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**Anísio Teixeira's Legacy to Brazilian Education**  
**L'héritage d'Anísio Teixeira dans le cadre de l'éducation brésilienne**  
**El legado de Anísio Teixeira a la educación Brasileña**

Clarice Nunes

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# Anísio Teixeira's Legacy to Brazilian Education<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

An analysis of the work of Anísio Teixeira (1900-1971), based on research in his archives that permitted a questioning of the current interpretations found in the pedagogical literature between 1970 and 1990. The focus is on his role as administrator at the secretaries of education of Rio de Janeiro (1930-1935) and Salvador (1940-1950), as coordinator of public organs, particularly the Instituto *Nacional de Pesquisas Educacionais/INEP* (1952–1964). His legacy was built amid political-ideological clashes due to his stance in defense of democracy and education for democracy, both in his administrative work and publications. The controversy surrounding the book *Educação não é Privilégio* (1957) and its nationwide repercussion are examined. Anísio Teixeira and his collaborators built a domain of identification and practice for professional educators, defining the career and producing policy aimed at creating a school system from elementary education to university.

Keywords: history of Brazilian education, Brazilian educators, Anísio Teixeira

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<sup>1</sup> This is an expanded version of a paper presented at the International Colloquium *120 years of Anísio Teixeira*, São Paulo, University of São Paulo (USP), online event on December 16, 2020.

## El legado de Anísio Teixeira a la educación Brasileña

### Resumen

Se presenta un análisis de la obra de Anísio Teixeira (1900-1971) a partir de investigaciones en sus archivos que permitieron cuestionar las interpretaciones vigentes en la literatura pedagógica entre 1970 y 1990. El foco está en su papel como administrador de las secretarías de educación de Río de Janeiro (1930-1935) y Salvador (1940-1950), y como coordinador de órganos públicos, en particular del *Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Educacionais/INEP* (1952-1964). Su legado se construyó en medio de entretamientos político-ideológicos por su defensa de la democracia y la educación para la democracia, tanto en su labor administrativa como en sus publicaciones. Se examina la controversia en torno al libro *Educação não é Privilégio* (1957) y su repercusión nacional. Anísio Teixeira y sus colaboradores construyeron un dominio de identificación y práctica para los profesionales de la educación, definiendo la carrera y produciendo políticas dirigidas a la creación de un sistema escolar desde la enseñanza básica hasta la universidad.

Palabras clave: historia de la educación brasileña, educadores brasileños, Anísio Teixeira

## L'héritage d'Anísio Teixeira dans le cadre de l'éducation brésilienne

### Résumé

Cet article analyse l'œuvre d'Anísio Teixeira (1900–71). Elle est basée sur des recherches effectuées dans ses archives qui nous permettent de questionner les interprétations actuelles dans la littérature pédagogique entre 1970 et 1990. Nous mettons l'accent sur son rôle d'administrateur aux secrétariats de l'éducation de Rio de Janeiro (1930–35) et du Salvador (1940–50) en tant que coordinateur d'organismes publics, en particulier *l'Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Educacionais/INEP* (1952–64). Teixeira a façonné son héritage parmi les affrontements politico-idéologiques en raison de sa position en faveur de la démocratie et de l'éducation pour la démocratie, tant dans son travail administratif que dans ses écrits. Nous examinons également la controverse autour du livre *Educação não é Privilégio* (1957) et sa répercussion nationale. Anísio Teixeira et ses collaborateurs ont construit un domaine d'identification et de pratique pour les éducateurs professionnels, définissant leur carrière et réalisant une politique visant à créer un système scolaire de l'enseignement à partir du primaire jusqu'à l'université.

Mots clés : histoire de l'éducation brésilienne, éducateurs brésiliens, Anísio Teixeira

## Introduction

*You are, as educators, the founders of Brazil...*

(Teixeira, 1976, p. 385)

Anísio Spínola Teixeira (1900-1971) stood for education and defended public schools as a focus for his work and the purpose of his life, both as an intellectual and organizer of people and institutions. The contributions made in the positions he held achieved significant advances towards education based on solidarity and social justice.

He was part of a generation of intellectuals that created a field of identification for professional educators. There is practically no aspect of this field that wasn't affected by his ideas and initiatives, such as the democratic principles of education; the creation of institutions to train professionals in research and teaching, from elementary education to university; and the management of public spaces and resources for public schools, among others. He moved between politics, philosophy, art, and human and social sciences, placing these at the service of an ideal: quality schooling for all citizens. In promoting dialogue between social scientists and educators, he directed conquests in various fields of knowledge at the main problems in Brazilian education, proposing plans of action, rethinking curricula and teaching methods, improving teacher training, and reviewing the work done by schools.

This work is defined by focus on the whole of the teaching system in order to propose and execute his planned policies. He sought efficient teaching methods from primary school to university, hence the importance of improving teacher training, the definition of the educator's career as a profession, schools' material resources, the services of libraries, teaching system assessments, and the correction of any weak points. He and his workgroups were pioneers in implanting full-time education in Brazil, with physical, intellectual and cultural activities, as well as work practices. Nowadays, this education would certainly include the digital domain and the capacity to obtain reliable information, demanding discernment, the ability to perform research, and the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data.

Anísio Teixeira was one of the best prepared men for the public management of education. He came with some remarkable baggage: an Ignatian elementary education, a legal grounding from the law faculties of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, post-graduate studies in education at Columbia University, lengthy trips studying public management that led him throughout his life to move between Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, and Brasília. He articulated through his actions—as did other educators of his generation—his personal history, that generation's experience and intellectual output in favor of popular education. Despite many setbacks, he maintained with enviable persistence a commitment to shaping the mentality that the country's education is both necessary and important.

## Coming Into Contact With The Work of Anísio Teixeira

My contact with the work of Anísio Teixeira largely came about through the vast variety of documents, donated by his family, that make up his archive at the *Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil* (CPDOC), at *Fundação Getúlio Vargas* (FGV), Rio de Janeiro, in the 1990s. In this rich archive I read letters and declarations by his contemporaries, both collaborators and opponents, by public school teachers, pupils, ordinary men who had professional dealings with him, or friends. The archive reveals work processes in action, moments of doubt and crisis. In some cases, it uncovers his humanity, someone more fragile and less trusting than some idealizations would suggest.

The study of other CPDOC archives, such as those of Lourenço Filho, Paschoal Leme, Felinto Müller, Pedro Ernesto, Hermes Lima, Clemente Mariani, and Gustavo Capanema, placed alongside information found in the Anísio Teixeira archive, raises several questions: What is the historical value of an individual life? Does a biography serve to explore a problem or illustrate it? In *Esboço de autoanálise* (2005), Pierre Bourdieu claims not to want to sacrifice himself to the autobiographic genre, being conventional and illusory. He feared producing an effect of closure and didn't wish to impose an interpretation, but rather to understand "the field for and against which each of us were made" (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 40).

Contrary to the common and hegemonic view in pedagogy literature from the 1970s to the 1990s, which portrayed Anísio as being dazzled by technique, pro-American or Communist, the interactions between the narratives of various types of documents suggested new challenges to understanding and led me to a new perspective. The archive revealed his work in politics and on the creation of the *Partido Autonomista Renovado do Distrito Federal*. Among the listed documents I observed that in 1929, at the *III Conferência Nacional de Educação*, in São Paulo, Anísio stated that all educational work is, due to its broad purpose, political work. However, the emphasis shifts from politics to technique. Anísio's defense of technique was a political one. In a 1929 speech, what interested him was to affirm his ideological identification with the educators of São Paulo, above all Fernando de Azevedo. In 1931, the emphasis shifted to the results of technique, an attempt to relieve the envy of Rio educators who had applied for the position he now held. In the party program, emphasis is placed on the skills which, while nameless, define who belongs to the hegemony in the political leadership of the *Partido Autonomista Renovado*. In his 1935 resignation letter, the presentation of his post as "rigorously technical" serves to distinguish him from the Catholics (and integralists) and Communists.

The speeches were tactical instruments, but the books, written in intervals between his public service jobs, were long-range weapons. They were simultaneously made up of an inventory of gains and losses and an internal process of working through frustrations. The party program was a pivot that shifted the philosophy of John Dewey in practical ways towards possibilities that he perceived in Brazilian society in the 1930s.

The interaction between sources shows us the educator's attempts to bring rationality to the political field. His strength was to reveal a political consciousness and determination of

sufficient force to carry out, at state level, the historic possibility of meeting the needs of the general public. The weakness was that it deepened the internal contradictions of municipal governments, which were growing and interrupted the implantation of his project. This is also a symptom of the difficulty of leadership in practicing politics and that specific time, to reconcile the necessary and the viable. There is no security in imposing certain modifications on the course of social process, within given deadlines (Romo 1972). In the mid-1930s, reactionary interests did everything to dismantle and erase his work, upholding privileges among the population in accessing a quality education.

### **Anísio Teixeira Wasn't Born an Educator; He Became an Educator!**

Anísio became an educator in a process polished through exchanges between the various educators that influenced him. His elementary education took place at the Jesuit schools of *São Luiz Gonzaga*, in Caeté, and *Colégio Antonio Vieira*, in Salvador. There, the young Anísio came into contact with priests who were also teachers with an academic vocation, researchers in their field of knowledge, some of them the authors of articles in international journals.

Christian humanism formed the basic mold of his education. It stimulated his intimacy with books, opened up his thinking to philosophy and science, and led him to master rhetoric and make it a tool of power. It shaped a way of thinking and a way of living. It created for him a symbolic universe in which he made choices regarding his reading (Saint Ignatius, Father António Vieira, Saint Thomas Aquinas, etc.) and his friendships (Father Cabral, Herbert Fortes, Joaquim Faria Góes, etc.). Before 1929, Anísio was someone who had internalized a hierarchical vision of man, considered the family as the model institution for society, and defended an elitist and selective conception of teaching. During his youth, as a militant of the Catholic movement, he was ideologically aligned with Catholic thinkers such as Jackson de Figueiredo, Alceu Amoroso Lima, and Plínio Salgado.

When in the 1920s Anísio traveled to Europe and the United States, it awoke new possibilities for living and understanding the world. His experience as *Diretor Geral de Educação* in Salvador and his second trip to the United States to spend time at the Columbia University teachers college, produced before his very eyes and those of others a rupture in his biography that highlights the before-and-after of his time in the US. He chose the work of John Dewey as a compass for dealing with education, and became Dewey's first translator in Brazil. He opened himself to scientific thought and invested in the belief that the roots and paths of social change in favor of democracy were planted in childhood. Dewey's pragmatist philosophy was his theoretic guide and inspired both his organization of an educational policy and his defense of educational research in Brazil. Anísio followed Dewey in building new existential meaning and finding answers to the educational issues with which he was dealing.

Upon his return from the second trip to the United States, Anísio left Bahia and set up his life in Rio de Janeiro, then the capital city. He made new friendships: Monteiro Lobato and Fernando de Azevedo. He widened his reading to include William James, Bertrand Russell, H.G. Wells, as well as Baudelaire, Proust, Dostoevsky. In a 1971 letter he told Fernando de Azevedo that the turning point in his life had been the year 1929. He wrote,

"...that was the year I found myself" (Vidal, 2000, p. 132). The change in the symbolic universe<sup>2</sup> meant a withdrawal from the church, but not the Ignatian pedagogy that marked his personality indelibly. Just before he died, he commented to Fernando de Azevedo that from his religious education he had retained the sense that "to live is to serve and expect nothing more than the comfort of this possible service" (Vidal, 2000, p. 152). And so, from the late 1920s, Anísio distinguished between church and state, religion and spirituality.

## At The Service of The Country's Education

The list of services that Anísio Teixeira provided to Brazilian education is extensive: conferences and publications; the overseeing of relevant public education reforms, such as in Rio de Janeiro (1931-1935); the creation of the *Centro Educacional Carneiro Ribeiro*, better known as *Escola Parque*, in Salvador (1940 to 1960); the planning of the educational system of Brasília (1960); the creation of the University of Brasília, of which he was dean (1960); the creation of the *Centro Brasileiro de Pesquisa Educacional/CBPE* and the *Centros Regionais de Pesquisa Educacional do INEP/CRPEs* (1952 to 1964); and the running of the *Campanha de Aperfeiçoamento do Ensino Superior* (1951-1964), CAPES, which under his administration became a government agency. He was also president of the *Associação Brasileira de Educação/ABE* (1932-1934) and the *Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência/SBPC* (1955-1959), a consultant for international organs such as UNESCO, for whom he worked in Paris and London, and an advisor to the *Conselho Federal de Educação*. His fight for our first *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (law governing nationwide education) in 1961 was memorable. He was also a professor at Brazilian and international universities. What follows are comments about some of his main activities.

### *The Reform of Education in The City of Rio de Janeiro (1931-1935)*

As *Diretor Geral da Instrução Pública*<sup>3</sup> in the federal capital, Anísio Teixeira faced opposition from privileged groups, opponents in the fields of both politics and education. The reform of education in Rio de Janeiro created, for the first time and under a municipal government, a teaching system from primary school to university. Primary schools, secondary technical schools, and adult education all expanded and improved in quality.

Technical schools were a bone of contention, not only because they united general culture within professional technical courses for the first time in Brazil (something that had previously only existed at a primary level), but also because their diplomas were recognized and they introduced the participation of students, organized in councils, in the management of schools.

Libraries, especially for children, were a major innovation, and class libraries enhanced the pedagogy. The educational radio station in Rio de Janeiro carried the libraries'

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<sup>2</sup> Here we refer to the concept of symbolic universes developed by Berger and Luckmann in the book *A construção social da realidade*. Rio de Janeiro, Vozes, 1976 (*The Social Construction of Reality*. New York, Doubleday & Company Inc., 1966).

<sup>3</sup> This post corresponds to the current Secretaria Municipal de Educação (Municipal Secretary of Education).

programming directly to local families. Primary school teachers were highly valued. For the first time in the country, their training took place at the university level, at the then recently-formed *Universidade do Distrito Federal*. Education was established as an academic field of investigation. At the same time, under his leadership, research was produced at the *Instituto de Pesquisas Educacionais*, such as that carried out by Arthur Ramos, who defended the gentler treatment of children, as well as, despite some disagreements, the application in primary schools of classification tests for pupils.

Anísio Teixeira was part of the mentality of that period and ended up endorsing the disciplinary role played by schools within towns in dealing with the heterogeneity of low-income classes and their children. But unlike some of his colleagues, he didn't identify heterogeneity as a failing of attributes intrinsic to poor people. He shifted individual failings to government omissions in the rebuilding of social and educational conditions. He didn't see urban low-income classes as social and political obstacles, and therefore endorsed education as an instrument for overcoming a shortfall, not on the part of individuals, but of the erudite culture from which they were excluded. He perceived that inequality among people wasn't a given; it was made.

As authoritarian modernism became more established, Anísio Teixeira propelled the persecution of authoritarian Catholics and thinkers. His management was seen as an opposition to the official strategy and created successive conflicts at governmental and ideological levels, and within the actual schools. His reforms were fought and interrupted. Catholics invaded city hall and controlled education services. A divided educational project prevailed: for ordinary people, an education aimed at the working classes, and for the elites, education for the enjoyment and practice of culture. Anísio opposed nationalism with democracy, understood less as a set of mechanisms for participation by individuals in political society, but rather for the democratization of civil society.<sup>4</sup> The reforms he led broadened schools' influence in towns. They spanned the range of European and North American culture, articulating popular and academic knowledge. He withdrew the problem of education from church and federal government tutelage. All these aspects marked the polemic nature of his leadership.

The desk at which Anísio wrote the *Programa do Partido Autonomista Renovado do Distrito Federal* was the same one where Francisco Campos had written the *Constitution of the Estado Novo*.<sup>5</sup> The number and content of the letters received by Felinto Müller in the mid-1930s, eager to fight and repress communism, reveal that Anísio was right when he wrote to Hermes Lima showing the importance of shaping public opinion in combating every type of dogma, fear, prejudice and fanaticism.<sup>6</sup> Anísio's name was vilified. He was denounced in the hidden recesses of the Vargas secret police, along with rapists,

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<sup>4</sup> Miriam Warde. *Liberalismo e educação*. São Paulo. PUC/SP, 1984 (PhD thesis), p. 105-139.

<sup>5</sup> From 1920 to 1930 authoritarian thinking grew in Brazil, culminating in the coup of the Getúlio Vargas dictatorship, the Estado Novo (1937-1945). The authoritarian thinking took space from liberalism, which went into collapse, not only in Brazil, but in various European countries. See Lippi (1982).

<sup>6</sup> Clarice Nunes. *A poesia da ação*. Bragança Paulista. EDUSF, 2000, p. 511.



embezzlers and those who hire contract killers.<sup>7</sup> However, “the stump of his work,” to use Lobato’s expression, would later emerge like a phoenix rising from the ashes. In the mid-1940s he was invited by UNESCO to take a position as advisor for higher education.

### *The Creation of Escola Parque (1940s, 1950s, 1960s)*

In the late 1940s, Anísio left UNESCO and assumed a new role to reform education in the city of Salvador, creating one of the finest popular education acts in the working-class neighborhood of Liberdade. A happy school was created that united the usual classes taught through practices of work, art, recreation, socialization, and cultural extension. This initiative served as the basis for organizing an educational plan for the city of Brasília. The dynamics of the *Centro de Educação Popular* were described and analyzed by Terezinha Éboli in her book *Uma experiência de educação integral* (1983). I highlight what she writes about the contribution of the Centro Educacional Carneiro Ribeiro to the whole country.

She states that the Centro intended to:

[. . .] make better use of the things we know about children; make the classroom a laboratory of democratic life; improve the classroom environment; provide efficient learning materials; develop better procedures for working with parents; better employment of the conclusions of research about teaching school subjects; develop a program for assessing pupils’ progress, and seek to keep the school in harmony with the life of society, which has been so changing fast. (1983, p. 35)

The Centro Educacional Carneiro Ribeiro served as a symbolic anchor for various projects that later governments of different political-ideological tendencies attempted, such as the *Centros Integrados de Educação Pública* (Rio’s CIEPs - Leonel Brizola government) or the *Centros Integrados de Atendimento à Infância* (CIACs - Collor de Mello government). Here and in other initiatives the intention was to carry on Anísio Teixeira’s work, although very little or almost nothing had anything to do with the concept that fed his initiatives.

What distinguishes Anísio Teixeira’s proposals from other previous and/or later ones is his concept of education as a civil right, the basis of the autonomy of individual and collective historic subjects. He inverts the logic that has social rights coming first, before expanding political rights, without this expansion being accompanied by the actual achievement of civil rights. The latter end up existing on paper, more as proclaimed values than real ones (Rocha, 1995).

Anísio Teixeira doesn’t propose models to be followed. He refers to Escola Parque as a rehearsed solution and recognizes and values the people it incorporates without wanting to direct their destiny, but instead open up possibilities. This is because “the modern in Anísio Teixeira is stated with the recognition of the right of others, and therefore their civil liberties” (Rocha, 1995, p. 42).

What was it that allowed Escola Parque’s national and international success amid the destruction of Anísio Teixeira’s public work? This achievement in the 1950s and 1960s came not only from Anísio Teixeira’s driving force and commitment to popular education,

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<sup>7</sup> Letter from Sebastião Menezes to Filinto Müller dated 8/2/1938. Arquivo Filinto Müller, series Chefatura de Polícia do DF, FM 33.02.21 cph/ad, doc. II-52, CPDOC/FGV.

but was also due to the favorable dynamic current conditions marked by the acceleration of economic growth and the emphasis of the constitution of 1946.

Anísio was guided by an overall idea that placed him in opposition to the entire centralizing and authoritative process, whose main advocate was Gustavo Capanema, of the Dutra government (1946-1951). Rather, Anísio defended decentralization, educational differentiation, the facilitation of transfers between types of teaching, and organized actions by the various public spheres—federal, state and municipal—in conducting the expansion of the country's schools. Unity would come from cooperation and the monitoring of these three realms in order to fulfill the legal prerogatives of the country's educational directives and bases.

The policy that established demonstration schools creates an artificial center, something that placed other schools in the network on the periphery in terms of material and human resources. Although an intention to spread the model to the entire network is present, the powers thereby unleashed didn't contribute to this outcome. The greatest problem for management is how to transform this policy construction into a policy for the entire teaching system.<sup>8</sup>

The greatest difficulty is the mentality of bureaucratic government organs in coordinating the technical and political spheres. Breaking with generalized school standards isn't just a matter of showing external efficiency, but involves cultivating the internal efficiency of the administrative machines driving educational policy. Since the rhythms of this internal efficiency vary, "islands of efficiency" are created, something that quickly causes their isolation within the state apparatus. In other words, they cease radiating their efficiency to other sectors of government, which makes the most of complaints by agents who, being on the edge of system, don't feel they are [were] benefiting from the proposed policies.

Given that circumstances fluctuate, it is necessary for those involved in processes of change to know how to assess the socio-political viability of their ventures. However, the problem of these ventures isn't just one of viability, but their links to legitimate and long-lasting goals. In Salvador in the 1950s and 1960s, Anísio Teixeira's capacity for leadership coincided with the definition of a strategy at local and national levels that implied changes in educational policy. There was at that time what Romo (1972) refers to as a creative correspondence between the conception and the "facts," since the administrator had the capacity to both embrace the question of education in a vision of the whole and select intervention strategies. Management operated with an "analytic totality" and an "operative totality" to distinguish between obstacles that demanded a revision of aims and establishing mediation requirements for action.

The big difference between the Centro Educacional Carneiro Ribeiro and the other ensuing initiatives is that the strategy didn't superimpose itself onto events. It emerged from them and at the same time distinguished itself from them, since its creator sought the means of modifying them based on prior concrete experiences and his substantial knowledge of the experience of public administration. With a clear proposal in defense of

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<sup>8</sup> The distinction between regular schools in the teaching system and the experimental schools generated serious criticisms among teachers and other education professionals. In general, the overall policy was reduced to localized initiatives that put emphasis on the social assistance aspects, rather than the pedagogy.

quality public schools, educators could use their technical and political rationality in favor of them, connecting their attitudes to the proposed method and project. The success of innovative experiences depended on the fact that they embody strategies and tactics applied to the aspirations of the collective, or sectors of it that could provide support to official policies. They also depended on pedagogical imagination. In Salvador and all its problems, this support and this imagination—despite criticisms in the press—were effective. We tend to agree with Darcy Ribeiro when he writes, in the book by Terezinha Éboli mentioned above, “I often say that Escola Parque was created to teach us the sort of school that Brazil would create whenever it came to its senses.”

### *Anísio Teixeira's Presence at The Instituto Nacional de Pedagogia/ INEP (1952-1964)*

Anísio Teixeira acquired further momentum when he joined INEP, the current acronym for *Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais*, in 1952. He took on the running of this organ with a comprehensive vision of educational policy, a critical posture regarding the supply and quality of Brazilian education, skills in managing power and using authority, and knowledge of the administrative labyrinths that had to be negotiated in order to make his proposals viable—with the conviction that it is the state's duty to provide viable services needed by the population.

According to those who worked there, he elevated INEP to far beyond a mere governmental organ. INEP became a thinking organ that carried out improvements to the country's education within the current possibilities. It generated proposals for intervening in educational systems based on the latest social and educational research, developed through its sponsorship and the experiences of CBPE and the CRPEs. The concept of team leadership within this institution wasn't merely governed by hierarchy, but above all by the knowledge held by its agents, who would pass this on to the group in the face of the specific situations under discussion.

One way in which Anísio Teixeira used INEP resources was by supporting, through signed agreements, all the secretaries and departments of education in the Brazilian states under the pretext of pedagogical guidance and making use of Law 59, dated 11/08/1947, which authorized the federation to enter into an agreement with states for the purpose of improving primary, secondary, and normal schools. In 1956, Minister of Education Clóvis Salgado presented the complementary plan for primary teaching, along the lines of teaching for labour, and authorizing, by means of a budget proposal, the use of public funds for the year 1957 to install short workshops in primary schools. In short, the intention of this additional schooling was to institute a period of viable education in the teaching system for secondary school pupils, with education covering the child's life through to adolescence from the end of primary school to the legal working age. However, Brazil's first Lei de Diretrizes e Bases didn't endorse this extension of primary school teaching, whose duration was retained at four years.

In the 1960s, Anísio Teixeira's trajectory as an educator was once again put to the test. The military dictatorship constrained the University of Brasília and broke, as Darcy Ribeiro put it, one of the most important things that Anísio had done for the country: the national and regional research centers. Again, the attempt to make education a field of academic

investigation was frustrated. INEP was deactivated as an agency producing educational research and became first a bureaucratic organ and later a financing agency for studies and research in the field. Some of its publications, such as *Educação e Ciências Sociais*, were suspended, while the publication of others like the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos* became irregular. The document and bibliographical archives, laboriously organized by the *Centro Brasileiro de Pesquisas Educacionais*, were left to dilapidate.

### *Anísio And The "Education Isn't a Privilege" Polemic (1957)*

Anísio Teixeira's first book was launched towards the end of his mandate as *Diretor da Instrução Pública da Bahia* (1928). His second book appeared following his exoneration as *Diretor da Instrução Pública* in Distrito Federal, in 1936. Two further books, in 1956 and 1957, were published under heavy political pressure that almost resulted in his dismissal from the posts he held. The other books, such as those already mentioned, were published at the end of his time in office. He delivered the *Ensino Superior no Brasil* [Higher Education in Brazil] manuscript to the publishers, but it wouldn't be published until 1989. I myself organized the reprinting of Anísio Teixeira's works UFRJ in the 1990s.

The polemic created by the book *Educação não é privilégio* [Education Isn't a Privilege] grew. *The Memorial* by bishops from Rio Grande do Sul made serious accusations against Anísio Teixeira and demanded he be removed from INEP, putting into check a public vocation in a country of ferocious private interests. Anísio was again the catalyst for the anger of Catholics who made the journal *Revista Vozes* their frontline trench.<sup>9</sup> But in this controversy against the church, Anísio's pronouncements engaged public opinion, legislative and executive organs, the university itself, and combative sectors of the intelligentsia, with a focus on the necessity of the expansion and quality of a public education common to all Brazilians. The struggle now emerged to oppose the privatist interests regarding education in the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases*.

The book was based on two conferences. The first was held in 1953 for technicians, teachers, and students of the *Escola Brasileira de Administração Pública* (Ebab). The second, in 1956, was for a wider audience and at the invitation of the *Secretaria Estadual de Educação de São Paulo*, in Ribeirão Preto. It was divided into three themes: education is not a privilege; universal, free public schools; and education and training of the Brazilian people. In an annex, a pronouncement by the *Associação Brasileira de Educação* appeared, entitled *A Associação Brasileira de Educação e o ensino público* [the Brazilian Association of Education and Public Education]. For the edition reprinted in the 1990s I wrote a postface under the title *Prioridade número um para a educação popular* [Priority Number One For Popular Education].

In this work, Anísio stands up for public, lay, and free schools, for which he was attacked by Brazil's Catholic leaders. The conferences became a fuse that ignited a bleak combat, for which he was well prepared with his history of fighting for public education in Brazil,

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<sup>9</sup> The story of the book *Educação não é privilégio* can be found in the postface of the 1990s reprinted edition. Clarice Nunes. Number one priority for popular education. In: Anísio Teixeira. *Educação não é privilégio*. Rio de Janeiro, Editora da UFRJ, 1994.

while making it clear that the positions he defended regarding social problems were as the combatant rather than he himself.

However, it wasn't only the conferences that enraged Catholic authorities, but Anísio Teixeira's actions in incisively opposing the distortion of how *Fundo Nacional de Ensino Médio* funds were being used. These funds were used as a supplementary payment to private school teachers. As director of INEP he began sending funds to the states to enable them to expand primary school teaching at public schools. In his defense of an education for all, Anísio Teixeira held that schools not only taught reading and writing, but prepared citizens with a critical sense and aptitude to consciously take part in choosing a democratic government.

Anísio's first conference established a coordinate that would certainly please the ordinary people who wrote to Ministry of Education authorities describing the evils of public education.<sup>10</sup> The complaints from the population exposed the absence of a serious and competent policy for dealing with the problems of the schooling of Brazilian children, and they found echoes in Anísio's concerns not only in the first, but also the second conference that he held. Both conferences strengthened a movement that was taking shape not just in the Brazilian sphere, but internationally, given that concerns about illiteracy led ministers of education of Latin American countries to discuss policies for expanding and improving the continent's primary school teaching, at a meeting in Lima (1956). The second conference was held at the recently-approved biennial of education for São Paulo state, with its aim being to study and debate the problems relating to pre-primary, primary, rural, supplemental, normal, and medium-level professional education.

The fact is that the second conference, held at the *I Congresso Estadual de Educação*, met with enthusiastic applause and lively reactions emerging from the closing plenary session that approved the gathering's theses. Following this, accusations against liberal educators, above all Anísio Teixeira, spread like a powder keg fuse among the Catholic press and the city's newspapers with Catholic leanings. The effects of these criticisms began to grow and soon reached the Ministry of Education and the president, at that time Juscelino Kubitschek. In June 1958, in the words of the then friar Evaristo Arns, the "Anísio Teixeira affair" had become a national problem. What real danger did his authority pose to broad sectors of the Catholic church? He was certainly determined to divert funds previously destined for private Catholic teaching institutions so that state governments might expand and extend primary school teaching. Another point of conflict was Anísio's actions to pass on control of teacher training to states through examinations, as well as the introduction of pedagogical guidance services at ordinary schools provided by American technicians who had been specially invited. What was at stake here, apart from the application of funds, was a struggle for the training of young women teachers, in a context where the Church was already losing ground to other religious groups and an agitated discussion among the general population regarding the indissolubility of conjugal ties in the face of divorce proposals.

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<sup>10</sup> See for example the letter from Joaquim Evilásio Coelho to the Ministry of Education on 9th September 1953. *Arquivo Anísio Teixeira*, série temática, dossiê relativo à Lei de Diretrizes e Bases – 19/2/1952 a 26/6/1964, At t 52-02-19, Pasta 1, CPDOC/FGV.

During the debate, Anísio conceded that one's church was a matter of personal choice but rejected it as a participant in public negotiations. He rejected that this institution was meddling in the sphere of education, and reduced religious belief to the invisibility of individual consciences. Liberalism as practiced and defended by Anísio Teixeira—as director of INEP and secretary-general of CAPES—in the 1950s, was assertive. The control of funds and teacher training went to the nodal point of the ideological struggle between Liberalism and Catholicism: the separation between the world of individual consciences and the materiality of the social world (2007, p. 239). It is precisely the materialist aspects of Dewey's pragmatism that were being confused with Marxism.

With his book *Educação não é privilégio*, Anísio Teixeira confronted the Catholic Church and used its indignation as fuel for keeping alive the attention on this debate, activating public opinion, debating with legislative and executive organs, provoking the universities themselves and the combative sectors of the intelligentsia, to defend public schooling as a priority.

With Anísio, solidarity with the people was a commitment in constant movement. The aim was a majority of the Brazilian population achieving an appreciation of popular culture and becoming an instrument of true autonomy.

## Final Considerations

The work of Anísio Teixeira is the result of his choice of education as a focus of his career. The motivation driving this focus is persistent. The theme of democracy is superimposed on other themes, and in his work and life he acquired an intonation that was distinct from other intellectuals who collaborated on his projects or were opposed to them. In the field of popular education, the schools created in Rio de Janeiro and Salvador were the scene of a constant expansion of activities by students and of their interactive communication. Pupils who frequented them perceived and valued the possibility of repossession of spaces of sociability that had been lost by the working classes to urban reforms that had pushed them out into the suburbs.

Implicit in Anísio Teixeira's trajectory defending public universities and public research or funding institutions is the supposition that no country is capable of a dignified survival without institutions—above all universities—capable of producing knowledge and proposing their own solutions to the issues that afflict society. He defends the freedom to create, both in teaching and research. Through his active interlocution within Brazilian social thinking with the most important names among intellectuals, the debate about education became attuned to advances in other human and social sciences, and in permanent dialogue with art.

The theoretical bases of Anísio Teixeira's thought were built upon the conception of democracy and social change found in the works of John Dewey. He appropriated himself of the theory of education based on experience, which situated the roots of social changes in favor of a democratic society in childhood. Dewey believed that vocational achievements would be resolved by defending a system of public education that allows all to reap the benefits of equality in the structure for future careers. This proposal distances Anísio Teixeira from the outlook of confessional education and from some concepts of

certain progressive education groups (e.g., the *Escolanovistas*). It also distances him a great deal from the crystallized images produced by certain commentators on the left; that of a creator of vocational schools for the working classes, understood as professional preparation directed towards industrial interests.<sup>11</sup>

Dewey's thinking helped Anísio to abandon the concept of a narrow and rigid link between the processes of production and schooling. This movement is guided by a calculated distancing from the model imposed by psychology and a move towards philosophy and art; hence his rejection of the metaphor of schools as factories, and consequently his criticism pointing out the dangers of the deification of science in the organization and running of schools, something he found problematic since it impeded the vision of the school as a whole. Anísio questioned quantitative trace analyses, activities which, in both psychology and the study of children and the curriculum, presupposed a false vision of schools as a whole, denying this philosophy and, as a consequence, value judgments.

Anísio sought, within another philosophical matrix, to rescue from Jesuit pedagogy knowledge that is socially relevant to a humanist curriculum: the realism built by the historic insertion of the act of education; a connection between ends and means; an appreciation of classroom activities and of teachers; and the question of the centrality of subjects, meaning to work the profound involvement of people into the act of educating. In Ignatian education, this involvement goes beyond the psychological. It is also ethical and practical, in the sense that it must be converted into choices that build up a commitment to reality.

Anísio distinguished himself from Dewey in the sphere of political strategy. Dewey believed in the complete success of educational reforms in less developed countries, with an absence of rooted cultural traditions. Anísio knew and critically denounced the force of these traditions in Brazilian society. At no time did Dewey, in his vast oeuvre, indicate any measures for measuring intelligence or level of education. Anísio applied them through his collaborators in the public schools network. Dewey remained an independent thinker and didn't join any party. Although Anísio appreciated his independence, in defending the reforms of the Distrito Federal in the 1930s he did draft a party program. Dewey never engaged with the debate between confessional and public schools, while during the 1950s Anísio waded right into it. Anísio inherited from Dewey a respect for pluralism, and a pragmatism which he tempered with his Jesuit education and his experience in regional politics.

Anísio Teixeira's conception of education, and that of some of his contemporary collaborators, goes against the mentality, hegemonic at the time, that linked Christianity and citizenship and presented teachers as moral leaders in society. Anísio and his teams of pedagogues created a new mentality in which science and work are central values. Transforming children into adults is an educational task as well a conquest of political practice for liberal educators. As a collaborator writing and publicizing the *Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educação Nova* (1932), he proposed the autonomy of science and politics in

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Madan Sarup. *Marxismo e Educação (Marxism and Education)*. London: Routledge, 1978).

driving education as an instrument and product of public morality. Anísio affiliated himself with the prestigious tradition of active pedagogies, where dialogue and reason predominate and the greater concern isn't scientific content but the manner in which they are created.

Anísio Teixeira's democratic conception in his experience of the education reforms of Rio de Janeiro (1931-1935) became an example, within the series of reforms of public instruction in Brazil, of carrying out ideas laid out in the *Manifesto dos Pioneiros*. It went against the initiatives of the federal government, authoritarian educators, Catholics, and even some liberal colleagues. Tensions between the latter ones were present in the actual Manifesto, revealing differences in conviction that varied between greater or lesser democratic attitudes. Intellectuals who signed the Manifesto presented themselves as liberals, whether moderate or more "left" or "right" leaning.<sup>12</sup>

The choice of democracy, and education for democracy, led Anísio Teixeira to distance himself from several colleagues in their way of understanding the fragmentation and heterogeneity of the working classes and the children within those classes. He didn't identify in poor children an absence of intrinsic attributes necessary for social change, but attributed the individual's deprivation to omissions on the part of governments in their administration of rebuilding social and schooling conditions. He didn't consider urban working classes to be social and political obstacles. He defended education as an instrument for overcoming a shortfall; not the individual's, but that of the erudite culture from which he or she has been excluded.

Anísio's defense of popular education was materialized in the construction of school buildings, and in the expressive increase in enrollment at primary, secondary, and adult education levels. His work in Rio de Janeiro (1931-1935) was demolished by the pressure of authoritarian and Catholic leaders. This entailed his exile and the imprisonment of the first elected mayor, Pedro Ernesto, in what was then the capital city.

The fight for popular education reemerged in the 1950s with the creation, in the Salvador neighborhood of Liberdade, of the first experiment in integral education in Brazil, with new curricula, programs, and staff. This initiative expanded primary school literacy instruction to a schooling enriched by general culture to enable the integration of the population in poor areas within the context of a modern society. Literacy was approached from this perspective. The political criteria that led Anísio to an initiative of this size were anchored in the values of equality and individuality so dear to modernity. Through equality he defended everyone's access to school, and through individuality a flexible and varied education imposed through social means rather than by the state. This was a direction and not a model to be followed. The work of Centro Educacional Carneiro Ribeiro has remained relatively little-known in Brazil, but references to it by educators can be found in European journals.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Luiz Antonio Cunha prefers distinguishing between igualitarian liberals and liberal elites. See his introduction to the second edition of Anísio Teixeira's book *Educação para a Democracia: Introdução à Administração Educacional* (2007, pp. 9-34).

<sup>13</sup> See for example the remarks by Max Fourestier in *Revue Française de l'Élite Européenne*, mars 1963, reproduced in the book by Terezinha Éboli, 1983, pp. 95-96.



Anísio placed himself countless times in opposition to public authorities and private interest groups, whether it be to the owners of buildings rented in Rio de Janeiro in order to install schools during the 1920s and 1930s or private education entities in the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the latter were Catholic, had obtained government study grants for their secondary school students, and were using public funds to pay staff salaries. As well as cutting funds to the private sector, he shaped his ideological fight by defending public schools through a book published in 1957, *Educação não é privilégio*. His ideas were fought by Catholics. Bishops from Rio Grande do Sul wrote the *Memorial* requesting his removal from INEP, the organ which under his leadership had given its support to the *Centros de Pesquisa*, *Escola Parque*, the University of Brasília and, via agreements, to all education department secretaries in every Brazilian state. Under the pretext of pedagogical guidance<sup>14</sup> he created, with the backing of then minister of education Clóvis Salgado, a plan to complement primary school teaching. The educational effort of this proposal would cover the period from childhood to adolescence, between the end of primary school and the legal working age.

The tough tests endured by Anísio as he faced reality as an administrator made him skillful in discerning, whenever necessary as he used to say (here I cite from memory), decisive gestures of support or pruning, having learned the hard way “that democracy doesn't happen on its own, but is the product of an organized will and lucid resolve to conquer its objectives.”<sup>15</sup> To him, education was “the right of rights” and required deliberations that affected the whole of society, as well as resources and measures on a national scale, combined by different government bodies. It is to him and his contemporaries that we owe the fight for the creation of the *Fundo Nacional de Educação* funding body.

For Anísio, education was also a technical-pedagogical problem of the never-resolved question of improvement and enhancement of Brazilian school institutions, to be debated by Brazilian educators and teachers. It was necessary to secure the freedom to innovate, creating an atmosphere among staff of autonomy and cooperation. It wasn't a case of staff teaching what they liked but *teaching what they should teach based on the established professional consensus*.

Anísio Teixeira and his collaborators, in drawing up a professional state for education and school production, worked on defining a professional career. From the 1930s, when the *Escola de Educação* was incorporated into the *Universidade do Brasil*, the training of a primary school teacher had to be carried out at a university level. This training was interrupted by Gustavo Capanema following the demand for Anísio's dismissal as secretary of education of the city of Rio de Janeiro. Liberal intellectuals, coordinated by Anísio, marked out an exclusive field of action, recognized by law and protected by the

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<sup>14</sup> Here he invoked Lei n. 59 dated 11/08/1947, which authorized the federal government to enter into agreements with states in order to improve primary, secondary and normal schools. It was based on this law that the Minister of Education Clóvis Salgado presented, in June 1956, a complementary plan for primary schooling, aligned with education for work, and authorizing via a budget proposal the use of public funds for the year 1957 in order to install small workshops in primary schools

<sup>15</sup> Explanation of motives for the law project to organize education services in the Bahia State, in 1947.

state. School production was carried out through the reorganization of the public teaching systems for which he was responsible.

From the point of view of forming intellectuals, Anísio Teixeira valued the university for producing knowledge and proposing its own solutions to emerging problems, hence his defense of public universities devoted to teaching and research, as well as public research and funding institutions such as CAPES, which went from being a campaign to an organ. The creation of CBPE and the CRPEs in Brazil created the opportunity for dialogue between pedagogues and social scientists, with the objective of identifying educational problems and proposing solutions for Brazilian schools on different levels. Surveys were drawn up portraying the true situation of education in the country with a view to creating educational policies and planning for the implementation of schools to serve the population.

Anísio Teixeira identified the problems and focused on the solutions. He directed his energy, and that of the teams he led, to establishing a virtuous circle of education. To do this, he used the already existing organization and created new mechanisms, expanding the freedom to act and undoing bureaucratic ties.

Unusually for an educator, Anísio Teixeira combined the skills of thinking and executing. He was able to maintain, as he himself said, his "unrepentant optimism," even in the face of existing evils and the dishonesty of those seeking to retain every type of privilege, always encouraged by the desire to convince by dialogue and the fairness of the positions he took. His militancy for quality popular education is expressed in his books and articles. All his written works are united by a coherent democratic philosophy. They are documents of criticism and action. Anísio knew that laws made reforms possible but didn't secure their materialization. They would come about by changing society's mentality—despite the reluctance of the elites—and through the training of teachers and technical staff.

Anísio Teixeira proved that it is possible to intervene and change the quality of schools. His proposals always enjoyed the generosity of a complete vision. His strategy always favored a system of teaching, even if its costs frightened the authorities and political groups with which he aligned himself, and even if this required a previously inconceivable recruitment of professionals and their training. He believed it was the duty of the state to make viable whatever was necessary. The needs of the population in terms of schooling was always in the foreground of the proposals he presented. According to Anísio, schools shouldn't merely reproduce the existing community, but raise it to a higher level, something compatible with the social aspirations of the workers who were enrolling their children.

Still today we need Anísio Teixeira's will to execute, the assurance of his ideas, and his capacity for management based on a philosophical conception of education. We need his coherent attitude, his persistence in defense of education for Brazilian children and young people. He continues to provoke and inspire us.

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