

# PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION: THE GREAT FAILURE OF THE BRAZILIAN DICTATORSHIP

LUIZ ANTÔNIO CUNHA

TRANSLATED BY Peter Laspina

TECHNICAL REVISION Moysés Kuhlmann Júnior

## ABSTRACT

*This article analyzes Act number 5.692/71, an outcome of one of the most important educational policies of the Brazilian dictatorship (1964/1986): universal and compulsory professionalization at secondary school level. Students, educational administrators and private school entrepreneurs were against that policy and such resistance was openly voiced in 1974, when the worldwide economic crisis and the victory of the opposition party in congressional elections announced the decline of the ruling regime. Within that context, several decisions of the Federal Board of Education (Conselho Federal de Educação) re-constructed the wording of the relevant Act and changed its spirit in the sense of diminishing the professional nature of secondary school education.*

EDUCATIONAL POLICY • BRAZILIAN DICTATORSHIP •  
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

**F**IFTY YEARS HAVE ELAPSED SINCE THE COUP D'ÉTAT THAT INITIATED TWO DECADES of dictatorship.<sup>1</sup> It is worth focusing our attention on the harmful effects of that regime on the educational field. Aiming at contributing to address this issue, this article assesses the universal and compulsory professionalization policy at the secondary school level, as defined by Act number 5.692/71. In order to do that, the synthesis of studies on this theme (CUNHA, 2005) is resumed herein, also the thesis developed by Dermeval Saviani (2008) about the role of the National Congress in legislating on education, an article on professional ideology and education (FALCÃO; CUNHA, 2009) and a more recent article with reflections on two vectors that persist within the educational sphere even after the country has advanced in its transition into democracy (CUNHA, 2014). In the latter, education is analyzed as a function of the State-capital symbiosis and as a moral regeneration instrument for the individual and the society. In this case, it is a matter of calling attention to this great failure of the dictatorship, perhaps the greatest of them all, in the educational area: the universal and compulsory professionalization policy at the secondary school level.

As provided by Act number 5.692, of August 11, 1971, pretentiously called the Learning Guidelines and Bases Act for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Education (Elementary and Secondary School), this policy consisted of a merger of the branches of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of the secondary school level. As determined by that Act, secondary education; normal

<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the dictatorship as of the fiftieth year of the coupe d'état, please refer to Reis Filho, Ridenti and Motta (2014).

schools; industrial, trade and agricultural technical schools were all merged. All schools were to offer only professional qualification programs – then known as *professionalizing* programs – whose purpose would be to qualify technicians and assistant technicians for a variety of economic activities. The exclusively propaedeutic programs, such as the former high-school (classical and scientific), would no longer exist at this level of learning.

The merger of the branches of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of the secondary school level had a different rationale than that of the merger of the branches of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle. The main outcome of the latter was an emptying of the professional content, for the benefit of general and propaedeutic education, except for vocational coaching and career preparation. The slow and progressive reciprocal action between secondary learning and the professional branches, during the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle, ended up in the design of the second segment of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade (elementary level), as provided by Act number 5.692/71, whose purpose was not education for professional activities, aside from initiatives of exceptional nature, such as the *S System*. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle, this Act represented a rupture against the trends prevalent in educational policy and in the prevailing concepts among educators and educational administrators.<sup>2</sup>

## ONE ASPECT: PROFESSIONALIZING EDUCATION IN THE 1<sup>ST</sup> GRADE (ELEMENTARY SCHOOL)

The demolition of the dualist educational architecture began with the end of the New State (*Estado Novo*), in 1945, with the re-constitutionalization of political life and the return of liberal educators (led by Anísio Teixeira or inspired in his ideals) to the State apparatus. Several measures scaled down the professional nature of the basic industrial program, which characterized the industrial schools (1<sup>st</sup> cycle of the secondary level), enhancing the subjects in the general program at the expense of time dedicated to vocational classes. The industrial middle-school (which succeeded the basic industrial program provided by the organic law) ended up being transformed into a moment of vocational coaching and career initiation, completely bypassing its former objectives, the education of youngsters for an industrial job position. At the same time, pathways were opened among the several branches and cycles, in order to reduce the barriers to the movement of the students, until the first Act of National Educational Guidelines and Bases (*LDB – Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional*) provided the general equivalence between the certificates of the branches in each cycle.

These changes had the support and motivation of liberal educators, aiming at the elimination of the early professional education and the introduction of a common basis to all programs, in the several

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A different interpretation than the one presented herein may be found in Castro, Assis and Oliveira (1972) and in Castro, Mello and Souza (1974).

secondary level programs. That trend was enhanced with the experiences with 1<sup>st</sup> secondary school cycle renewal, in the sense of connecting it with the world of work, taking it away from an exclusive world of literary culture and sciences, more of the former than of the latter. During the first half of the 1960s, the Board of Secondary Education of the Ministry of Education (*MEC – Ministério da Educação*) developed and deployed several middle-school projects known as “modern”, “polyvalent” and “work-oriented”, where the motivation based on technical-secondary education was implicit, as conceived by Anísio Teixeira, in the Federal District (*Distrito Federal*) in the 1930s. Now, however, the direct reference to North-American education, without the implicit socialist traits of the Bahia-state educator, allowed a broader symbolic appeal and the guarantee of international funding.

This ideological alignment facilitated financing by the United States Agency for International Development – USAID – for MEC’s secondary school reform programs, which were intensified after the 1964 *coupe d’état*. An agreement was signed in 1965, under which the North-American agency undertook to engage a predefined number of United States technicians, along with an equal number of Brazilian technicians, to compose a Secondary Education Planning Team (*EPPEM – Equipe de Planejamento do Ensino Médio*) within the Ministry of Education. That team would then provide technical assistance to the state educational systems, as demanded.

Two years later, a plan for the deployment of 276 “work-oriented middle-school units” in four states (Rio Grande do Sul, Bahia, Minas Gerais, and Espírito Santo) as well as a model-school in the capital cities of 18 states and the Distrito Federal was ready. In 1968, another agreement was signed between the MEC and the USAID, providing for the allocation of external resources to carry out the plan. To complement the performance and oversee its execution, an Education Expansion and Improvement Program (*Premem – Programa de Expansão e Melhoria do Ensino*) was created that same year, which would also be in charge of the training and upgrading of teachers for vocational subjects. The “work-oriented middle schools” were characterized by offering one or more professionalizing foci, according to their geographical and economic location, comprising industrial arts, and commercial or agricultural techniques. A “homemaking education” module was added thereto, an extemporaneous heritage of the “domestic economy” of the agrotechnical schools, converging with the family traditions still prevailing in the country.

These initiatives culminated in the concept of the second segment of elementary education (5th to 8th years) of Act number 5.692/71. Industrial apprenticeship was maintained under the label of supplementary education (supply mode), which kept the existing

duality, though concealed by the discourse of general terminality vs. actual terminality.

With that said, we will look at the path taken by the Brazilian-American Industrial Education Committee (CBAI – *Comissão Brasileiro-Americana de Educação Industrial*), under which the influence of the United States in this branch of the Brazilian educational system began to take place.

Born from an initiative of Minister Gustavo Capanema, still within the New State regime, the CBAI only became effective after his fall in 1946, and prospered during the Populist Republic. An integral part of MEC's structure, managed by a director from each party, predominantly Brazilian, the Committee fostered programs, technical visits and a wide publishing program, which mainly affected principals and teachers in industrial schools within the federal system. The CBAI was abolished in 1962 by an initiative of the Brazilian Government, which transferred its duties to another agency within the Ministry. On the North-American side, its functions were absorbed by the USAID, which centralized the technical and financial assistance of that country, including the educational area. The review of the empirical material available allowed the conclusion that the Committee was an effective protagonist of the constitution of the federal system of industrial education in accordance with the New School educational standards. Furthermore, it was an effective diffuser of the training method according to the Taylorism principles of TWI (FALCÃO; CUNHA, 2009).

The scope of the hegemony achieved by the CBAI may be seen by its contribution to the emptying of the primarily professional content of the industrial branch in the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of secondary education, concurrently introducing professionalizing content into secondary education, although with less emphasis. The later merger of the branches of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of secondary education was the longer-lasting unfolding of that hegemony, the essence of Act number 5.692/71. No proposals were submitted by the CBAI regarding universal and compulsory professionalization in the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of secondary education.

## **ANOTHER ASPECT: PROFESSIONALIZING EDUCATION IN THE 2<sup>ND</sup> GRADE (SECONDARY SCHOOL)**

One of the highlighted elements of the educational architecture of the Vargas Era was the creation of technical schools, *stricto sensu*, that is, institutions for the intermediate qualification level of professionals for industries, agriculture, trade and services, in the second cycle of secondary education. Although normal schools had never been called technical schools, perhaps due to the professorial ideology with a heavy

missionary and charismatic content, they occupied the same position as the latter within the educational system architecture, which separated secondary education from the branches intended for the qualification of professionals. The unrestricted enrollment in college education was prohibited to these programs, as their graduates could only apply to colleges in programs considered directly related to the studies they had undertaken. Secondary education was nevertheless considered compatible with any college program, despite the internal division between “classical” and “scientific”. That reality was being changed by the equivalence laws of the 1950s and by the LDB-1961, increasing the number of graduates from technical schools that entered college programs, even in areas not “compatible” with their specialties.

The technical schools, above all the industrial institutions, gained considerable prestige for the quality of their programs, the employability of their graduates and the successes thereof in college entrance exams. Hence, it was no surprise that they became the models always referred to in the restructuring of the entire 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of secondary education.

The concept of universal and compulsory professionalization in secondary education was not supported by an expressive line of thought, either inside or outside the MEC. No country in the world adopted this practice, nor was it proposed by international organizations. USAID did not recommend it, since that agency valued the models in place in the United States, where nothing like it existed. Technical education in the US was carried out in specialized schools or in the workplace. Furthermore, the production organization in that country, leader of the capitalist world, did not emphasize the employment of secondary-school technicians, a characteristic more commonly found in Europe.

To prevail the concept of universal and compulsory professionalization, it was necessary for the MEC to deploy authoritarian procedures, among which the suppression of a national education conference, the last that was convened in that period. The defeated group was even larger, however, as later construed from reports of the 4th National Education Conference, in June, 1969, and from the preparatory seminar for the 5th Conference, in February, 1970, which ended up not taking place. Both the *Initial Document* of that seminar and the recommendations of the 4th Conference converged in condemning the early specialization in professional education (for economic and social reasons), in the positive acknowledgement of the propaedeutic function of secondary education, in the need to upgrade the concept of general education centralized on science and technology, as well as in the proclamation of the desirability of professional education through an association of school and work.

The context of the development of the secondary school professionalization policy began with the political changes of 1964. The

new outline of power counted on broad support from the urban middle-classes and adopted, as an immediate measure to favor its sustaining basis, an increasing number of seats in college programs. The middle-class layers were strongly represented within the university community, whose components were precisely those that increasingly depended on a college education for social mobility. The economic policy implemented as of 1964 narrowed the potential business growth for middle-class individuals. Both the opening of new businesses and the accumulation of capital for small-size commercial establishments, industries and service providers became increasingly difficult. Thus, their growth depended on rising through the public and private bureaucracies, which made the college diploma an increasingly necessary, though not sufficient, requirement.

While educational policy, as of 1964, aimed at increasing the number of students in public universities, benefitting the middle-class, economic policy caused the need for college programs to grow even more intensely. The growth of the private-sector college education was the “offsetting” factor over that difference, although it did not offer courses free of charge.

The importance of this process may be seen from its political consequences. During the first half of 1968, there were several intense student protests in major Brazilian cities. The most frequent mottos in all such protests were “more funds” and “more seats” for public college programs. The surplus (candidates for college programs not enrolled) intended to enter the university, and the university students and professors asked for more funds and the revoking of financial cuts that had affected them. The political consequences of these demands and of the repressive initiatives were enormous in both the short- and long-term.

The most important aspect to highlight within this scenario is that one of the measures adopted by the government to take control of the situation was the creation of a workgroup to develop a legislative bill for university reform. That group voiced their conclusions in a report that is summarized below, considering the elements that refer directly or indirectly to secondary education.

The workgroup set forth as a principle that it would not be fair to meet the demands for more funds for college-level education unlimitedly, if this would jeopardize meeting the demands of primary and secondary education. There should be a balanced growth of the educational systems, at all levels, to meet the two types of demands: primary and secondary education extended to practically the entire school age population, and college education for those who wished and were able to enroll. The conciliation would be made difficult by the fact that the demand for seats would end up exceeding the expected number of occupational opportunities for university graduates.

The factors presented in the report as causes of difficulties for that conciliation illustrate this position: (i) demands for seats by young people not always intellectually qualified for the programs; (ii) distorted secondary education because, if students were prepared to work, it would reduce the demand for the number of seats in college; in addition, an excessive number of secondary-level technicians were looking for college education; (iii) scarcity of public resources to fund education in general, and college education in particular; ethically, there would be as much priority to develop primary and secondary education as there would be for college education; and (iv) the demand for seats in each college program was either larger or smaller than the actual needs of the market, requiring a redefinition of the dimensions of enrollees/graduates for each program according to the occupational opportunities.

A review of these aspects shows that the workgroup indicated two non-educational factors that required educational reform – limitation of resources and limitation of occupational opportunities for college graduates. The report comprised a university reform proposal by the group and also a reform of secondary education (only suggested), so that the latter, preparing the pupils for the labor market, reduced the demand for seats in the college institutions, therefore, the surplus. This would solve or mitigate three issues immediately: one, political, that of the protests for seats/funds; another, social, perhaps subject to political expression, the frustration of college graduates having a hard time finding jobs that met their expectations; and, last, of financial nature, the reduction (or at least reduction of the rate of growth) of the public expenditures for college education.

The reform of secondary education included the suggestion of making university reform feasible. The concept of professionalizing education was based on the need to organize secondary education so that it would provide professional qualifications to the graduates. This need would be an outcome of the need to combat students' frustration, resulting from their disqualification for the labor market at the end of their secondary education, which would be forcing them to look for colleges as the only means of obtaining professional qualification.

The possibility of channeling that frustration arose from the belief in the existence of an unmet demand for secondary-level technicians. However, nobody was aware of the volume of occupational opportunities available. There was merely an expectation that it would be large enough to offset at least the secondary school graduates who were not enrolled in college programs – and that belief was enough.

Indeed, there were indications of both an intense lack of professionals for certain sectors of the economy and for certain specialties, and abundance for other areas. The increased number of



available industrial technicians could eventually force the lowering of salaries, which would reduce the existing advantage of preparing these professionals. In addition, there were no data that allowed the generalization that the shortage for *all* secondary level professionals, as was done by the educational administrators and by the campaign to enhance secondary school reform.

## FROM THE BILL TO THE LAW

In 1970, a workgroup composed of nine members was created by Minister of Education Jarbas Passarinho to prepare, in a very short time, a report on the upgrade and expansion of elementary and high-school education.<sup>3</sup>

It is worth highlighting that the group had only two members with any prior experience in the area, even tangentially. The Salesian priest José de Vasconcelos, member of the Federal Board of Education (*Conselho Federal de Educação* – CFE), came from a religious congregation that, since its foundation by Don Bosco, was dedicated to the professional education of poor children, with the purpose of taking them away from sin and subversion. The other member was Geraldo Bastos Silva, from the staff of the Ministry and member of both Epem and Premen. None of them had any experience with industrial, commercial or agricultural technical education.

The report issued by the workgroup was submitted to the minister, who forwarded it to the CFE, which made small changes, irrelevant to the topic discussed here, resulting in the draft of the legislative bill submitted to the National Congress. It was reviewed by a mixed committee of deputies and senators, whose mission was to deal with the 357 amendments presented, many of them ineffective or meaningless. The substitute bill issued by the reporting congressman, Deputy Aderbal Jurema, was shielded such that it was approved in the Chamber (of Deputies) with no modifications, which exempted it from going through the Senate (SAVIANI, 2008, pp. 114-117).

As opposed to Act number 5.540/68, which provided for reform in higher education and received several vetoes from general Costa e Silva, Act number 5.692/71 received no vetoes whatsoever from the President, General Emílio Médici, revealing the alignment between the Legislative and the Executive branches at that juncture. It is worth highlighting that the proceedings of the university reform act took place in a context of political unrest, including intense student movement against the government. In 1971, on the contrary, the police-military control of public spaces discouraged protests of displeasure. Furthermore, specific demands regarding educational legislation were devalued by sectors on the left, whose main objective was the overthrow of the dictatorship.

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This awkward nomenclature referred to the two secondary education cycles.

In Saviani (2008), we find important information on the role of the National Congress to improve the bill, vetoing or discouraging autonomist velleities. The reporting congressman, Aderbal Jurema, had been a member of the workgroup and knew, therefore, the positions therein, such that he acted only to allow changes that followed the intended direction. That was the extent of professionalization in secondary education. The preliminary legislative bill suggested that a special part of the program had the purpose of qualifying professionals OR of deepening certain orders of general studies; that is, the propaedeutic function was clear and thoroughly acknowledged in it.

Several amendments were proposed to modify this provision, and that of Deputy Bezerra of Mello prevailed. Based on statements made by the Minister of Education Colonel Jarbas Passarinho, the deputy proposed means to make it more difficult to reach the propaedeutic role of secondary education, making it an exceptional alternative that depended not only on the student's specific aptitude but also on the statement of professors and the counseling service of the educational institution. Saviani (2008, p. 127) noted that, with that reduction of the status, there had been a significant change from the plural to the singular: from "certain orders" to "a certain order" of general studies. The "wording" was changed, but the "spirit" of the project was supported: the secondary level of education was where the "true terminality of school education from 7 to 18 years of age" was found, as stated by the chairman of the workgroup, Father José de Vasconcelos (SAVIANI, 2008, p. 127).

## CRITICISM AND RESISTANCE

The universal and compulsory professionalization in secondary education fostered adherence and rejection. For some, this level of education would now have its own purposes, overriding the role of mere preparation for college. For others, however, the reform contradicted their interests. It is, thus, worth highlighting the most important rejections of this policy. Above all, it must be clear that identifying such resistance is not an easy task because of authoritarian practices, including control of political protests and censure of the press, inhibiting the formulation and dissemination of ideas against those of the government.

Overcoming the difficulties that opposed their voices, the students did not passively accept the new order of universal and compulsory professionalization in secondary education. Despite the scattered motivation, yet effective for the acquisition of professional qualification, they reacted to the introduction of professionalizing subjects as these reduced the course load of subjects that were important for college entrance exams. They also reacted to the charging of more

and more expensive fees in the public schools as a means of financing the expected reform.

These reactions were expressed through the most diversified means and in the most different ways: from a mere lack of interest in studying to cartoons in student newspapers and graduation parties, where such issues were discussed. During the congressional elections of 1974, the payment for secondary education and professionalization were topics of debates in some states, which suggests that those reactions had reached a higher level of expression, beyond individual and group protests into the actual political sphere.

Within the scope of educational administration, there were critics of another nature, that recognized the practical infeasibility of universal and compulsory professionalization in secondary education: the critics were principals of technical schools, administrators of industrial learning systems and specialists in professional education, who knew the reality of work and the special issues that affected the preparation of workers at all levels of qualification, particularly professionals with secondary education.

Among these, Roberto Hermeto Corrêa da Costa (1971) stands out, for the effectiveness of his activities meant to turn the process in question.<sup>4</sup> In 1973, he was the advisor to the Special Committee for the Execution of the Plan for the Improvement and Expansion of Technical and Industrial Education (*Plano de Melhoramentos e Expansão do Ensino Técnico e Industrial*) – Cepeti – of the Department of Secondary Education of the MEC, when the 4th Meeting of the Secretaries of Education and Culture and Representatives of Boards of Education took place in the city of Fortaleza. Invited to make a presentation, Roberto Hermeto caused a scandal among the heralds of the new law, as he advocated that the basic knowledge necessary to perform a set of professions, rather than a strict specialization, be provided to all secondary students, allowing the professional qualification to be completed at the workplace or in a specialization school. That proposal placed the possibility of enrollment in college as an alternative of equal weight in relation to professionalization.

In March, 1974, Roberto Hermeto organized the Brazilian Center for School Construction and Equipment (Centro Brasileiro de Construções e Equipamentos Escolares) – Cebrace – within the scope of the MEC, of which agency he was the first director. The activities of that agency, focused on the preparation of school construction projects and the standardization of teaching materials for the elementary and secondary levels, necessarily depended on curricular definitions, on the one hand, and on resource availability, on the other hand. Hence, the insistence on realistic guidelines.

If, at the meeting in Fortaleza the year before, Roberto Hermeto called everyone's attention primarily to the *technical* inadequacy of the

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As a reference to Roberto Hermeto's contribution to the non paradigm-based analysis of the industrial apprenticeship, upon the enactment of Act number 5.692/71, please refer to Costa (1971).

educational policy regarding the qualification of professionals, he also indicated the existence of new problems resulting from the *economic* inadequacy: the costs of universal and compulsory professionalization in secondary education would hardly be covered by the existing budgets. If secondary education was limited, in the special part of the curriculum, to the provision of basic technological knowledge in certain areas of activity, than the costs would not be so high, an advantage that could be added to the other one, mentioned above, of complying with the existing occupational structure.

In a document prepared in 1974,<sup>5</sup> Roberto Hermeto suggested two ways out of the technical-economic deadlock of the reform. The first one would be the continuation of Act 5.692/71 unchanged, re-construing it through the new opinions issued by the CFE that would approve the basic qualification programs, eliminating the qualifications in force until then, in order to prevent misinterpretations. The second way out would be to change the law itself in such a manner as to make preparation for college education not a difficult alternative but, rather, a possibility equivalent to the basic qualifications in areas corresponding to those of college programs. Thus, the curriculum for secondary education would comprise basic qualifications corresponding to the occupational groups and programs to strengthen the general studies (the return of the plural form!) in the biomedical, social, exact and technological sciences; humanities and philosophy; languages and other areas. Whatever solution was chosen, the document acknowledged both the propaedeutic nature of education at the secondary level and the need to maintain the existing technical programs.

Protests of displeasure from owners and principals of private secondary schools soon appeared in 1971, immediately after the enactment of the Act. Criticism focused primarily on the “pragmatic” nature of compulsory professionalization in secondary education, which tended to subject the “graduation” objectives of scholastic education to the “immediate” goals of the labor market. In 1972, statements from private school directors appeared in the newspapers calling attention to the escalating costs, barely covered by increases in tuitions. In the following two years, presidents of private educational institution unions started making increasingly frequent statements that the professionalization at the secondary level was driving the private schools to bankruptcy.

The critics from the private sectors soon found their “scapegoat” in the National Congress, attributing to it the liability for the exaggerations of the universal and compulsory professionalization policy. They claimed it was the Legislative Branch that had initiated the generalizing of professionalization, as opposed to what the workgroup and the CFE intended. However, an accurate review of the statements of

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*O Ensino de 2º grau e a habilitação profissional*  
(The secondary level education and the professional apprenticeship)  
- Suggestions regarding the interpretation of Act number 5.692 - preliminary document. (unpublished).

the reasons and proceedings of the bill left no doubt that, if the Congress had generalized the professionalization, it did so upon the demand, or at least with the agreement, of the Executive Branch – specifically, the MEC.

The criticisms of students, educational administrators and education entrepreneurs took on a political dimension in 1974, with General Ernesto Geisel taking office as the President of the Republic and Colonel Ney Braga as Minister of the MEC, as discussed below.

## POLITICAL INFLECTION

Alongside the military forces that sponsored the *coupe d'état* in March-April 1964 and with the civil forces that supported them, a long struggle developed between two projects: (i) that of a classical Latin-American style dictatorship, abolishing all mechanisms of political representation and the prerogatives of the Judiciary Branch, and (ii) that of a liberal-democratic regime, according to the North American model, free from threats attributed to political forces from the left. From the *coupe d'état*, to the election of Tancredo Neves as President of the Republic, the political process suffered the results of the confrontation between these two projects (CUNHA, 1991, p. 22-23).

The success, although delayed, of the sectors that sought the institutionalization of a liberal-democratic regime, without threats (either real or imaginary) from the left, was facilitated by the assembly of a sophisticated mechanism for the bureaucratization of the military power which hindered the emergence of charismatic leaderships within the scope of the Armed Forces. As a result, there were no military chieftains in Brazil after 1964, since the general officers could not remain more than four years at each level, with a maximum of 12 years as generals; no longer being promoted, they had to transfer to the military reserve. That way, the creation of a distinctive system of bureaucratic-military domination required the maintenance of mechanisms for the legitimization of candidates for the presidency of the Republic previously chosen by the high command of the Army, the strongest of the three military forces, through a ritual of elections by the National Congress convened especially for that purpose. On the other hand, the periodic threats of rupturing of the “military unit” have provided other elements that reinforced, on the side of the military, the option for the institutionalization of the liberal-democratic political regime: the internalization of the conflicts between remaining and emerging policy trends, related to the “election” of their candidate-generals; and the division, never assimilated by the military corporation, between the “troops” and the information apparatus. .

From the side of the political forces that opposed the military governments, two trends soon were defined. One of them considered

that armed conflict was the only way to overthrow the military regime. That trend considered the Brazilian people ready to be mobilized for insurrection, lacking only the initiative to show them the path and build an organization of their own for this type of political conflict. After the failure of the first, improvised attempts at armed conflict, some parties of the left dedicated themselves to the type of conflict from 1967, predicting a long-term conflict, in which they were unsuccessful. Another trend, comprised a wide range that ran from liberal-democratic to socialist and communist parties, including forces led by the deposed President of the Republic, João Goulart, and other political leaders whose political rights had been suspended (Miguel Arraes, Leonel Brizola, Carlos Lacerda and Juscelino Kubistchek). It considered the organization of the masses in defense of democratic freedoms as the path to the reestablishment of the Rule of Law, a condition necessary (for some) or sufficient (for others) for democracy.

Hence, a minimal program was taking shape that included: the convening of a National Constituent Assembly; amnesty to those who were punished for political acts of exception; and the revocation of authoritarian legislation on labor, economic and cultural issues. In terms of organization, a wide front was forming which gathered the political forces in opposition to the military governments, which ended up as the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB – *Movimento Democrático Brasileiro*), created in October, 1965 with members remaining from dissolved political parties, who were subjected to strict standards of organization and operation. From the confrontation between these forces, the process of building democracy followed a tortuous path, with progress and setbacks.

After the defeat of the proposals for the dissolution of the MDB and the confrontation in the campaign for the null vote in the 1970 Congressional elections, the opposition front to the military governments was acquiring new members for their political platform, which included the denunciation of arbitrary government acts and a sequence of events that would end with the convening of a National Constituent Assembly. Even though they knew of the difficulties to achieving victory in the polls, the opposing parties took advantage of moments in the electoral campaigns to denounce the dictatorship. In the 1974 Congressional elections, the MDB received 72% of the valid votes, which earned it a victory of 16 chairs in the Senate and 160 in the Chamber of Deputies. In addition, that party achieved a majority in the legislative assemblies of six states: Acre, Amazonas, Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Guanabara.

As of those elections, the military governments developed a strategy of incorporating partial demands of the opposition while they modified the electoral laws, to eliminate the advantages the opposition

was achieving, in order to prevent, from the outset, the gain of an effective majority in the states' legislative assemblies and in the National Congress.

The economic and social problems generated by the country's development model during the ten years following the military coup d'état in 1964, but mitigated by a favorable international environment, resulted, as of 1973, in the change to that environment and in the re-emergence of inflation which became a threat to the rate of economic growth, the cornerstone of the so-called "Brazilian Miracle" (*Milagre brasileiro*).

These issues showed, in an increasingly dramatic way, the infeasibility of maintaining the prevailing economic model. The problems ranged from doubling of the foreign debt in two years to the occurrence of critical epidemics resulting from the deterioration of the already precarious living conditions (in terms of food, dwelling, health, etc.) of the working classes. With all this, signs of potential rupture of the agreement between public and multinational companies began to show, which would change the entire economic model. During that transition, the possibility of the reappearance of nationalistic and anti-capitalistic military groups was feared.

Predicting that risk, President General Geisel tried to incorporate new partners into the prevailing political regime, mainly the national entrepreneurs (given the redefinition of the role of the Congress in the political arena), middle-class groups, the Catholic Church and intellectuals. The elimination of tensions generated, maintained and accumulated by previous governments, the *distension*, was, hence, the first step in broadening the social base of the State.

The Minister of Education did not delay in noticing that the educational policy regarding secondary education was a source of generating tensions which he had to halt.

## ABOUT FACE!

The reform of the reform of secondary education began with Ministerial Notice number 924, September 20, 1974, directed to the President of the CFE, Father José de Vasconcelos, who had presided over the workgroup that had prepared the legislative bill of Act number 5.692/71, precisely that which determined the universal and compulsory professionalization of secondary education. The CFE responded promptly. Three months later, the councilor Newton Sucupira submitted Indication number 52/74 to the CFE, acknowledging and legitimating, in a very explicit manner, the opinion that had been proposed by Roberto Hermeto one year earlier.

The review of the issue was fast: in the following month, Opinion number 76/75 was approved, reported by Terezinha Saraiva, who

re-construed, in the background, Act number 5.692/71. The Opinion began by reaffirming the merits of the thesis of professionalization in secondary education, although it acknowledged that the time elapsed since then showed the need for new standards and more diversified directions.<sup>6</sup> This need came from the lack of funds required to deploy professionalizing education, the shortage of qualified teachers, the difficulties created by the reduction of the course load in general education, the difficulties with cooperation of the businesses, the lack of information about the job market, and other aspects.

The difficulties, in turn, were the result of a basic misunderstanding about the nature of professionalizing education. The interpretation of the law, as it had been done, led to an erroneous assumption that each secondary school should provide professional education, transforming all secondary schools into technical schools. If that were the legal determination, the lack of human and material resources would certainly be enormous.

Among the reasons given for this re-orientation of the educational policy, the specific training: (i) could make the students take to the businesses certain defects resulting from an education that could be distorted in relation to the activities they would actually perform; (ii) would require knowledge about data that were difficult to obtain, about job market needs, considering that there were approximately 1000 occupations corresponding to secondary school education; (iii) required that schools follow the increasingly more frequent technological changes, which would be highly expensive; (iv) made the adaptation to new occupations difficult, there being a danger of an excess of professionals; and (v) would require the reproduction of the entire environment of companies inside each school, leading to duplications that would increase educational costs considerably.

The most relevant innovation of the Opinion was the very definition of professionalizing education, different from that contained in Opinion number 45/72. It was no longer understood as the transmission of limited technical knowledge with little flexibility. It now intended “to make the youngster aware of the expertise they must have of the scientific bases that guide a profession, and lead them to the technological application of the merely abstract knowledge conveyed so far by the school.” Thus, instead of specific professionalizing education, the rationale was now grounded in terms of a basic professionalizing education, “that would have a general nature and be intended to insert the youngster into the context of the humanism of the our times, to be attained above all at the secondary level”, by means of a basic qualification, understood as the “basic preparation for initiation into a specific area of activity in an occupation that, in some cases, would only be defined after the professional was hired.” In the secondary school,

<sup>6</sup> Opinion number 76/75 was published in *Documenta* (Brasília), issue number 170, January, 1975.



students would have information on broad issues of production and services and, thus, each of them “would be prepared to acquire a wide range of responsibilities within the company, according to its needs.” The occupations for which the specific qualification at school would be possible and advantageous could be the object of instruction in the technical programs through a combining of schools and companies, of schools with interscholastic centers, and other possible arrangements.<sup>7</sup>

Within the new concepts, the previously well-defined division between the general and the special parts of the curriculum became less distinct with the recognition that there were subjects in the general education part that could be considered instruments of qualification, being part of the special education schedule. Hence, in the organization of the curricula, each school could increase the course load of general education subjects, distributing them between the general and the special parts. It was also possible to compute them in the special parts, if they were grouped by areas. Furthermore, adopting the “systemic focus”, the school could make both course loads compatible. That way, the general education course load, corresponding to the common core of secondary school, was reinforced, not only by the increased time of the already existing subjects but also by the introduction of other subjects, also of general content.

Opinion number 76/75 stated there was no intention to eliminate the 130 professional qualifications already approved by Opinion number 45/72, but to group them into certain *basic qualification families* such as health, building, electronics, administration, business, among others.

After Act number 5.692/71 was re-construed by Opinion number 76/75, diluting the universal and compulsory professional nature of secondary education, it was no longer possible to withhold the growing wave of change to its wording. In fact, most members of the CFE were educational entrepreneurs or their agents who did not agree with that policy, and composition with a unified authoritarian guidance from MEC was no longer necessary, as had prevailed at the beginning of that decade. Events that took place in several areas of the country about professionalizing education are good indicators of these changes, in which the critique of the positive yet radical nature of Act number 5.692/71 was shared by the CFE members who already openly advocated the changes in the legislation beyond their interpretation through the Opinion.

The convergence of opinions toward the reform of the law then resulted in Opinion number 860/81, which began by stating that it had fostered, in the ten years it had been in effect, a unanimity: that it should be upgraded, not only in the interpretation of its provisions but, in some passages, by changing its wording.

For councilor Nathanael Pereira de Souza, reporting officer of the Opinion, the reasons that led the Chamber of Deputies to extend

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The mentioned stretches are part of the Opinion number 76/75, published in *Documenta* (cit.), pp. 40-42.

professionalizing education to all secondary students were merely conjectural, for which reason a situation soon emerged that he called a crisis of quality at this level of education. The report then recommended the preparation of a legislative bill, to be submitted by the CFE to the Minister of Education, with the following guidelines: (i) elimination of the predominance of the special preparation part over the general education part, in the secondary school curriculum, but preserving the qualification for work; and (ii) cancelation of the professional qualification requirement for obtaining a diploma at that level. The unanimous approval of the vote reported for the plenary session of the CFE was a measure of the acceptance of the changes in the Act within that joint committee.

Pursuant to that result, two similar measures were adopted by the CFE and by the MEC: the organization of workgroups to prepare amendment proposals for Act number 5.602/71, mainly regarding professionalization in secondary education. The first group was composed of members of the Federal Board and of the São Paulo State Board, a MEC technician and a professor from the Federal University of the State of Minas Gerais – UFMG. The second group comprised MEC personnel, exclusively. The reports of both groups were reviewed by the CFE, resulting in Opinion number 177/82, with Anna Bernardes da Silveira as reporting officer.

After collating the reports issued by the CFE and the MEC, the Opinion proposed a third formulation. The professional qualification would be maintained as an objective of secondary education, but it could be replaced by extending certain subjects in the general studies. The prevalence of the general education or special education parts, or even a balance between them, would depend on the nature of the studies offered at each educational institution.

In the draft of the bill of the Act attached to the Opinion, there was a replacement of a term that defined the general purpose of both elementary and secondary education. Article 1 of Act number 5.692/71 defined it as follows: “to provide students the training necessary for the development of their potentialities, as an element of self-assurance, the qualification for work and for the conscious exercise of citizenship.” The intermediate term “qualification” was replaced by “preparation”, assuming a vague connotation, so that practically any content could be associated, even if indirectly, with professionalization.

In the year when the dictatorship was forced to replace the choosing of state governors with direct elections, which allowed the opposition parties to take control of the important states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Minas Gerais, there was still an attempt to conceal the weakness of that educational policy.

The culmination of the process of the *reform of the reform* of professionalizing education in secondary school, under development since 1973, occurred with a short yet incisive legislative bill from the MEC. Act number 7.044, October 18, 1982, was derived from that bill, which adopted part of the CFE recommendations.

The term *qualification* for work was replaced by *preparation*, within the general objective of elementary and secondary education, in accordance with the Opinion from the CFE. However, instead of explicitly resuming the duality in secondary education, the wording of the Act was at the same time timid and euphemistic. The preparation for work, as an element of the total preparation of the pupil, would be compulsory in elementary and secondary school, and should be part of the curricular plans of each educational institution. Contrary to the original law, which set forth a universal and compulsory professional qualification in secondary education, the modified provision stated: “The preparation for work, during secondary education, could *result in* professional qualification, at the discretion of the educational institution” (Act number 7.044/82, Article 76, author’s emphasis).

That Act represented the actual emptying of the professionalizing education at the secondary level, as it had been defined by the preceding law 11 years earlier. However, it did not discard the opinions developed by the CFE based on Act number 5.692/71, which were maintained fully in force. In a surprising political-ideological stratagem, the action taken was to add the possibility desired by the private institutions, complying with the higher-income segments of the middle class, concealing the revocation, in practice, of the previous legislation.

Four years later, another Opinion issued by the CFE (number 785/86) expressed the euphemistic nature of the provisions of the new Act. The *preparation for work* could be understood in such a broad manner that it would be fully met by a secondary school specialized in preparation for the college entrance exams as long as it offered information about the college-level programs, provided visits to businesses, lectures by professors and professionals, as well as offered vocational exams, to its students.

## BACKFLOW ONTO COLLEGE EDUCATION

Correlated with the changes in the educational policy for secondary education – and even before its inflection was concluded – a renewed government effort was noticed to implement a policy, already outlined by the university reform of 1968, fostering the replication of short-term programs. These were to be given, not within the universities where the long-term programs could attract students from the short-term ones, but jointly with other institutions, especially the federal technical schools.

This institutional segregation allied itself to the symbolic distinction between the short- and long-term programs. The denomination “operating engineers”, given to the graduates of three-year programs, was banished from the vocabulary. They would now be called *technologists*. The short-term programs should have curricula quite different from those of the long- or full-term ones, so as to discourage future attempts by their graduates to seek to complete their qualification by adding a set of subjects to the curriculum attended, with the aim of attaining the diplomas of long-term programs. That was the content of Opinion number 1.589/75 of the CFE.

Hence, the strategy of “advocating” college education was changed in the face of a “massive attack” of candidates. Early in the 1970s, this advocacy was attempted based on withholding the demand, by diverting potential candidates for college programs into the job market, supposedly undergoing a shortage of mid-level technicians for which the universal and compulsory professionalization was instituted in the secondary schools. With the crisis of the “Brazilian Miracle” a “distension” policy was imposed, which led to protest, although cut short by the authoritarianism of the military governments, of pressures that showed the imminent failure of the professionalization policy in secondary education.

Having verified the impossibility of reducing the demand for college education by diverting a significant part of the potential candidates into the job market through secondary education, the solution found was to satisfy that demand by offering college programs, however with lower economic and symbolic value: the short-term programs.

Consistent with that new strategy, the college entrance exams were redefined: instead of being merely classificatory, always based on multiple-choice questions (which were mandatory), they came to verify the academic qualification of the candidates for college programs. As a consequence, the exams were split into two tests, one eliminatory and the other classificatory. The evaluation of Portuguese language skills became mandatory, with the same purpose, and the public universities adopted discursive tests, suggested as being better than the “objective” tests for verifying the aptitude of each candidate.

In order to justify this change in the strategy of social discrimination by means of schooling, the resumption of the theme of the quality of college education by means of the selection of students moved into the foreground in the early 1980s, from where it had been purged since the beginning of the previous decade.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The above material shows that the policy of universal and compulsory professionalization in secondary education was not a necessity of the productive system, nor did it correspond to the internal rationale of the educational system. In this case, the incongruence was flagrant. Regarding the industrial dimension of professionalization, always given as an example, the qualification of technicians and technical assistants did not correspond to the industrial arts of elementary school, guided more by artisanship than by industrial culture. On the other hand, the ultra-specialization of technicians and technical assistants was inconsistent with the concept of undergraduate programs in college, which, according to Act number 5.540/68, ought to start with a basic cycle of a general nature so as to prevent an early choice of a career.

The concept of professionalization in secondary school was not an invention of the military regime, although they were somewhat favorable to it, as were the religious persons of the Christian branches for whom work would prevent subversion and sin. Nor was it a recommendation of international agencies, which did not acknowledge similar experiences in other countries, even less in the United States, always evoked as the model for development in Brazil.

From the mandatory merger of the branches in secondary school, in the government of General Emílio Médici, there passed into the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso the mandatory separation between the general nature programs and the professional programs in secondary school, the aim of Decree number 2.208/97 prohibiting the existence of the integrated technical education. Since the beginning of the government of Luís Inácio Lula da Silva in 2003, the government has sought means and methods of articulation, whose outcome remains undefined.

Facing such a lack of identity, secondary education is still characterized by a double denial: it is no longer elementary education, meant for everyone; nor is college education, yet. The National Secondary Education Exam (*Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio – Enem*), introduced into the Brazilian educational structure as a version of the French *baccalauréat* and of the German *abitur* exams, with the double function as the exit from secondary education and entrance into college education, has never met the first goal, as it has come to be synonymous with the second. In other words, the propaedeutic function has prevailed, reinforced, at least in an ideological plan, by the program University for All (*Universidade para Todos*), instituted by Act number 11.096, January 13, 2005.

Nothing remains from the educational policy of the dictatorship herein focused, except for the damage caused by the years of deviation in a level of education that has not yet found its identity within the educational structure of the country.

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### LUIZ ANTÔNIO CUNHA

Associate professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro – UFRJ –,  
Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
[lacunha@globocom](mailto:lacunha@globocom)