

Article

REPERTOIRES OF COLLECTIVE ACTIONS OF INTELLECTUALS ENGAGED IN THE EDUCATION DEBATE IN BRAZIL: INQUESTS, MANIFESTOS, AND NATIONAL CONFERENCES ON EDUCATION (1914-1967)

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to explore the concept of repertoire in the problematization of the actions of Brazilian intellectuals in the educational field. The concept of repertoire designates the strategies that a social group uses to achieve its objectives and express demands in situations of political conflicts. Among the repertoires analyzed, we highlight inquests, manifestos, and national education conferences. Each of these modes has specificities and requires intellectuals to engage in organization, writing, and publication procedures. Among the sources we highlight: the proceedings of the National Education Conferences of the ABE; the inquests organized and promoted by the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* (OESP); the *Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educação Nova* and the *Manifesto dos Educadores Mais Uma Vez Convocados*. In the conclusions section, we highlight how, through the repertoires analyzed, intellectuals promoted collective actions capable of catalyzing movements that led to the modernization of society and the educational field.

Keywords: Repertoires of collective action, Intellectuals, Education field.

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REPERTÓRIOS DE AÇÕES COLETIVAS DOS INTELLECTUAIS ENGAJADOS NO DEBATE EDUCACIONAL NO BRASIL: INQUÉRITOS, MANIFESTOS E CONFERÊNCIAS NACIONAIS DE EDUCAÇÃO (1914-1967)

RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo explorar o conceito de repertório na problematização das ações dos intelectuais brasileiros vinculados ao campo educacional no Brasil. O conceito de repertório designa as estratégias que um grupo social utiliza para alcançar seus objetivos e expressar demandas em situações de embates políticos. Entre os repertórios analisados destacamos: os inquéritos, os manifestos e as conferências nacionais de educação. Cada um desses modos tem especificidades e requereu dos intelectuais o empenho em procedimentos de organização, redação e publicação. Entre as fontes destacamos: os anais das Conferências Nacionais de Educação da ABE; os inquéritos organizados e promovidos pelo jornal *O Estado de S. Paulo*; além do *Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educação Nova* e dos *Educadores Mais Uma Vez Convocados*. Nas conclusões destacaremos como, por meio dos repertórios analisados, os intelectuais promoveram ações coletivas capazes de catalisar movimentos que conduziram o processo de modernização da sociedade e do campo educacional.

Palavras-Chave: Repertórios de ação coletiva, Intelectuais, Campo educacional.

REPERTORIOS DE ACCIONES COLECTIVAS DE INTELLECTUALES IMPLICADOS EN EL DEBATE EDUCATIVO EN BRASIL: ENCUESTAS, MANIFIESTOS Y CONFERENCIAS NACIONALES SOBRE EDUCACIÓN (1914-1967)

RESUMEN

Este artículo pretende explorar el concepto de repertorio en la problematización de las acciones de intelectuales brasileños vinculadas al ámbito educativo en Brasil. El concepto de repertorio designa las estrategias que un grupo social utiliza para alcanzar sus objetivos y expresar demandas en situaciones de conflicto político. Entre los repertorios analizados, destacamos: encuestas, manifestos y conferencias nacionales de educación. Cada uno de estos modos tiene especificidades y requiere que los intelectuales participen en procedimientos de organización, escritura y publicación. Entre las fuentes destacamos: los anales de las Conferencias Nacionales de Educación de la ABE; las investigaciones organizadas y promovidas por el periódico *O Estado de S. Paulo*; además del *Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educação Nova* y de los *Educadores Mais Uma Vez Convocados*. En las conclusiones, destacaremos cómo, a través de los repertorios analizados, los intelectuales promovieron acciones colectivas capaces de catalizar movimientos que encabezaron el proceso de modernización de la sociedad y el ámbito educativo.

Palabras clave: Repertorios de acción colectiva, Intelectuales, Campo educativo.

INTRODUCTION

This article addresses intellectuals as collective subjects who, in certain circumstances and events, acted in the public sphere. On such occasions, aiming to capture public opinion attention or warning the established powers, they dealt with issues, whose relevance and social and political interest, went beyond the strictly technical dimension of their professions. We will analyze the public behavior of intellectuals engaged in the education debate in Brazil, considering the repertoires they employed to break their isolation and join collective actions to denounce and protest, establish the “truth” or influence political decisions. Among the repertoires gathered in this analysis, we highlight inquests, manifestos and national education conferences.

Each of these modes has specificities, demanding the intellectuals’ effort in procedures involving organization, collection, writing, publication and storage, in addition to having experienced different emergences and durations. Inquests, mainly, given their widespread dissemination in commercial press, saw their golden era at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Manifests are characterized by emerging suddenly, according to the circumstances that summoned intellectuals, while conferences transformed from the 19th-century form of individual and ceremonial speeches, intended for the dissemination of philosophy and science, into regularly recurring collective events dedicated to erudite and technical specialties or to topics of social interest, such as national education, in the conferences organized by the *Associação Brasileira de Educação* (ABE) [Brazilian Association of Education] .

The historical period encompassed by the mobilization of these forms of protest covers approximately the first 80 years of the republican period in Brazil. Thus, the aim is to cover the inquests that urged experts to diagnose the education situation and propose solutions; the most significant manifestos addressed to the people and governments; and the ABE conferences, in which theses were formulated to exhort the school community, political elites, and, above all, public authorities to action. This period was chosen, in agreement with Alonso (2012) who, having examined the individual trajectories and works of the so-called 1870 generation, stated that it was not possible to establish a clear distinction between intellectuals and politicians in the period between 1870 and 1880. As pointed out by Alonso (2012, p. 30, our translation), “in Brazil during the second half of the 19th century, there was no social group whose sole activity was intellectual production”. As regards the education field, the objective conditions for its constitution and affirmation, such as specialized education consolidation, school network expansion, teacher associations, production of books and periodicals aimed at teaching and schools, appeared more significantly, in the first few years of the 20th century. This process was, to varying degrees, aligned with a large-scale public debate surrounding the role and power of education, whether in shaping the Brazilian people—from the perspective of elevating national culture—or raising the country to the level of so-called civilized nations.

INTELLECTUALS AND REPERTOIRES OF ACTIONS

The theme of intellectuals, both in history and social sciences, has been widely studied. Gramsci (1977), Mannheim (1968) and Bourdieu (2004) pioneered this type of problematization and, despite their theoretical differences, facilitated the understanding of “intellectuals from their social practices, their places of enunciation, their networks of sociability, and their political commitments with political elites or those who advocate subversion of power” (Vieira, 2008, p. 82, our translation). In short, they distanced themselves from the traditional history of ideas and its textualist methods to think of intellectuals as collective actors engaged in political debate and struggles.

Authors such Bobbio (1997), Sirinelli (1998), Winock (2000) and Charle (2000) continued that approach, which also impacted the Brazilian social thought. Miceli (2001) is one of the specialists who represent that tradition, since a significant part of his writings is dedicated to the analysis of the public behavior of intellectuals in Brazil.

In this article, the term intellectual partially corresponds to the meaning applied to individuals dedicated to literary, philosophical or scientific activities, but it also refers to the descendants of a recognizable political body that emerged in the Dreyfus Affair in late 19th-century France. According to Sirinelli (1988, p. 9-10, our translation), the inherent political connotation remains to identify the intellectual either as an “actor in the political game or witness of their time” when engaged in action, or as “an agent in the circulation of cultural air masses that determine the establishment of the great ideological zones of an era”. This is a figure within the cultural sphere who, placed in the position of a political figure, transcends their social status when an individual will is turned towards collective use (Ory; Sirinelli, 1992).

In short, the crucial issue in defining intellectuals is their impetus for engagement in public causes, moved by a shared feeling of social mission. In the context analyzed, issues related to the education of people and the cultural elevation of the country took on the meaning of a national cause, in the sense of something urgent, strategic, and unavoidable. The cause of national education brought together intellectuals from different generations, social strata, areas of expertise, political and religious beliefs, who engaged in education projects associated with the expansion and improvement of regular schools at all levels, the administrative structures of public education management, as well as cultural agencies such as museums, libraries, publishing ventures, radio broadcasting programs, and educational cinema.

Therefore, as collective social agents, intellectuals, in inquests, appear to the public opinion as specialists in first order technical and political subjects; they organize, write and subscribe manifests to the people and the government and when associated and legitimated by civil associations, they claim rights and assert the mission of inciting public powers, in public conferences, to implement projects that they allege represent scientific rationality and civic spirit. These are the ways of thinking and speaking combined with practices of public demonstrations that we conceptualize as repertoires that, according to Charles Tilly (1978), designate the set of forms a group or social movement uses to achieve their objectives and

express demands in situations of political conflict. Also, according to that author, repertoires integrate a set of factors on which the success of movements depends, including the capacity of operating financial resources and technical expertise, structuring and coordinating collective actions, and finding and exploring political opportunities such as government or legislation changes.

To make it possible to transfer Tilly's (1978) heuristics to the social space occupied or aspired by intellectuals, one must overcome the traditional way of conceiving and inquiring intellectuals, as individual authors tied to the intrinsic meanings of their work or to their social class of origin or belonging (Vieira, 2011; Bontempi Jr., 2021), and ascribe the due weight to the institutions of instruction and action, association entities they joined, and the protagonism of press as an agent of production of agendas and dissemination of voices in the public sphere. It is therefore less important for us to proceed with the exegesis of ideas than to reveal the intentions and highlight the ways of expressing them. We are interested in uncovering the criteria for selecting those invited and the interlocutors, deciphering the political and linguistic contexts of speech acts, revealing the strategies of recruitment and publication, and ascertaining the presumed or actual impacts and reactions. Furthermore, it is necessary to understand the intellectuals engaged in the education debate as participants in a larger group, at the intersection of the fields of culture and politics, with which they share beliefs, *habitus*, languages, and repertoires.

Since intellectuals rarely resort to physical violence or firing squads, their practices of mobilization, demonstration and protests predominantly take the variable forms of public and published discourse, wielded with a peculiar persuasive potential in inquests, manifests or conferences. Such repertoires are fluid and have been historically constructed in the confluence of factors such as group culture, social and political structure of the context in which they operated, interaction with other groups and social movements, and the experience and skills of their participants (Tilly, 1978). Repertoires tend to endure overtime, preserved in traditions passed down through generations. When the circumstances of their initial emergence are overcome or forgotten, inquests, manifestos, and conferences effectively become such characteristic repertoires of action that they come to define, as much as the status itself, the social representation of the group that knows and uses them well.

INQUESTS AS REPERTOIRES OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

In the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, a combination of factors led to the formation of the field of specialists in education. Among them, public instruction reforms stood out, since at the state level, they regulated positions and functions, defined technical guidelines and criteria for personnel recruitment (Reis Filho, 1995). The associative movement and the publication of specialized periodicals converged to differentiate between dilettantes and specialists (Catani, 1989). In the sphere of public opinion, education themes were dominated

by graduates or medical doctors, who appeared in the media as authorized voices to set the agenda and comment on any subjects (Martins; Luca, 2008). In the newspaper *A Província de S. Paulo*, for example, created in 1875, the bachelor Rangel Pestana addressed quite frequently issues such as teacher qualifications, secular education, and the responsibility of the state, among other education themes (Hilsdorf, 1988).

Two decades after the start of the public instruction reforms, however, the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* (OESP), successor of *A Província de S. Paulo*, brought the experts to the forefront. In 1914, the president-director of that newspaper, Júlio de Mesquita, launched the *Inquérito sobre a instrução pública em São Paulo e suas necessidades* [Inquest about the public instruction in São Paulo and its needs], a series of interviews with 13 teachers and managers, introduced as “the elite of São Paulo’s teaching profession” (Inquérito..., 1914, our translation).

The inquest was a successful genre in the press, since João do Rio published in the newspaper *Gazeta de Notícias*, in 1905, the opinions of 36 writers about the cultural life and literary scene (Beting, 2014). Other famous inquests were those of Oswald de Andrade, in *O Pirralho*, about a character by Eça de Queirós, in 1915; and that of Monteiro Lobato, for *O Estado de S. Paulo*, in 1917, for which, even “non-professional writers” were invited to discuss the legend of *Saci Pererê* (Prado, 2016, p. 21, our translation).

Regardless of the variety of voices, the interference of those who proposed, compiled, or published journalistic inquests was inherent. Prado (2016, pp. 13-15, our translation) observed that “through comments, presentations, criticisms, and his customary irony,” Monteiro Lobato insinuates himself “as an author” in the inquest about the *Saci*, constituting, with his interventions, “threads that guide and tie together the presentation of the testimonies of various authors”.

Similarly, Júlio de Mesquita selected the participants, imposed the questionnaire, and edited the opinions for the 1914 survey. He gathered a group of men, graduates of the Teaching School, with the exceptions of the journalist Paulo Pestana and the engineer and French teacher Ruy de Paula Souza. The “elite of São Paulo’s teaching profession” (Inquérito..., 1914, our translation) consisted of a generation of managers and inspectors from the *Diretoria Geral de Instrução Pública* [General Directorate of Public Instruction], former teachers or directors of groups, supplementary, secondary, or teaching schools. According to Bontempi Jr. (2011), with the exceptions mentioned, they were authors of articles on education, primers, and methods; more than half were members of the board of the *Associação Beneficente do Professorado Público de São Paulo* (ABPP) [Beneficent Association of Public School Teachers of São Paulo] and the editorial board of the *Revista do Ensino* [Teaching Magazine]. To the readers, they displayed the legitimacy conferred by the State, the professional corporation, and the press.

Framed as unbiased diagnoses of primary education, even though their status as civil servants obliged them to offer excuses (Bontempi Jr., 2011), their opinions formed consensus, such as the notion that education had declined since the early years, that there were still

many children out of school, and that many of the problems were due to reduced salaries and unequal teacher education. According to Antunha (1976), the crisis diagnosis that prevailed in the series impacted the motivation and elaboration of the 1920 reform, with measures to correct and rationalize the system. Through the synergy between specialists and journalists, the initiative fulfilled its intent of affecting both reformers and ordinary readers, ultimately validating journalistic surveys as an effective repertoire for collective action by intellectuals.

In fact, in the following decade, *OESP* found a new opportunity to interfere with education public policies. In 1926, when the regulations of another reform were included in the agenda, Júlio de Mesquita Filho launched the second inquest about education in the state, appointing Fernando de Azevedo as organizer. The series was published in the second semester, divided into three parts: primary and teaching education; technical and professional education; secondary and higher education.

Without deviating from the genre, Azevedo's authorship stood out through robust introductions and inductive questions, full of his own ideas. As in 1914, the interviewees were specialists and activists in public education. As Vidal (2010) pointed out, those who issued opinions about primary and teaching education were associated with the *Sociedade de Educação* [Education Society], which brought together teachers and aimed to study education issues, promote congresses, courses and conferences, and, like the ABPP, publish a journal. Furthermore, they were sympathizers of the *Liga Nacionalista* [Nationalist League], convinced that the necessary political reform would only succeed if it was accompanied by an education reform. The 1926 survey is linked to the 1914 survey by another tie, that is, all its respondents were involved in the 1920 reform, the same one that had been based on the crisis diagnosis made by the previous generation.

Maybe for this reason, and for not belonging to the *Diretoria Geral de Instrução Pública*, that their opinions revealed the motivation to react to the “retrograde and revanchist nature of the 1925 reform” (Vidal, 2010, p. 67, our translation). Induced by a question about “the most serious flaws and errors observed in the primary and teaching education, in their current organization” (Azevedo, 1957, p. 19, our translation), the specialists increased their critique, leading the organizer, in his concluding remarks, to state that the reform conducted by Pedro Voss would cause education in São Paulo to regress to the standards of 1892.

In its proposal, according to Vidal (2010, p. 74, our translation), the 1926 inquest exposes an “inventory of burning issues in primary education in the 1920s”: the interest in school and teaching material modernization and renovation; the importance of physical education and hygiene, the concern with education for work; and the remodeling of teacher education curricula. The inquest impact on the previous education policy, not only in São Paulo, was intense so that Vidal (2010, p. 63) called it a “prelude” to the public instruction reform in the Federal District, implemented by Fernando de Azevedo (1927-1930).

As regards secondary and higher education, teachers, scientists and managers of faculties and institutes were summoned. In that case, Bontempi Jr. (2017) identified the resonance of Júlio de Mesquita Filho's diatribe, *A Crise Nacional* (1925) [The National Crisis], in which

the journalist offers a scathing diagnosis of the republican regime, supported by the political class corruption, the hypertrophy of the Executive Branch, and a weak public opinion. In the same work, the inclusion of the theme “secondary and higher education”: the urgency of creating a university to educate the democratic and enlightened elite was associated with the need to qualify teachers who would be in charge of its anteroom.

Likewise, the inquests by the *Associação Brasileira de Educação* (ABE) [Brazilian Education Association], in the period 1927-28, and the one by Rotary Club of São Paulo, in 1929, reinforced the consensus about the university vital function for imprinting its mark in the legislation that would define higher education standards up to the 1970s. In 1931, the Ministry of Education and Public Health issued Decree nº 19,851, setting the guidelines for the organization of universities, which would, according to the *Exposição de Motivos* [Statement of Reasons] by the minister Francisco Campos, educate the “leading elites”; in 1934, the decree that created the University of São Paulo, whose rapporteur Fernando de Azevedo, again appointed by Mesquita Filho, would reveal his debt to the inquests, especially that of 1926.

The 1914 and 1926 inquests are not merely similar, but they were in fact related. However, some differences can be observed between the two groups of intellectuals who made use of them: if the 1914 group was composed of “experts,” the 1926 group, especially due to its affiliation with the *Liga Nacionalista*, was made up of “ideologues”¹. While the former planned the return of what they considered to be the golden age of the first reforms (Catani, 1989), the emphasis of the latter was precisely on overcoming them.

It is evident that the positive evaluation of the effects of the first initiative to publicly diagnose the state of education encouraged Mesquita Filho to replicate his father’s experience. It is also plausible that Fernando de Azevedo, alarmed by the imminent regression in education and, by extension, the delay in the modernization of schools and society, saw in the new inquest an opportunity to influence public opinion, legislators, and leaders, repeating the effect of 1914. There is no doubt that the positive evaluation this second generation of intellectuals made of a previous successful action stimulated their own initiative, thus establishing journalistic inquest as a recurring element in the intellectuals’ repertoire of action.

MANIFESTS AS COLLECTIVE ACTION REPERTOIRE

Just like the promotion of journalistic inquests, the publication of manifestos was another form of collective action quite present in the European context since the 19th century, as well as in the Brazilian history. In Brazil, the 1870 Republican Manifesto marked the insurgency

¹ We refer to Norberto Bobbio’s distinction (1997, p. 73-74), according to which “ideologues are those who elaborate the principles on which an action is justified and therefore accepted – in a strong sense, the action is ‘legitimized’ –, by virtue of conforming to the values adopted as a guide to action; experts, by indicating the most appropriate knowledge for achieving a given end, ensure that the action that conforms to it can be called rational according to the objective”.

of a dissident group from the political elites against the conservative orientation that shaped the monarchical regime².

Following the advent of the Republic in 1889, a variety of manifestos emerged on the national scene, intensifying intellectual debate, both in terms of revising the forms and meanings of canonical literature and visual arts – as proposed in the modernist manifestos³ –, and in relation to political guidance for the education sector.

From the 1870 Republican Manifesto to the education manifestos published in 1932 and in 1959, striking political, economic and cultural changes occurred. However, in the education manifestos, the defense of republican principles in public education organization configured the argumentative axis of their content, permeating the wordplay that suggest continuities and ruptures, oppositions and affinities, condemnations and legitimacies.

The analysis of those two education manifestos allows us to understand to what extent the transfer of a modality of specific action such as the publication of manifestos, is plastic enough to incorporate demands originating from different historical contexts (Alonso, 2012). The *Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educação Nova* [New Education Pioneers' Manifesto] (Manifesto..., 1932, our translation), published in 1932, confronted the so-called “traditional education”, founded in the Jesuit pedagogy, and defended the “country's education reconstruction”. The defense of a school open to social diversity, as well as to co-education, welcoming everyone without any distinction, raised the issue of democratic education in an environment subjected to the power of local oligarchies and marked by huge social inequalities. In such context, the interaction with other protest movements, as well as with other strategies presented in ongoing collective action repertoires (Tilly, 1978) became necessary and potentially efficient.

The publication in widely circulated newspapers was the means of dissemination used. The use of printed press ensured resonance and repercussion to the manifesto, promoting the spread of its ideas and debate among peers. On the other hand, associative practices contributed to bringing together supporters for the struggle of the moment, leading to a more efficient organization of the planning of actions aiming at obtaining advances in relation to the desired changes.

Among intellectuals, the creation of the *Associação Brasileira de Educação* (ABE), in 1924, played a relevant role in the organization of the 1932 manifesto, even if the entity gathered members with different political, ideological, religious and pedagogical links. The *Conferências Nacionais de Educação* [National Education Conferences] became another way of optimizing collective action. In fact, the opportunity of launching the *Manifesto dos*

² Published in the newspaper *A República*, on 3rd December 1870, with 58 signatories, the document advocated for a government founded on the idea of social representation, subject to national legislation and the competent and ethical management of the common good and public affairs (Mattos, 1989).

³ As an example, the *Manifesto da Poesia Pau-Brasil* (1924) [Pau-Brazil Poetry Manifesto] and the *Manifesto Antropófago* (1928) [Anthropophagous Manifesto], both written by Oswald de Andrade, confronted artistic expressions that replicated forms imported from Europe and presented an invitation to anthropophagy, a way in which Brazilians could nourish themselves on foreign cultural influences, digesting them, but maintaining their own culture and identities.

Pioneiros da Educação Nova was created while the *IV Conferência Nacional de Educação* (CNE) by ABE was held.

The publication of the manifesto *Mais uma vez convocados* [Once more summoned] (Manifesto..., 1959), in 1959, occurred amidst the disputes surrounding the drafting of the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (LDBEN) [Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education]. Although it was a re-edition of a previously experienced form of collective action, the process of drafting and publishing this manifesto signals the adhesion of new generations of intellectuals sensitive to the education cause, many of whom worked in universities⁴. Its preparation occurred within an atmosphere of expectations for the democratic reconstruction of the country. In the legislative debate, democrats emphasized the State's responsibility for funding public education, in opposition to proposals that also aimed to benefit private institutions. In fact, the presence of business owners from non-religious private schools in that debate revealed a trend towards breaking the hegemony that Catholics had maintained over the education of elites in secondary education institutions but also suggests a convergence of interests regarding the distribution of public resources for education.

In any case, the clash between defenders of a secular public school and those representing the Catholic hierarchy remained strong in the 1950s, including the publication of another type of manifesto. In the *Memorial dos Bispos do Rio Grande do Sul* [Memorial of the Bishops of Rio Grande do Sul] (Contra a..., 1958), published in April 1958 – therefore, the year before the publication of *Mais uma vez convocados* –, Anísio Teixeira was accused of fostering a pedagogical project that, in addition to intending to replace family influence by State interference in the minors' education, ultimately aimed at facilitating the establishment of a socialist regime in the country. According to contemporary sources⁵, the ensuing debate flooded newspapers in the following two months, during which intellectuals from all over the country pledged solidarity and expressed agreement with Anísio and the project he represented.

During the interactions between the contending groups, both manifestos were used as tools by intellectuals in the political struggle, energizing the debate on national education through newspapers and public spaces. Certainly, they succeeded in driving changes in the prevailing conceptions and practices among education and teaching professionals, just as they exerted pressure on government authorities, influencing educational policies and legislation, albeit in a limited way, that is, by negotiating with other competing interests⁶.

⁴ Among the best-known leaderships of the two generations of signatories in the 1959 manifesto, Anísio Teixeira (1900-1971) and Darcy Ribeiro (1922-1997) stood out. They were both linked to the *Faculdade Nacional de Filosofia* [National Philosophy College], in Rio de Janeiro. Other prominent names were Fernando de Azevedo (1894-1974) and Florestan Fernandes (1920-1995), who worked for the Universidade de São Paulo [University of São Paulo].

⁵ See the *Memorial dos bispos gaúchos* against the Anísio's permanence at the Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos (INEP) [National Institute for Pedagogical Studies] and the solidarity movement for Anísio (Contra a..., 1958).

⁶ The continued presence of religious education in public schools, even to this day, shows that some republican principles – such as secularism in public education – are difficult to negotiate.

Within each context, the publication of an education manifesto exposed the changes occurred in the structure of political opportunities (Tarrow, 1994)⁷. The movement of manifestos continued producing a rhetoric that made extensive use of the arguments of authority and intellectual competence of the group that validated them. Regarding the 1959 manifesto, the recourse to the memory of the previous generation served to suggest continuity and a strengthening of forces when the cause of public education could already count on the renewal of its leadership for the struggles undertaken at that moment, as well as for the challenges that were to come in the near future.

EDUCATION CONFERENCES AS COLLECTIVE ACTION REPERTOIRE

Alongside journalistic inquests and manifestos, the education conferences organized by the ABE constituted a repertoire of collective action between 1927 and 1967.

The first half of the 20th century is a relevant period for civil society organization in Brazil. The creation of professional associations, unions, civic-patriotic leagues, student unions, and cultural and scientific entities was driven during that period, stemming from the organization of collective wills seeking to defend theses and projects not voiced by the political-party representation structure. We can understand the founding of the *Associação Brasileira de Educação* (ABE) in 1924 as part of this structural movement that shifted groups with specific interests and demands from the realm of traditional political parties to new types of social spaces, governed by their own logic and, above all, with programs that advocated transcending the divisions inherent in the political-party field.

In the first article of the ABE's statute, we identify the following statement regarding the entity's main objective: "The *Associação Brasileira de Educação* aims to promote the dissemination and improvement of education in all its branches in Brazil, stimulating initiatives that can most effectively achieve such objectives" (ABE, Estatuto, 1924, p. 7, our translation). Carvalho (1998) emphasized that ABE was founded after the project to create a new political party was discarded: "it was from the failure of the organization of the political party Ação Nacional that the *Associação Brasileira de Educação* was born" (p. 54, our translation). This interpretation reinforces the idea that a shift occurred from traditional structures to new spaces that, over time, diversified their internal functioning and above all, their lines of action.

These new groups championed banners broad enough to encompass and unify different ideological orientations present in the national scene. This interpretation finds support in the memoirs of Lourenço Filho, then president of ABE, in the context of the VII CNE, in 1935:

⁷ While the 1932 manifest was elaborated amidst dissatisfaction with the republican regime that the so-called 1930 Revolution promised to remedy, the 1959 manifesto expressed the expectations of democratic reconstruction after the fall of the authoritarian regime of the Estado Novo [New State] (1937-1946). Among other objectives, both intended to interfere in the legal reform prompted by those political events.

A little over ten years ago, concerned about the course of social and political events in the country, some men of goodwill gathered, led by that singular figure, Heitor Lyra da Silva; and between the idea of organizing a new political party and that of founding an association in favor of national culture, they decided to opt for the latter. [...], this program was and is political, in the best and highest sense of the term. Political, in the sense of reviving in all minds responsible for the affairs of Brazil, faith in the things of education; and political, in the sense of enlightening public opinion regarding the problems of national organization, through a cultural organization (ABE, Anais, VII CNE, 1935, p. 21-22, our translation).

Obviously, this is not about considering it an apolitical entity, despite the rhetoric of *abeanos* [ABE members] asserting this position, since, in this context of structuring civil society, ABE represented a new political front and marked its actions by developing an agenda of issues related to education, demanding reforms in administration and public education policies⁸.

According to Vieira (2017), the intellectuals gathered at the ABE reaffirmed the slogan, present in the Brazilian intellectual scene since the 19th century, of the mission of the educated elites in the formation of national consciousness. This civic consciousness would have its privileged place of formation in primary school, disseminating behaviors and feelings associated with the ideas of industriousness, order, hygiene, and civic duty.

Beyond the idea of educating the Brazilian people, the ABE played a relevant role in formulating projects for the education of the country's ruling elite, especially through the attempt to reform secondary and higher education. The problem of education was presented as a national and strategic issue, without open adversaries, even though conflicts of varying magnitude were visible within the ABE, such as the major split in the 1930s, when the Catholic laity left the association, dissatisfied with its positions and the predominance of secularist currents and those advocating for a unified republican school system.

Although ABE promoted several impacting initiatives in its first few years of existence – such as the organization, in 1926, of a significant set of science popularization courses, widely attended by both academic and lay audiences, the organization's activities were limited to the city of Rio de Janeiro, then the federal capital. From 1927 onwards, the ABE sought to amplify its visibility and the scope of its actions, beginning to propose national conferences. According to the regulations defined by the ABE, the National Education Conferences would be held annually. The minutes of the preparatory meeting for the 1st National Education Conference reveal this objective:

Continuing with the execution of its educational program, the *Associação Brasileira de Educação* resolves to hold national education conferences in all Brazilian states, with the participation of all federative units, aiming at the congregation of all Brazilian teachers around the highest ideals of civic duty and morality. In this way, the separatist spirit that sometimes manifests itself here or there is combated, in a noble work for national unity (ABE, Atas, 1927, our translation).

⁸ The term *abeano(s)* used in this study designates intellectuals that were members of the ABE and was appropriated from documents produced by that association, in which we identified as having members who referred to themselves as such.

In total, 13 *Conferências Nacionais de Educação* (CNEs) [National Education Conferences] were held between 1927 and 1967, the first in Curitiba and the last in Rio de Janeiro. The first CNE therefore represented the beginning of a series of national events that outlined a project of great impact, engaging ABE intellectuals for over 40 years in the defense of a national education project encompassing different themes (Chart 1).

Chart 1 – ABE Events (1927-1967).

Year	Event	Location	Main theme
1927	I CNE)	Curitiba (PR)	National organization of primary education.
1928	II CNE	Belo Horizonte (MG)	Secondary education and higher education inquest.
1929	III CNE	São Paulo (SP)	Secondary education and secondary education inquest; health education.
1931	IV CNE	Rio de Janeiro (DF)	Popular education guidelines.
1932/1933	V CNE	Niterói (RJ)	Preparation of the preliminary draft of the national education organization.
1934	VI CNE	Fortaleza (CE)	Education general organization.
1935	VII CNE	Rio de Janeiro (DF)	Physical education.
1942	VIII CBE	Goiânia (GO)	Primary education, mainly for rural populations: objectives and organization.
1945	IX CBE	Rio de Janeiro (DF)	The concept of democratic education.
1950	X CNE	Rio de Janeiro (DF)	Suggestions for the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education.
1954	XI CNE	Curitiba (PR)	Funding of public education systems.
1956	XII CNE	Salvador (BA)	Processes of democratic education at various levels of schooling and in life outside of school.
1967	XIII CNE	Rio de Janeiro (RJ)	Education for the development of science and technology.

Source: Elaborated by the authors, from ABE sources, Carmem Jordão's archive⁹.

⁹ We observed in the sources a fluctuation in the naming of ABE's national events between *Conferências Nacionais de Educação* [National Education Conferences] and *Congressos Brasileiros de Educação* [Brazilian Education Congresses], with the term "conferência" [conference] prevailing in all 13 meetings. Nevertheless, the change in name did not alter the format or objectives of the events.

According to Vieira (2017), the way the CNEs were organized saw little change throughout the 13 conferences; the procedures for the main themes, thematic sessions, and the presentation of theses by the Governing Council, which served as a guide for the debates, were maintained. The conferences adhered to the annual criterion only between 1927 and 1929 and between 1931 and 1935. Two major gaps in the event's periodicity are noted between 1936 and 1941 and between 1957 and 1966. Despite such discontinuities, the longevity of the association and the frequency of the events were unusual characteristics, considering that during that period the ephemeral and discontinuous nature of events, associations, and publications in the education field predominated¹⁰.

Over the 1920s, ABE remained the first and most representative civil society entity, with national scope, engaged in the debate of education. As we have already mentioned, the association's action was eminently political, even though it took place in a space distinct from traditional political structures. Thus, we understand the national conferences as a repertoire used by ABE, based on a specific structure of political opportunities (Tarrow, 1994), which aimed to mobilize teachers, social groups, civil society organizations, and political and administrative elites in order to influence public policies for education, as well as the administrative and pedagogical practices that permeated the school. Repertoires (Tilly, 1978), as we have already conceptually clarified, are options given by the historical experience of social movements in the broad sense of doing politics, that is, of promoting changes in the ways of thinking, living, and feeling reality.

The understanding of CNEs as repertoires aiming at interfering in public policies for education is confirmed by Lourenço Filho, a prominent figure in the ABE who stated that those events: "should not and cannot be congresses of a technical or scientific nature. What they should do is constitute centers for the study of a national policy in education matters" (ABE, Notícias da II CNE, 1929, p. 21, our translation).

Therefore, repertoires should not be understood as actions of individuals, but of collectives organized in politically oriented associations, aimed, at the same time, at theorizing and acting upon the social world. The strength and influence of the ABE in the public sphere and with the State varied over time. It is possible to say that, from its creation until the decree of the *Estado Novo*, the entity enjoyed great prestige and symbolic power. Evidence of this position can be represented by the appeal of Getúlio Vargas and Gustavo Capanema, President of the Republic and Minister of Education, respectively, at the opening of the IV CNE (1931), for the congressmen to "provide the provisional government with the 'happy formula', the 'concept of education' of the new education policy" (Carvalho, 1998, p. 380, our translation).

During the *Estado Novo* dictatorship (1937-1945), like the rest of civil society, the ABE (Brazilian Association of Education) held a low profile and weak political activity. In the post-World War II period, the organization regained its position in public debate, promoting important conferences such as the IX *Conferência Nacional da Educação* (1945) and the X *Conferência Nacional da Educação* (1950), which addressed, respectively, the concept of

¹⁰ The *Associação Brasileira de Educação* (ABE) remains operational and is headquartered in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Democratic Education and the development of contributions to the first *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional*. Those events, which involved the mobilization of ABE teachers and intellectuals, were widely publicized in the mainstream press. In the late 1950s and the following decade, the ABE gradually lost its status as the main representative of the education movement, especially from 1964 onwards, when a civil-military dictatorship was established in Brazil, significantly weakening civil society movements.

Throughout the 40 years when CNEs were organized, the ABE made use of different initiatives to engage the intellectuals associated with the entity in political-educational action, such as: the popular science courses in 1926; a service called the pedagogical consultancy, which, using the pages of the *Jornal do Brasil* newspaper and specialists appointed by the Board of Directors, addressed doubts expressed by teachers about practical teaching problems; the national surveys that dealt with specific themes, such as those organized on higher education (1927-1928) and secondary education (1929); and the manifestos, notably the *Carta Brasileira de Educação Democrática* [Brazilian Charter of Democratic Education] (1945-1946).

The effectiveness of those actions is undeniable; however, none of them had the frequency, scope, and impact of the CNEs. For this reason, this instrument of collective action was highlighted in the analysis of the political action strategies of the intellectuals who formed the leadership group of the *Academia Brasileira de Letras* (ABE) [Brazilian Academy of Letters].

CONCLUSION

When observing the repertoires of action of groups that took part in the debate about public education organization in Brazil, some issues need to be highlighted. First, it is relevant to remember that the period following the Republic Proclamation triggered the debate about political and institutional organization of the country, even before the stabilization of the new regime. Opportunities of promoting changes in the most diverse sectors of national life – both the desired and the feared ones – ignited the spark that encouraged intellectuals to answer the call to engagement, generating debate, establishing spaces for sociability, and launching campaigns to disseminate and legitimize their proposals on the role of education in that context of political renewal.

In the first half of the 20th century in Brazil, the literate elite was reduced, however, it was active in several spaces of intellectual sociability, as reported by the seminal study by Sergio Micelli (2001), *Intelectuais e classe dirigente no Brasil (1920-45)* [Intellectuals and ruling class in Brazil]. The new market for intellectual jobs allowed them to work as journalists, teachers, literary figures, in addition to other functions related to writing aiming at the production and dissemination of knowledge. It seems also relevant to remember the influence of widely circulated newspapers in that period, which worked as spaces of intellectual sociability and opinion formation in the public debate.

The newspapers gave the education inquests an authorized view of the national education situation, endorsed by experts. The newspapers also disseminated manifestos with the principles and targets that structured discourses dear to the modernization of education to provide a republican framework for the education bureaucracy. It was also the press that promoted the circulation of news about the activities developed by ABE, highlighting the calls and dissemination of CNEs, without forgetting other collective actions that constituted the repertoires mobilized by that entity. In addition, newspapers were the stage for polemics and confrontations of ideas, principles, projects and expectations regarding the present and future of the country. Amidst those actions, the debate about the education issue grew and matured, converging to the formation of groups based on affinities and interests, as well as for the definition of problems and presumed solutions in dispute.

Considering that, education inquests, apparently conducted by an individual with credentials to collect the opinions of other specialists to better inform the public opinion, were treated as repertoire of collective action given the synergy involving journalists and experts engaged with the education cause. Through the inquests published by the *O Estado de S. Paulo* newspaper in 1914 and 1926, criticism was voiced and emphasis was placed on ideas and the proposals of education measures aiming at influencing the implementation of policies for the sector.

Another component of the repertoire of collective actions highlighted in this article points to the publication of manifestos as the axis around which different views of education and the role of subjects and state agencies in its operationalization as a right, duty and responsibility were debated, disputed and confronted. In this endeavor, the use of the press and the wordplay, integrated through harsh and accusatory words, confronted the discourses of competence and political engagement, whether for the preservation of established norms and principles, or for the opening of a broad project for the education of the Brazilian people and national construction.

The social mobilization that accompanied the preparation and dissemination of the education manifestos of 1932 and 1959 generated various forms of engagement in the cause of public education, united generations, and cemented a memory that transcended its time and is constantly being evoked and updated. This demonstrates that the manifestos achieved a longevity that was probably unforeseen, even though the effort to achieve this was conscious and consistent. Even today, the frequency with which academic rituals commemorating the 1932 manifesto are repeated warrants reflection on why this event, and not others, were fixed in our educational memory, as well as in the very writing of the Brazilian education history (Xavier, 2015).

In turn, the ABE organization in the 1920s functioned as a radiating center for a rich repertoire of collective actions, through which boundaries were defined in the field of ideas and national projects, while groups, leaderships and actions of confrontation and negotiation were configured. Within ABE's repertoire of actions, the *Conferências Nacionais de Educação* stand out for their temporal and geographical scope: 13 National Education Conferences in 40 years, alternating venues in the main capitals of the country. Furthermore, they involved the

participation of different social and professional groups, aiming to stimulate changes considered essential for the functioning of education and the organization of the education bureaucracy.

All this movement of repertoires, which intersect and sometimes replicate, associate, and legitimize each other, demarcates the lines of action of intellectuals, through the press or civil society associations, aiming to interfere in public debate and, above all, in education policies. As we have seen, the effectiveness of these repertoires was undeniable, interfering in various spheres, such as legislation on primary, secondary, and professional education, the statutes of public universities, and teacher education processes, reverberating in the organization of time, space, and school practices. A situated analysis of the effects of the repertoires discussed leads us to finally understand to what extent political opportunities and collective actions contributed to the irruption of education intellectuals as a discernible political body in public debate (Bontempi Jr., 2021).

In short, we hope to have contributed, through the repertoires analyzed, to outlining the movement of convergence of literate elites, who dedicated their intellectual credentials to advancing the so-called education cause. Certainly, this process occurred through multiple, and at the same time, integrated repertoires of collective actions aimed at promoting a political intervention capable of catalyzing movements of change and continuity in the confrontations and negotiations that led to the modernization of Brazilian society and its education field.

It is also worth noting the potential of using the concept of a repertoire of collective action to understand the behavior of Brazilian intellectuals in the close relationship between languages, experiences, and lines of action. The concept is fruitful because it brings together two dimensions that, as a rule, have been treated separately, namely, discourses and practices. As we have demonstrated, the repertoire is, at once, a theorization that demands discursive articulation and political practice, considered and replicated by social movements in their struggles. Once established, the repertoire will remain available among the options of social movements, which adapt mobilization protocols from the past to present realities. In this choice, social groups or civil society entities take into account the effectiveness of the repertoires, considering the immediate conjunctures and the structural changes in societies.

Thus, thinking in terms of structural regularities, we can state that, based on the repertoires analyzed, manifests and conferences are still present in the list of options of organized collectives, mainly those linked to the education field. Inquests, however, lost the centrality they had achieved as a strategy of mobilization. In the structural process that guides forms of manifestation of social agents, historians must explain the uses and impacts of repertoires on specific historical moments.

The analysis showed that manifestos, conferences and inquests were fundamental repertoires in the strategies to mobilize and, consequently, to structure the education field between 1914 – when the *O Estado de S. Paulo* newspaper's inquest was published –, and 1967, when the *XIII Conferência Nacional de Educação* [XIII National Education Conference] was held, going through the manifestos published in 1932 and 1959, the second inquest of 1926 and the CNEs, held from 1927 onwards.

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