendar. Over the five years in question, the paper's news items on this theme did not present significant changes in their content, nor in their form, being conveyed, as a rule, in the section entitled '*Vida Escolar*' [School Life], which, in turn, was recurrent in the newspaper.

Worthy of note is the fact that the evaluation of the individual performance of students in school examinations was often publicized by private schools, which published the names of students who passed – including their grades – as well as lists with the number of students who had passed at the *segunda época* [second sitting], along with the respective subjects, and lists with the number of students who failed to pass (*Vida escolar*, 1957a, p. 5).

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<sup>7</sup> The Organic Law of Secondary Education provided for entrance examinations for middle school courses and high school classics or scientific courses, with a *primeira época* [first sitting] and a *segunda época* [second sitting]; *exame de suficiência* [sufficiency examination] (annual, by grade) and *exame de licença* [certification examination] (at the end of each cycle or course) (*Decreto-lei nº 4.244*, 1942).

In addition to evaluations of learning and academic progress, schools in Pará complied with national regulations, for example, the development (*madureza*) examinations, which certified them to provide middle school and high school education, as per article 91 of Decree-Law No. 4.244, dated April 9<sup>th</sup> 1942 (Organic Law of Secondary Education), to students who met the necessary requirements. Advertisements for preparatory courses for these examinations were also frequent, such as that publicized by the *Escola Técnica Rádio-Telegráfica* [sic] *Rui Barbosa* (Rui Barbosa Radio Telegraph Technical School) about its emblematic ‘*Ginásio em 1 ano*’ [Middle School in 1 year] course (1957, p. 3). It can be seen from the frequency of advertisements by schools that offered this type of course that there was social demand for these examinations.

In turn, on January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1958 the *Colégio Estadual Paes de Carvalho* (CEPC) school also published in the ‘*Vida Escolar*’ section of the newspaper a public notice that established the regulations for its second sitting examination that year.

[...] 1) – The examinations provided for under article 91 of the Organic Law of Secondary Education can be held at two sittings: the first in October, and the second before the start the next academic year. 2) – At CEPC the second sitting examinations will be held in 1958, from February 15<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>. 3) – Candidates who fail to pass the first sitting examinations, or who do not take them, can enroll for second sitting examinations. 5) [...] a) The examination for each subject will include a written test lasting ninety minutes [...] and an oral test, in which the candidate will be tested by an examiner for not less than five minutes and no more than 20 minutes; b) the programs will be the same as those of the middle school course (*Exames de 2<sup>a</sup> época*, 1958, p. 5).

On January 6<sup>th</sup> 1957, another school publicized this examination, as well as its preparatory course.

The Rui Barbosa Radio Telegraph Technical School, which has successfully been meeting the requirements of ART.91, will begin on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of this month its PRÉ-91 course, intended to teach the subjects of the fifth year of primary school, and those of the first and second middle school grades. The course is a solid base for ART.91 candidates (*Ginásio em 1 ano*, 1957, p. 5).

In 1957, the Department of Education and Culture gained centrality in the government’s actions, to such an extent that even the examinations schedule was set by it, as can be seen in the news item published on November 14<sup>th</sup> 1957.

The Department of Education and Culture's Educational Orientation and Research Service, has issued the following notice about the State supplementary course final exams: The exams will consist of written Portuguese and Mathematics tests and oral Portuguese, Mathematics and General Knowledge tests. Student will be considered to have passed if they score fifty (50), taking the arithmetic average between the written and oral test scores (*Vida escolar*, 1957b, p. 5).

A similar public administration notice was published in 1960.

The Municipal Education orientation service informs the heads of its schools that this sitting of the verification exams will be held according to the following timetable: [...] The tests must be collected from the Municipal Department of Education and Culture by 9 a.m. on the 27th day of next month (Friday) (*Provas de verificação*, 1960, p. 5).

This concern with evaluation on the part of the public administration also occurred with the 'pós-prova' [post-test], as registered on January 6<sup>th</sup> 1957 in a news article entitled '*Mapas finais das escolas do interior*' [Final charts of schools in Pará's interior region], in which the Pará State government requests that schools in the state's interior region deliver their final charts containing the exam results (*Resultados do ano letivo*, 1957).

The theme in question was also of a public nature, to the point that the students' grades were published and exposed in the newspapers; and not only their grades, but, above all, lists of the names of those who passed the exams. However, in the period we studied we did not find a list with the names of students who failed to pass the exams, because in this case the news was limited to the number of students who failed, unlike what happened to those who passed and whose names were published in the newspaper.

In addition to conventional strategies for measuring learning, there is also the use of prize-givings in an attempt to positively reinforce successful evaluation processes and, at the same time, give visibility to the positive results of public education. An example of this is the news item that publicized Councilman Isaac Soares'<sup>8</sup> bill of law, the intention of which was to create an award for municipal school students who demonstrated good performance (*Prêmio aos alunos das escolas municipais*, 1959).

Just as the quality of education took center stage in governmental actions and in the debates around it, concern with evaluation was treated 'naturally', considering, as

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<sup>8</sup> Councilman belonging to the *Partido Social Democrático* [Social Democratic Party] (PSD), the same party to which Governor Magalhães Barata belonged.

pointed out, the frequency of the theme in the paper's news items. As was the practice in years prior to the period analyzed by this research – which infers that society in Belém was used to this type of news –, the prerogative of evaluation also reverberated in the form of 'ascertaining and assuring' the quality of education and enhancing the image of the schools, with regard to both the public administration and the students who aimed to be admitted to educational institutions through entrance exams.

## EXPANSION OF EDUCATION AS A MARK OF THE DEVELOPMENTALIST PROJECT

In their analysis of the expansion of public education in São Paulo, between 1947 and 1963, Diniz & Souza (2019, p. 117) point to the social and economic demands of that time “[...] the disputes for schools, the strategies of political actors for the creation and installation of school establishments, as well as the multiple dimensions of power implied democratization of public education [...]”, expressing how the number of schools was expanding.

This movement is noticeable in the local education expansionist policy, which was announced in newspaper reports related to the building, renovation and inauguration of schools, as well as the publicizing of enrollments at state and municipal schools.

Unlike the themes we have presented so far, expansion of education had greater centrality and visibility in the newspaper; and several times, throughout the years we investigated, this topic was highlighted in front page stories as the headline of the day, or was published on the back page of the newspaper, but without losing visibility, because, according to the layout of the newspaper, its back page also had the function of a back cover, which demonstrates the importance that this newspaper assigned to educational issues.

In February 1957, the theme figured in the reply that the Government Secretary, Mr. Benedito Carvalho, gave to the newspaper, regarding the complaints of secondary students about the limited number of places at the *Colégio Estadual* and the *Instituto de Educação*, indicating that the expansion of education in the State of Pará was a result of the demands for schooling, as can be seen:

Mr. Benedito Carvalho, speaking for the government, agrees with most of the criticisms made by the students. For example, that the matter is serious, that Pará lacks a larger number of schools, and that the budget for education is still low. However, the Government Secretary explains: ‘The eternal tax evaders contribute to public revenues not increasing’ (*Vida escolar: Curso Secundário...*, 1957, p. 5).

The State of Pará admitted to the students who complained that the availability of school places was insufficient, justifying its inability to solve the problem by presenting problems of an economic nature.

On March 7<sup>th</sup> of the same year, another news item highlighted on the newspaper's back page, entitled "Two procedures for enrollment in *grupos escolares* [school groups] [...]", informed that "[...] as is already public knowledge, many places have been made available in school groups and *escolas reunidas* [congregated schools] of this capital city, as a result of the large number of students whose results were below average [to start or continue in primary education]" (*Dois expedientes para matrículas...*, 1957, p. 10). However, on the same day, another news item was published, which also announced the beginning of enrollment for places at school groups and, again, reproduced the discourse of the Education Secretary, highlighting the efforts of his administration to ensure school group reorganization. The maximum number of students, according to the news item, should be 50 per class, in order to improve the quality of education, keeping "[...] the same number of places in the school groups and congregated schools in the capital, that is 23,598, which was the number of enrollments in 1956" (*A partir do dia 7...*, 1957, p. 1). In both news reports, one can notice the dissemination of the idea that students failing to pass the exams would be one of the causes of the decrease in enrollments, despite the government's efforts to maintain the number of places available.

It is relevant to note that neither the beginning nor the duration of school enrollments in 1958 were reported on by the *A Província do Pará* newspaper. Only in 1959 did news on this issue return. In February, the paper published a report on what it considered to be a number of places below what was necessary in the State's public schools, both in the capital and also the interior region (*Falta de vagas...*, 1959, p. 7). The news item entitled *Maior corrida, este ano, a estabelecimentos de ensino do Estado* [Big demand, this year, for State schools] (1959), published in March and highlighted on the back page of the newspaper, emphasized the great demand for enrollment at state schools, drawing attention to the significant number of children who were not able to enroll.

In an interview with the newspaper, the then state Education Secretary, Mr. Cunha Coimbra, also gave an explanation about the large number of students who were not able to get a place. The Secretary said:

As we are at the beginning of the school year, we thought it appropriate to interview Mr. Cunha Coimbra about the education problem in our state. [...]. Initially, Mr. Cunha Coimbra told us [...]- There is no reason why primary education should have low performance, as a consequence of the excess of students enrolled in the grades of the various shifts of each School Group. [...] the Education Department has been careful to control enrollment in such a way that each teacher will not have more than 50 pupils (*25 mil escolares matriculados*, 1959, p. 10).

On March 9<sup>th</sup> 1960 a news item was published about the start of the school year, with emphasis on the changes perceived in the daily life of the city due to the number of students circulating in the streets, as well as bookstores being full of people buying textbooks (*Atividades escolares reiniciadas*, 1960, p. 3).

In 1961, however, there was only one news item about enrollment in the state school system, which filled the front page of the newspaper. The news item highlighted the queues of parents and guardians that were forming in search of places at state schools (*Fila para matrícula*, 1961). The news items about inauguration or promises of renovation and expansion of schools and school groups, in the capital and in the interior region of the state, published mainly during 1957 and 1958, set the tone with regard to the social importance of schools, the continuing demand for them and public policies on expanding education in the State.

The *A Província do Pará* ran a report on difficulties in accessing places at schools in the capital and in the interior region of the state, as well as government actions (or promises of action) aimed at expanding the number of places, as in the 1957 news item entitled 'A new state middle school for two thousand students'. The news item reported on the existence in the Legislative Assembly of a bill of law proposed by Deputy João Camargo, asking for the creation of another school similar to the CEPC, to be built on a plot of land in Avenida Nazaré or in Avenida Generalíssimo Deodoro. Its inauguration was planned to take place during the term of Magalhães Barata's government (*Um novo ginásio do Estado...*, 1957).

In the section entitled 'The Governor's Day' dated March 20<sup>th</sup> 1957, it was reported that, after inspecting the school groups in the Pedreira district, the governor had determined that the two institutions in the district should be reformed and enlarged so that a greater number of places would be available there (*O dia do Governador...*, 1957).

Another news item in the same section reported on the governor's inspection of the renovation of the Cornélio de Barros School Group, in the Marambaia district, as well as at the headquarters of the *Sociedade Auxiliadora Operária* [Workers' Aid Society]; once this work was finished, the school would be able to provide primary education to dozens of children (*O dia do Governador...*, 1957).

The availability of places at municipal schools was also the subject of a news item published on March 12<sup>th</sup> 1957, placing emphasis on the number of students enrolled at the capital's municipal schools. According to the report, 5,500 students were enrolled at the 17 municipal schools. The news item highlighted the fact that the city government had expanded the number of places by inaugurating two new schools.

The 17 schools that will operate this year include two new ones, inaugurated last Saturday and Sunday. They were built by the City Government in collaboration with the *Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos* [National Institute for Pedagogical Studies], and are

located in the populous districts of Matinha and Guamá [...] 250 children are already enrolled at each of them, and this number shows the value of these schools in these two populous districts of the city (*5.500 alunos matriculados...*, 1957, p. 5).

Finally, enrollment in public school systems and the government's actions to expand the availability of places in them indicate the expressive social relevance that education enjoyed at the time, given the newspaper's coverage of the subject, always providing news about schools. Although there was an emphasis on availability of places for students in the school systems, it is noteworthy that, in public schools, this access was fraught with conflict and political disputes, since government representatives went public, through this newspaper, to clarify the reasons for not having enough places to meet society's growing demand for school education.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Between 1957 and 1961, school practices, debates and state and municipal government policies on education in Pará occupied a privileged space in the contents of the *A Província do Pará* newspaper. The analyses of the news items on the most frequent themes published in the newspaper show the dialogue between school institutions, the State and Pará society, which took place by means of news on school places, enrollment periods and evaluations; opinion-based debate; direct convocation of students' legal guardians made by schools or the State; nominal disclosure of evaluation results or their absence at schools.

The *A Província do Pará* newspaper published news items that, in general, were linked to national policies and, in its news items that dealt with local issues, it avoided direct criticism of government policies on education; the newspaper's editorial line often behaved as a 'reproducer of voices' that spoke on certain topics, one of which was education.

We have presented, especially, the three themes regarding education that were most present in the *A Província do Pará* newspaper; however, in addition to them, we identified several other themes regarding education that gained repercussion in the newspaper, among them: the school curriculum, funding for education, the student movement and the teachers' movement. During this period, news items about students' school attendance were also routine, as well as everyday occurrences in some schools. This reinforces the idea, already presented, of the importance of newspapers for the society of that period in time.

We conclude that, at that time, there was a national strategic guideline that sought, above all, to develop the Amazon in order to meet the new capitalist demands of the post-war world, a scenario in which education appeared as one of the

indispensable elements to achieve such development. In the mid-twentieth century, the national developmentalist policy of the Brazilian State was aimed at implementing an educational system in the Amazon region that would meet capitalist demands, in addition to trying to deconstruct the vision of backwardness that hovered over the Amazon population.

The intense debates on education issues published in the newspaper indicate the configurations of Paraense education that were sedimented at the time of the national developmentalist project. Propounded as a locus of regional development, education became relevant as a state public policy, contributing to the consolidation of a school culture.

In summary, it is possible to infer that, for the State of Pará, which was committed to those intentions and values, it was necessary to create conditions for education based on the acceleration of the economic and social development of the country, since, by belonging to the Amazonian territory, it also attracted national attention, considering that the Amazon was perceived as a 'culturally backward' region, this being one of the causes of its precarious economic situation. It was up to the governments that were in power between 1957 and 1961 to change this image, to guide and consolidate education in Pará, in order to implement the national developmentalist project.

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**Received on:** 03.19.2021

**Approved on:** 07.27.2021

**Published on:** 12.20.2021

**Responsible associate editor:**

José Gonçalves Gondra

E-mail: gondra.uerj@gmail.com

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**Peer review rounds:**

R1: six invitations; three reports received.

**How to cite this article:**

Bencostta, M. L. A., Melo, C. N., & Moraes, A. W. A. Education under the marks of national developmentalism in Pará (1957-1961): quality, assessment and expansion. (2022). *Revista Brasileira de História da Educação*, 22. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4025/rbhe.v22.2022.e201>

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