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80 years of the Manifesto of the Pioneers of Educação Nova^I: questions for the debate

Diana Gonçalves Vidal^{II}

Abstract

The article, prepared in the context of the celebrations marking the 80 years of the publication of the Manifesto of the Pioneers of Educação Nova, inquiries into the current value of this charter. For that, it explores the historical conditions of the emergence of this document, the meanings attributed to the *Escola Nova* in the 1930s Brazil, and the disputes that occurred in the educational arena during that period. Additionally, the text investigates the specificities of the Brazilian *Escola Nova* movement, attempting to demonstrate that the *Escola Nova* constituted itself in this country as a formula with multiple meanings and distinct appropriations produced at the intersection of three streams: the pedagogical, the ideological, and the political. With respect to the first aspect, the lack of definition of conceptual borders allowed the phrase *Escola Nova* to congregate different educators, catholic as well as liberals, around the pedagogical principles of active teaching. In the second case, the formula appeared as a means to the transformation of society, helping to fulfill the conflicting objectives of warring factions. Under the third trend, it became a political banner, converted into a hallmark of renovation of the educational system by the Manifesto and by its signatories. The document therefore emerged as part of a political game for the control of the State and of its dynamics and, thus, as an element of cohesion of a group of educators which, in spite of their differences, articulated itself around common objectives, such as the laity, gratuity and mandatoriness of education. Furthermore, the document also represented a group of intellectuals that sponsored the same project of nation, albeit with internal divergences.

Keywords

Educational policy – History of education – 1932 Manifesto – *Escola Nova* – Pioneers of education – Public education.

I-In view of the historical specificities that *Educação Nova* acquired in Brazil, which are clarified in the article, there is no direct translation of the term into English. Nevertheless, just as a way of situating historically this educational issue, it might be useful to recall that *Educação Nova* brings together elements of what is called in French *Éducation Nouvelle*, and in English *Progressive Education*.

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80 anos do Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educação Nova: questões para debate

Diana Gonçalves Vidal¹

Resumo

O artigo, produzido no âmbito das comemorações dos 80 anos de publicação do Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educação Nova, interroga-se sobre a atualidade dessa carta. Para tanto, explora as condições históricas de emergência do documento, os significados atribuídos à Escola Nova no Brasil na década de 1930 e as contendas ocorridas na arena educacional no período. Além disso, discorre sobre as especificidades do movimento escolanovista brasileiro, procurando demonstrar que a Escola Nova constituiu-se no país como uma fórmula, com significados múltiplos e distintas apropriações produzidas no entrelaçamento de três vertentes: a pedagógica, a ideológica e a política. No que tange ao primeiro aspecto, a indefinição das fronteiras conceituais permitiu que a expressão Escola Nova aglutinasse diferentes educadores, católicos e liberais, em torno de princípios pedagógicos do ensino ativo. No segundo caso, a fórmula ofereceu-se como meio para a transformação da sociedade, servindo às finalidades divergentes dos grupos em litígio. Já na terceira acepção, tornou-se bandeira política, sendo capturada como signo de renovação do sistema educacional pelo Manifesto e por seus signatários. Assim, o documento emergiu como parte do jogo político pela disputa do controle do Estado e de suas dinâmicas, e, portanto, como elemento de coesão de uma frente de educadores que, a despeito de suas diferenças, articulava-se em torno de alguns objetivos comuns, como laicidade, gratuidade e obrigatoriedade da educação. Ademais, ele também foi representante de um grupo de intelectuais que abraçava um mesmo projeto de nação, ainda que com divergências internas.

Palavras-chave

Política educacional – História da educação – Manifesto de 1932 – Escola Nova – Pioneiros da educação – Educação pública.

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On the occasion of the celebration of the 80 years of the *Manifesto of the Pioneers of Educação Nova* at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, I was invited alongside Carlos Jamil Cury to take part in a panel moderated by Libânia Xavier and entitled *The modernity of the 1932 Manifesto and the debate on Brazilian public education*. There were two reasons why taking part in this panel was a challenge for me. The first was that, in the company of the two most prominent Brazilian experts on the theme, I asked myself what I could add to the debate: Libânia did her masters dissertation on the *Manifesto*, published as a beautiful book by EDUSF in 2002 under the suggestive title of *Para além do campo educacional: um estudo sobre o Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educação Nova (Beyond the educational field: a study on the Manifesto of the Pioneers of Educação Nova)*; Jamil Cury is the author of the already classic *Ideologia e educação brasileira: católicos e liberais (Ideology and Brazilian education: Catholics and liberals)* published by Cortez in 1984, and a mandatory reference in courses on the History of Education in Republican Brazil. The second reason for considering such participation a challenge was the very need to ask myself what modernity, if any, remained of the *Manifesto* launched in 1932?

Before trying to answer the central question of the panel, it seemed appropriate to situate, albeit briefly, what the *Manifesto*, this object of debate and celebration, in fact is. With the subtitle of *A reconstrução educacional no Brasil: ao povo e ao governo (The educational reconstruction in Brazil: to the people and to the government)*, the document was released simultaneously by several organs of the mainstream Brazilian press on 19 March 1932. I mention here only the *O Estado de S. Paulo* newspaper, particularly because Julio de Mesquita Filho, owner of the vehicle, was also a signatory. The action intended to have the largest possible dissemination over the national territory. Cecília Meireles, for example, had the document published by the *Diário de Notícias* in Rio de Janeiro.

The *Manifesto* claimed for itself the direction of the movement to renovate Brazilian education, as conveyed by its title. It saw the light amidst the disputes for the conduction of the policies of the recently created Ministry for Education and Health in Brazil (1930), and its text exhibited a threefold objective.

1) Initially, it presented a defense of general principles which, under the rubric of *new ideals of education*, aimed at modernizing the education system and the Brazilian society. Apart from laity, gratuity, mandatoriness and co-education, the *Manifesto* advocated a single school constituted on the basis of productive work, taken as the foundation of social relations, and by the defense of the State as the responsible for the dissemination of Brazilian school. In this sense, it set itself apart from what was then denominated *traditional education*, particularly in what it regarded as the biggest contribution of *Escola Nova*: the scientific organization of school.

2) Moreover, by collecting the signatures of 26 intellectuals, and by making use of the phrase *pioneers* in its subtitle, the publication of the *Manifesto* created a collective personage: the *pioneers of educação nova*. From this moment on, the literature on education in Brazil would turn frequently back to this collective personage and to the principles enunciated in this monument-charter – as it was labeled by Libânia Xavier (2002) – within the analyses that aimed at interpreting the state of Brazilian education.

3) Lastly, by disqualifying the previous attempts in the educational arena (portrayed as traditional school or even as devoid of actions), the text established itself as a founding pillar of the Brazilian education debate. Hence also the insistence with which authors and educators would return to the *Manifesto* in their analyses. The process of turning the document into a monument was also assisted by other texts written by the signatories, which conferred to the *Manifesto* the role of an inaugural act in Brazilian education. We may cite, for example,

the school manual *História da educação* (*History of education*) by Afrânio Peixoto, and the classic *A cultura brasileira* (*The Brazilian culture*) by Fernando de Azevedo.

Since I have mentioned the signatories, I should probably present them, even if briefly. They were: Fernando de Azevedo, Afrânio Peixoto, A. de Sampaio Dória, Anísio Spínola Teixeira, M. Bergström Lourenço Filho, Roquette Pinto, J. G. Frota Pessoa, Julio de Mesquita Filho, Raul Briquet, Mario Casassanta, C. Delgado de Carvalho, A. Ferreira de Almeida Jr., J. P. Fontenelle, Roldão Lopes de Barros, Noemy M. da Silveira, Hermes Lima, Attilio Vivacqua, Francisco Venâncio Filho, Paulo Maranhão, Cecília Meireles, Edgar Sussekind de Mendonça, Armanda Álvaro Alberto, Garcia de Rezende, Nóbrega da Cunha, Paschoal Lemme and Raul Gomes. Just naming them, of course, does not mean to introduce them. I do not intend to draw their biographies here, but I wish to highlight some of them with the purpose of demonstrating that the strength of this collective personage came chiefly from the place that each one of these persons occupied in the national educational scenario at the time.

Female presence was restricted to three women: Cecília Meireles, a well-known poetess, responsible for the column *Página de Educação* (Education page) of the Rio de Janeiro newspaper *Diário de Notícias*; Armanda Álvaro Alberto, Edgar Sussekind de Mendonça's partner and proprietor of the *Escola Regional de Meriti* (Meriti Regional School), conceived to be one of the main private initiatives within the *Escola Nova* in Brazil; and Noemy Silveira, director of the Applied Psychology Service of the Department of Education of the State of São Paulo.

As to the 23 male signatories, let us the start with the Cardinals of education as Paschoal Lemme (1988) would name them. Fernando de Azevedo lectured at the *Curso de Aperfeiçoamento* (Progress Course) of the Pedagogical Institute of São Paulo, and wrote for the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*. Anísio Teixeira directed the Public Instruction

of the republic's capital, and M. B. Lourenço Filho directed the recently created Institute of Education, a model school for the education of teachers situated in the Federal District. Also teaching at this same school were Afrânio Peixoto, Delgado de Carvalho and Francisco Venâncio Filho. Attilio Vivacqua reformed the Public Instruction in the state of Espírito Santo in 1928. Mario Casassanta had worked as general inspector of Public Instruction in Minas Gerais and directed the State Official Press. Roquette-Pinto directed the Municipal Radio of the Federal District. Almeida Junior, apart from being a teacher at the Pedagogical Institute, had also taken up, along with Carneiro Leão, Anísio Teixeira and Afrânio Peixoto, the Managing Board of the Brazilian Education Association (ABE)¹.

Instead of continuing to situate them, it seems necessary to observe that they were, in their majority, teachers and that a significant fraction of them worked in the written or radio press; secondly, the absences are as relevant as the presences. Let us mention only two: Antônio Carneiro Leão and Everardo Backheuser. The former was a reformer of the Public instruction in the Federal District (1926) and in Pernambuco (1928) and, as already stated, shared with Teixeira and Peixoto the conduction of ABE; the latter collaborated intensely with Fernando de Azevedo in the dissemination of the *Escola Nova* in the 1927 reform, having led the Pedagogical Crusade for the *Escola Nova*. There were, therefore, fissures originated in political disputes among the signatories (in the case of Fernando de Azevedo and Carneiro Leão) and/or ideological disputes (in the case of the Catholic educator Backheuser).

The three operations conducted in the concrete terrain of the social struggles (already highlighted here: general principles, collective personage and inaugural act) had repercussions in the field of educational research that went beyond the moment of the publication of the *Manifesto*. For more than 50 years the

¹ - To situate all signatories in 1932, see SAVIANI, 2007, p. 234ff.

interpretations of the sociology and history of education in Brazil insisted on the topic of the *Escola Nova*, asking themselves about the actions in biography of the *pioneers* and focusing on the 1930s as their object of study.

It was only after the 1980s that the *Manifesto* began to be revisited by academic investigation, and to have its discursive devices questioned. The *pioneers* emerged as a group whose cohesion was not due to identity of ideological positions, but to political strategy of struggle, carried out in defeat of the battles for the control of the educational apparatus. In this sense, such collective personage had no explaining power for the analyses that harked back to previous decades, not even for those that advanced beyond the first half of the 1930s, as it had hitherto been the practice in educational investigation.

The 19th century and the early 20th century began to draw the attention of historians. Contrary to the diagnostics outlined in the *Manifesto* about a void of initiatives, the period emerged as fertile in educational actions promoted by the State and by the civil society, and relevant to the understanding of the national educational debate. In both directions, it made it possible to follow the modes in which the Brazilian education system was being organized – which included the discussion about free and mandatory education – and in which the School culture(s) in Brazil were being conformed. This regress in time also afforded the opening of new lines of interpretation of the historical production of the monument-charter and of its main proposals, thereby leading to the de-monumentalization of the *Manifesto* and of its group of signatories. The very notion of a cohesive group and, by the same token, of the collective personage called *pioneers* began to be questioned, as was also the unity of the principles of the *Escola Nova*.

Along this trajectory, *Escola Nova* turned out to be a formula with multiple meanings and distinct appropriations produced at the intersection of three streams: the pedagogical,

the ideological, and the political. With respect to the first aspect, the lack of definition of conceptual borders had allowed the expression *Escola Nova* to bring together different educators, Catholic and liberal, around the pedagogical principles of active teaching. In the second case, the formula presented itself as a means for the transformation of society, contributing to the divergent purposes of the warring factions. In the third sense, it became a political banner, captured by the *Manifesto* and by its signatories as the hallmark of the renovation of the educational system.

Let us pause for a moment to reflect upon these issues, starting with the *pedagogical stream*. Before that, however, it may be interesting to explain what I have discussed here as a formula. For that, I shall make use of the reflections by Daniel Hameline (1995), not specifically about the *Escola Nova*, but about the *Escola Ativa*.

According to that author, the fate of a formula is not explained simply by the fleeting admiration by a group or population, but by a conjunction of events in the rhythm of a history that interweaves short and long terms, and that mirrors an evolution of pedagogical practices and discourses. Therefore, investigating the genesis of such formula – in the present case, the *Escola Ativa*² – presupposes poring over the trajectory of the qualifier *active* as applied to the school context since the late 19th century, into the *arbeitsschule* (1895-1920), which in the tradition of the work school changed into the active school in the discourse of Genevan educators, and into the *Escola Ativa* itself, which between 1917 and 1920 established itself as the expression of a new educational concept.

To Hameline (1995), it is necessary to bear in mind that the idea is born and grows in a medium in which it is not, at first, a deliberate or formalized act by an author, but a common and little controlled term. The history of the foundation of the *Escola*

² - *École Active* in the French original

Ativa is for him an example of the collective inability to control the discourse about the social activity, both with respect to education (more general level), and regarding the schooling (particular level). Hameline (1995, p. 9) says: “in the proposals about education there is not a master of the lexicon”.

According to the author, there are then three reasons for the initial emergence of the formula *Escola Ativa*: at first, the expression referred to the ingenious activity of teachers inside the classroom; next, it became a slogan, more than a concept; and thirdly, it was inseparable from a theory of manual labor, conceived as a means to educate the spirit. The formula was disseminated in Switzerland from 1919 onwards, and more forcefully after 1922, and it was not long before it reached Brazil. But then, perhaps differently from the success it had experienced in several countries, its use was obscured or was seen as a variation or strand of another formula that reached a higher success, the *Escola Nova*, consolidated in the official discourses from 1928 onwards.

The use of the expression *Escola Nova* was not new within the Brazilian education scene. In the 1910s, Oscar Thompson and Sampaio Dória had already identified it with an intuitive method. However, in the late 1920s with the Fernando de Azevedo reform in Rio de Janeiro, the term began to indicate the efforts to renovate the school system and to break away from the old educational structures. It is not therefore strange that the consolidation of this formula occurred amidst the events that put in check the educational past, stimulated particularly by the debate created around the celebrations of the Centenary of Primary Education in 1927 (VIDAL; FARIA FILHO, 2002).

Under the banner of the new, the formula fed on the aspiration for breaking away with social, political and educational practices hitherto in place in the Republic, grounding itself into a widespread desire for change. The metaphors of the old and the new suffused the collective imaginary at that time, and were

expressed both in what Maria Stella Bresciani (1978) called the *turns of the screw*, as in the representations about the 1930 revolution, simultaneously the endpoint of a Republic denominated *Old* and foundation of a Republic self-conceived as *New* (CAPELATO, 1989).

The enthroning of *Escola Nova* as a formula did not imply in the erosion of other labels, such as *Escola Ativa*. However, in the porosity of its borders, it accepted various pedagogical proposals which, when taking power in the institutional sphere of general directorships, aimed at distinguishing themselves from the enterprises that had come before them. Thus, under its cover different methods were to be found, such as interest centers, project methods, platoon system or any other educative proposal that attached itself to the interest and experience of the child, as well as to her active participation in the construction of knowledge.

To what extent are we not taking today the same statements to justify novel educational initiatives that value child and juvenile protagonism, the organization of school work around multidisciplinary projects and ambient classrooms that intend to keep discipline by engaging the pupil in school activities in the certainty that knowledge is built from individual experience?

But if *Escola Ativa* made reference to a pedagogical principle, the *Escola Nova*, particularly in Brazil, took on a meaning far removed from what it had acquired in all other countries in which it emerged. It gathered around itself not just an educational banner, but a political investment: the renovation of public system. Here we should emphasize that Brazil was the only country in the Western world in which *Escola Nova* became an investment of the State. In every other nation the principles of *Escola Nova* were taken up by groups of educators that created specific institutions. In Argentina, for example, the Cossettini sisters created the *Escola Serena*. In Brazil, however, *Escola Nova* constituted an attracting element for the reforms of the municipal or state school

apparatus in the various regions of the country, implemented through the Directorships of Public Instruction (the predecessors of the Secretariats for Education).

The strengthening of the formula would reverberate in 1932 with publication of the *Manifesto of the Pioneers of Educação Nova*. The Catholic educators that had remained fond of the expression – such as Jonathas Serrano and Everardo Backheuser – tried without success to restrict it to the pedagogical field. After the creation of the Ministry for Education and Health in 1930, the disputes for the control of the state apparatus and for the definition of the direction of national education tended to bring closer the relations between a wide pedagogical ideal, the defense of a conception of an educator State and the recomposition of the frontline of educators in the dynamics of defections and new alliances. As a banner, *Escola Nova* became equivalent to a *movement* and established the frontiers of a battle pitting *pioneers* against *Catholics*. On this issue, which refers to the *ideological strand*, I shall not expand. I referred to the main author on this subject, Carlos Jamil Cury, and in particular to his book *Ideologia e educação brasileira: católicos e liberais* (1984). I will touch upon this subject only to help us better understand the *political dimension* of the *Manifesto*.

I wish to examine here some events that help us understand the context in which this monument-charter is embedded. The history is already well-known. In 1931 the Brazilian Education Association organized the Fourth National Conference on Education, opened with speeches by Getúlio Vargas and Francisco Campos, first Minister for Education in Brazil. They requested of the educators the – *right formula* and the *concept of education* of the new educational policy. The expectation was frustrated, and the Fourth Conference eventually turned into the triggering episode of the tearing between the groups gathered at the ABE, which became known by historiography as the *pioneers* and the *Catholics*. This fact took place only in 1932 with the departure of the Catholic educators

from the entity, with the creation of the Brazilian Catholic Confederation for Education, and with the publication by Azevedo of the *Manifesto of the Pioneers of Educação Nova*.

The political maneuvers that shaped the works during the Fourth Conference were closely followed by Marta Carvalho (1998) and denounced the rearrangements in the education field in the struggle for the establishment of guidelines for national education. Among the diverging points there was the debate about the *function of the State in the organization of the school system*, evidenced in the polarizing between centralism and federalism, between the educative and subsidiary functions, between the duality of the system (school for the rich and school for the poor) and common education, as well as between religious teaching and lay teaching.

By defending a *public, lay, free and mandatory education* and by opposing the *sterile centralism*, the *Manifesto of the Pioneers of Educação Nova* exposed the fracture in the educational field, deviating from the proposals defended by Francisco Campos and by a group of Catholic educators, such as the optional religious teaching in public schools already instituted by Decree 19941 on 30 April 1931.

Among the objects under dispute there was the education for teachers. It is of no small importance to observe the coincidence of dates: on 19 March 1932 took place both the publication of the *Manifesto* and the approval of Decree 3810, in which the administration of Anísio Teixeira ahead of the Rio de Janeiro public instruction reformed the teacher preparation course, creating the Institute of Education of the Federal District. It is also relevant to note the coincidence of proposals between the monument-charter and the Teixeira act: both aimed at raising teacher education to a higher level which, according to the *Manifesto of the Pioneers of Educação Nova*, should now have a university-level character. It was, therefore, a forerunner of the movement that in 1934 in São Paulo and in 1935 in Rio de Janeiro would associate teacher education and university

(VIDAL; RODRIGUES, 2004), only to be aborted in 1937 by the direct action of Catholic groups.

Beyond the disputes in the educational field, one must recall – and this fact is not always present in the debates made about the *Manifesto* – that in 1930 the establishment of a *New Republic* had been hailed with optimism by the São Paulo press spearheaded by Julio de Mesquita Filho, as already noted a signatory of the *Manifesto* and owner of the *O Estado de S. Paulo* newspaper. The revolution signified for the new liberals, assembled around the Democratic Party, the exorcism of the past – associated to oligarchic power, to fraud, to immorality, to force, to tyranny, to backwardness and to petty-law mentality – and a moment of inflection towards a modern mentality characterized by the scientific knowledge, by progress and by order.

However, in the years that followed, São Paulo liberals began to identify in the Vargas government a departure from the 1930 discourse, and started to defend a liberal constitution and to argue that the new regime was based on experiences imported from Europe, ill adapted to the traditions of the country and to the spirit of its people. The 1932 revolution emerged from this scenario as the apex of the dispute that had at its heart the defense of the autonomy of the State of São Paulo, threatened by the positions assumed by the nation's ruler during the initial years of his government (CAPELATO, 1989). Thus, the *Manifesto of the Pioneers of Educação Nova*, published in March, four months before the outbreak of the revolutionary movement, was not restricted to the struggles within the educational field, but also represented a preaching of a macro political nature. The defense of decentralization in the educational system joined in the wishes for federalism sponsored by the new São Paulo elites.

It is rather illuminating to attend to the *Manifesto* as part of the political game for the control of the State and its dynamics and, therefore, as an element of cohesion of a whole line of educators who, despite their differences, were articulated around common objectives such as laity, gratuity and

mandatoriness of education. But it was not just that. The document also represented a group of intellectuals that sponsored the same project of nation, albeit with internal divergences. The tactics of organizing united fronts was, incidentally, common in the late 1920s and early 1930s, constituting the strategy utilized to bring forces together around a common ideal. It was clear in the *Convención Internacional de Maestros* (International Conference of Teachers) that brought together educators of liberal and anarchist inclinations, as well as in other social and political movements, such as the foundation of the *Bloco Operário (Laborers Block)* in 1927; the creation of the *Aliança Liberal* (Liberal Alliance) in 1929; the constitution of the *Frente Negra Brasileira* (Brazilian Black Front) in 1931; and the composition of the *Frente Única Paulista* (São Paulo United Front) in 1932. Edgar de Decca (1986), analyzing the 1930 Revolution, highlighted the importance of the fronts during this period as *tacit agreements* capable of giving a political direction to the struggle carried out by groups with divergent and different proposals.

The *Manifesto*, itself a front; Escola Nova, a formula: perhaps therein lies the modernity of this monument-charter. The intricate mosaic constituted around the *Manifesto* leads us to consider the web of relations in which the educational policies are produced and their implications within the various spheres and levels of the school system and of macropolitics. It seems somewhat useful to recall the concept of a *cycle of policies*, as proposed by Stephen Ball, Richard Bowe and A. Gold (1992) to account for the social dynamics of the construction of reforms. Recognizing the complex and controversial nature of educational policy, the authors emphasize the importance of articulating the micro and the macro levels of analysis and reject the interpretation models that separate the stages of formulation and implementation of proposals, since they ignore the disputes and reinforce the rationality of the management processes (MAINARDES, 2006). It

is the formation of the discourse of the policy and its active interpretation by the school agents that constitute the main focus of interpretation, which is concerned with identifying resistances, accommodations, subterfuge and conformism “within and between the arenas of the practice, and the outlining of conflicts and disparity between the discourses in those arenas” (p. 49). The proposal of a *cycle of policies* is constituted by the interpenetration of three contexts: the context of influence, the context of the production of the text and context of practice.

To be sure, we cannot regard the *Manifesto* as a reform. Its formulation, however, gave substance to initiatives within the educational policy arena. This happened not just to the platform that it put forward, but to the fact that it implicated a pleiad of educators that had various posts within the national scenario of the 1930s. The contexts of influence and production of text were linked to this group, homogeneous enough to constitute a front united by ties of solidarity and friendship, such as pointed out to us by Sirinelli (2003), but with rather conflicting views about the school and its processes of teaching and learning. At any rate, the changes affecting Brazil and the world and the 1930s quickly made the *Manifesto* obsolete in some of its claims, and reconfigured the political alliances that gave support to it.

With the end of the armed conflict in 1932, the agreements between the members of the Constitutionalist Party – to which belonged the group associated to *O Estado de São Paulo* – and Getúlio Vargas made it possible to Armando de Sales Oliveira to assume as *intervener* (appointed governor) of São Paulo in 1933, and turned part of the São Paulo intellectuals in favor of the 1934 Constitution, seen as an educational and political victory, despite the successes obtained by the lobbying groups of the Church galvanized by the *Liga Eleitoral Católica* (Catholic Electoral League). However, as described by Maria Helena Capelato (1989), the Liberals’ victory was ephemeral. The events of 1935 were to

redirect Brazilian politics. Among them we can mention, in March of that year, the creation of the ANL – *Aliança Nacional Libertadora* (National Freedom Alliance), congregating communists, socialists, *tenentes*³, liberals and Catholics with the objective of fighting the threat of Nazi-Fascism; the transformation of the *Ação Integralista Brasileira* (Brazilian Integralist Action) into a political party; the promulgation of the National Security Law in April; the closing down of the ANL in July; and the November uprising, which became known in historiography as the Communist Revolt (*Intentona Comunista*).

Between the end of 1935 and the beginning of 1936, hundreds of civilians and military people were arrested throughout the country. Among them were educators Paschoal Lemme, Edgar Sussekind de Mendonça and Arminda Álvaro Alberto, all signatories of the *Manifesto*. The arrests justified the declaration in March 1936 of a state of war, which would be in place until the mid-1937. The measures had the support of the São Paulo liberals, compelled to accept the acts of political exception in the whirl of the struggle for the preservation of a liberal State, relinquishing temporarily their freedom so as to guarantee the social order. They walked unknowingly into the establishment of an authoritarian State, which would come on November 11 with the siege and closing down of the National Congress by troops of the Military Police and with the announcement to the nation made by Getúlio Vargas via radio on the beginning of a new era, oriented by the new Constitution created by Francisco Campos.

According to Marlos Rocha (2006), the political radicalization that was observed from 1935 onwards in Brazil and abroad, as expressed in the dissemination of totalitarian ideologies, led educators to review their positions concerning the role of the Union in the education systems and with respect to

3 - So were denominated the military uprisings of the 1920s, led mainly by army lieutenants, among which we may cite those of the 18 of the Fort and the Prestes’ Column.

the nationalization of education. In *A cultura brasileira* (The Brazilian culture), for example, which was published in 1943, Fernando de Azevedo criticized the excessive federalism, proposing the *unification of education systems*, praised the Vargas government and highlighted the ministry of Francisco Campos, seen as having a democratic character. To Rocha (2006), in an expression of his understanding of the New State as authoritarian, but not as totalitarian, Azevedo, like part of the São Paulo liberals, the sharpness of his actions through the exceptional nature of the historic moment.

Azevedo recognized, also, in the preservation of the renovators' principles in the 1937 Charter and in the expansion of elementary, professional and secondary education, manifestations of a democratic dimension of the State. By not problematizing the political regime and its legitimacy, some of the signatories of the *Manifesto*, such as Fernando de Azevedo and Lourenço Filho, established with the Vargas government a relationship of collaboration. In the words of Fernando de Azevedo (1943, p. 401) in 1937,

the State coup used authority to curtail the conflict [between pioneers and catholics], soothing controversies, dampening passions, and imposing as a line of conduct in the educational domain a policy of compromise, adaptation and balance.

That was not the case of other *pioneers*. To mention just two examples: Anísio Teixeira kept himself a recluse in the Bahia outback until the end of the Vargas Age, returning to the battles for education only in 1946. Edgar Sussekind de Mendonça, imprisoned between December 1935 and December 1936, had to wait until 1947 to be reintegrated into his post as teacher at the Secondary School of the Institute of Education of the Federal District.

Rereading the *Manifesto of the Pioneers of Educação Nova* today implies seeing it as a political piece in the educational debate situated

at the early 1930s, denouncing the parts in the dispute and the movement, operated by the text, of resignification of the education proposals and objects under dispute with the explicit purpose of guiding the educational policies of the new Ministry for Education and Health. It also implies understanding it as a monument of Brazilian educational memory, often revisited by the Pioneers themselves throughout time as a strategy of legitimizing intervention in the educational field. Emptied of the conditions of its emergence, the *Manifesto* survived as a chart of pedagogical principles, as a landmark in favor of a renewed school, but mainly in defense of the responsibility of the State in the dissemination of education in the country, of public school.

Therein lies perhaps its most perennial and modern sense. In a society that in the 1980s still struggled to ensure the right to access to public school by a whole segment of the population in schooling age, the *Manifesto* represented a founding event in the discourse for the democratization of teaching. The permanence of its most illustrious signatories – Fernando de Azevedo, M. B. Lourenço Filho and Anísio Teixeira – in politics until the mid-1970s, when the three of them passed away, worked also as a mechanism to activate the memory of the *Manifesto*.

At the heart of the creation of our first National Education Guidelines and Framework Law in 1959, precisely amidst the dispute about the responsibility of the State in the dissemination of national education, and during the Campaign in Defense of Public School, Azevedo took up again the basis of the 1932 *Manifesto* and launched a new charter, a new manifesto, pointedly denominated *Manifesto of Democrat Educators in Defense of Public Education (1959)*. *Once again called upon*: manifesto to the people and to the government. The expression *to the people and to the government* harked back to the terms of the 1932 *Manifesto*, but the more explicit association was the use of the formula *once again called upon*. As a strategy, the press was once again employed and the 1959 *Manifesto*

was published simultaneously in the *O Estado de S. Paulo* and in the *Diário do Congresso Nacional* on 1 July.

Several signatories appeared again. It was a case of Fernando de Azevedo, Anísio Spínola Teixeira, Julio de Mesquita Filho, Mario Casassanta, C. Delgado de Carvalho, Hermes Lima, Paulo Maranhão, Cecília Meireles, Armada Álvaro Alberto, Nóbrega da Cunha, Paschoal Lemme and Raul Gomes. Many names were added. The 1959 *Manifesto* had a significantly higher support than the 1932 document: it collected 180 signatures, whereas in 1932 there were only 26. Other names disappeared for various reasons, including the death of the signatory in the intervening time. It is perhaps worth noting the absence of Lourenço Filho who at the time had retired from administrative and teaching activities, but that in the 1940s had conducted the works on the *National Education Plan*.

Although not wishing to prolong the analysis of this point, it is probably useful to note that both *Manifestos* put us before the challenge of thinking the contradictory relationships constructed in the political debate around Brazilian education at the different moments through which the discussion about public school has gone, but also at the several commitments made by these intellectuals in their defense of their ideal of school. The

charters make us think about the places occupied by the intellectuals in the national political scene, in the historical situations in which their discourses were made, in the networks of sociability that constantly reinvented the power game, in the fronts that were constituted when discussions erupted, in the disputes for political negotiation, in the historical rearticulation of the proposals and in the defections.

Perhaps that is the reason to celebrate the 80 years of the *Manifesto of the Pioneers of Educação Nova*: to prompt us to ask what ideal of school do we defend; how do we conceive the role of the State in the dissemination of education in the country (the relation between State and education); what are the political compromises that emerge today in the educational scenario; how do we configure our networks of solidarity and sensibility in the struggles that we carry. Perhaps that reason is, in the end, to claim that there is still a social and political place for the intellectual in the public debate about education, in which our contribution consists primarily in negotiating proposals and work agenda is in favor of public education – and we might add here – of good quality. Nothing could be more auspicious as we approach the celebrations of the bicentenary of the Independence of Brazil (2022): an assessment of the past and establishment of goals for the future.

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