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# Understanding the Perpetuation of Inequalities in Brazilian K-12 Public and Private Schools from a Historical Perspective

*Ana Lucia Rossi Mendonca*

## Introduction

Brazilian education has the same characteristics as the country. It is full of diversity; it has specific cultural and regional traits that infuse the school settings; and within that description, there are vast inequalities that go beyond cultural and socioeconomic levels. All of which contributed to creating two different school settings: the private and the public.

As a Brazilian educator who has studied in my own country and abroad, I have always been interested in understanding how the inequalities originated so that as part of society and community I can promote changes through awareness and a critical view. On one side is the right of the individual to public education, as considered the responsibility of the State/government to provide the best conditions for that to happen. On the other side are the incentives granted by the same government to the private institutions, which reinforce the privileges to the more affluent social classes.

Access to education in the beginning in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was reserved for a small portion of the population, the elite, who mostly attended private schools. Conversely, the vast majority of the poor, notably black and indigenous whom most needed education, were excluded from access to formal education. The process of industrialization and urbanization of Brazilian society, which began in 1930 and changed around 1950, influenced the need to reflect on education as well create laws and guidelines for it. The expansion of the public school in Brazil took place from the second half of the 20th century in a process that has led to transformations in the social and political structure of the country.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between the public and private also changed over the years, mostly regarding the structural reforms of the State (at federal, state, and municipal levels) and social policies, in which the federal government transferred part of its responsibilities to state and municipal levels through funding.<sup>2</sup>

The policies defined from 1940 to 1996, in my view, have contributed to the perpetuation of class differences, and that is what this research seeks to describe. The primary objective of this article is to understand how and why the current inequalities occur in Brazilian school settings by examining the phenomena from a historical perspective. The development of adequate educational policy within the standards of equality in society has not been the focus of Brazilian education. As a result, the quality of education has suffered and led children and young people to marginalization. Some advances in the Brazilian educational system have been made throughout

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<sup>1</sup> Araujo, Jurandir de Almeida. "Educação e Desigualdade: A Conjuntura Atual do Ensino Público do Brasil." *Revista Direitos Humanos*, 2, n. 3 (2014): 125-157.

<sup>2</sup> Note: all quotations from documents from the Brazilian government as well as articles written by Brazilian scholars are translated by the author.

the years, but deep marks of those inequalities were left when we analyze what the law says regarding directives and rules for public and private educational settings.

### **The Beginning: The Manifest of the Pioneer**

The development of policies for Brazilian education is closely related to the country's political periods. In 1930, the period of the New Republic begins with the government of Getulio Vargas (1930-1945). During his administration, a group of intellectuals from the Brazilian elite wrote a document called the Manifest of the Pioneer of the New School of 1932 (O Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educacao Nova)<sup>3</sup> with the purpose to rethink and renovate the country's educational project. The text stated that,

if, after 43 years of Republican rule, a review of the current state of public education in Brazil, it is found that economic and educational reforms are dissociating, it was indispensable to redirect them to the same direction. In the same sense, all our efforts, without unity of plan and without the spirit of continuity, have not yet succeeded in creating a system of school organization that is in keeping with the modern needs of the country.<sup>4</sup>

According to the document, the leading cause of problems in education was a lack of a broader view of the difficulties education faced, summing up:

education logically resumes to a matter of a social reform, if not for the extensive and intensive action of the school on the individual, and of it on itself, or from the point of view of the influences, but by a continuous evolution, favored and stimulated by all organized forces of culture and education.<sup>5</sup>

Another aspect noted by the intellectuals is that the school was traditionally developed in a bourgeois conception, leaving the individual in an isolated and sterile autonomy.<sup>6</sup>

The proposal of the manifest should be considered a beginning in the transformation of education.

The new education which, certainly pragmatic, proposes itself in order to serve not the interests of classes, interests of the individual, and which is based on the principle of school with the social milieu, has its ideal conditioned by the current social life, but deeply humane, solidarity, social service and cooperation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> O Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educacao Nova (1932). Accessed October 4, 2018. [http://www.histedbr.fe.unicamp.br/revista/edicoes/22e/doc1\\_22e.pdf](http://www.histedbr.fe.unicamp.br/revista/edicoes/22e/doc1_22e.pdf) (189)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> The bourgeois conception comes from the term bourgeois, which means the social order that is dominated by the so-called middle class. In social and political theory, the notion of the bourgeoisie was mostly a construct of Karl Marx (1818–83) and of those who were influenced by him. In: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/bourgeoisie>

<sup>7</sup> O Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educacao Nova (1932). (191)

The document defended that education was essentially a public function; the school must be unique and common, without the economic privileges of a minority; all teachers must have university education; education must be secular, free, and compulsory. Although this document is 86 years old, it described guidelines by which the majority of the poor population would have a chance to be educated in an environment promoted by equality and similar opportunities for people of different social classes. According to Bittar and Ferreira Jr., "Concerning the History of Education, this Manifesto (together with its critical view of the methods of traditional teaching which was authoritarian and centered on the figure of the teacher), begin to form the syllabus of the curriculum from the 1940s onwards."<sup>8</sup>

In analyzing the Manifesto of the Pioneer of the New School of 1932, one would expect that the service in education offered to society would have improved. Although there was a proposition for equal opportunities in education for the population to close the gap among citizens from different social-economic statuses, it was not the case. Reflecting on the inequalities from the perspective of critical education, the educational policies in Brazil were not considered or planned through a process in which the decision-making and the practice of social and political responsibility were considered for the whole population. Paulo Freire, the most prominent Brazilian educator, argued that inequality among social classes led to oppression of the popular classes by the more affluent classes.<sup>9</sup>

### **Populist Republic**

From 1945 to 1964 the country found itself in a period called Populist Republic. It marked a time of great economic development with investments in the petroleum sector, with the creation of Petrobras, a Brazilian oil company, as well as a great incentive in the transportation and electric energy sectors. In this period, the fifth federal Constitution was promulgated and the new capital of the country, Brasilia, was inaugurated.

In 1946, the National Constituent Assembly voted in favor to write the first Education Law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases*). The first draft was published in 1948. Over 13 years, there was an intense debate within the State and civil society between those who defended the priority of the public school and those who favored freedom of education. Some advocated that state resources should be used to maintain and expand public schools, which should provide compulsory, free and secular education. For the others, these resources should be transferred to private institutions, which would administer education according to the ideological orientations of families, and the State would occupy only the space not filled by private initiative.

In 1961 the first Education Law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases de 1961*) was finally approved. As expected, the public versus private debate was marked by dualism and it was kept in the law. Regarding Title II: Rights to Education, Article 2 says "Education is the right of all and will be given at home and at school."<sup>10</sup> The single paragraph says: "It is up to the family to choose the

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<sup>8</sup> Bittar, Marisa, and Ferreira Jr., Amarilio. "The History of Education in Brazil: The Formation of the Field and Theoretical Influences." In *Espacio, Tiempo Y Educación* 3, no. 1 (2016).61-84. (67)

<sup>9</sup> Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Lei das Diretrizes e Bases de 1961. Accessed October 4, 2018. <http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/1960-1969/lei-4024-20-dezembro-1961-353722-publicacaooriginal-1-pl.html>

kind of education they must give their children.”<sup>11</sup> Article 3 regarding the right to education is ensured: by the obligation of the public power and by the freedom of private initiative to minister education to all degrees, in the form of a law in force.<sup>12</sup> The articles show that education is still associated with social class, which favors the most privileged, and the law reinforces the right to maintain the *status quo*. Santos, Prestes, and Vale, in an objective manner, clarify the interests from the private and the public spheres:

The debate was centered around the conflict between the private school the defenders of the public school. The first, usually grouped around the Catholic Church, defended a religious and humanist conception of teaching, and even demanded public funding for private education, to guarantee the "freedom of choice." Others, in their progressive and lay movements, only one public school would guarantee the same educational chances for all the Brazilian citizens.<sup>13</sup>

The Catholic Church has played a significant role in Brazilian education since the 16<sup>th</sup> Century with the teaching of native Brazilians. At the time the Manifest of the Pioneer was written, the church also criticized the document because it saw a decrease of its influence in society, and now it had the boldness to demand special funding to keep its interests.

The military coup of 1964 took the president Joao Goulart from power and initiated a new era in the country, the military regime that lasted a long twenty-nine years until 1985. According to Assis, it was from the 1964 military coup that the military governors started to release the obligation of the federal government to finance the free public education and they established legal conditions that allowed the transfer of public resources to the private setting.<sup>14</sup>

The plan for the military was implemented through the Constitution of 1967, specifically through a constitutional amendment of 1969, in which minimal percentages of resources to be allocated to education by the federal and state government were extinguished, maintaining only the obligation of investments of 20% by the municipalities for elementary schooling.<sup>15</sup>

### **Changes: Military Government and the Education Law of 1971**

In 1971, during the military regime, the government created a new Education Law.<sup>16</sup> Two aspects impacted the education setting since then: first, education was compulsory, which on the one hand was very positive, but on the other, the expansion following such a measure was not accompanied by increased funding. At the same time, the quality of public education declined.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Santos, Irena da S. dos, Prestes, Reulcinea I., Vale, Antonio M do. "Brasil: 1930-1961: Escola Nova, LDB e Disputa entre Escola Publica e Privada." In Revista HISTEDBR On-line. N 22. (2006). 131-149. (145)

<sup>14</sup> Assis, Renata. "A educação Brasileira durante o período militar: a escolarização dos 7 aos 14 anos". In Educação em Perspectiva, Viçosa. V. 3, n. 2, (2012). 320-339.

<sup>15</sup> Constitutional Amendment of 1969 to the Constitution of 1967.

<http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/emecon/1960-1969/emendaconstitucional-1-17-outubro-1969-364989-publicacaooriginal-1-pl.html>

<sup>16</sup> Lei das Diretrizes e Bases de 1971. Accessed October 4, 2018. <http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/1970-1979/lei-5692-11-agosto-1971-357752-publicacaooriginal-1-pl.html>

The government enabled the opening to private education, which has strengthened the migration of elites' children to private schools. This migration has intensified social and educational inequalities. From that moment, the logic was created that the children of the rich have access to quality education and, therefore, more chances of reaching higher education, while the children of the poor have a precarious and deficient public schooling that makes their university entrance very difficult.<sup>17</sup>

The Education Law of 1971 also increased from four to eight years the mandatory elementary schooling, defining education for 7 to 14-year-olds as “primeiro grau,” first degree. It also incorporated vocational education in the high school years, which was defined as “Segundo grau,” second degree. The new measures had the intent to capacitate the new working force for a country that was growing. But reality showed that the results were not so positive due to the lack of investments. Schools had to adapt to the new reality with more openings, reducing the school hour terms to fit morning and afternoon shifts. Teachers were working more hours and not receiving substantial pay. All that led to poor quality in education due to lack of resources and control by the military. No teacher could speak their mind and criticize the regime. As noted by Assis, the democratization of education had an exclusively quantitative dimension and excluded the population from participating in politics because the new subjects defended the ideology of national security. Free and critical thinking were repressed and censored. It was a time in which many student unions and movements were shut down and repressed in Brazilian society.<sup>18</sup>

Another interesting fact of the time of the dictatorship was the creation of the program MOBREAL—Movimento Brasileiro de Alfabetização, in December of 1967 that aimed to show reading and writing to youth and adults. The program was designed to suppress the method established by Paulo Freire, who in 1963 developed a program and plan to combat illiteracy in the country. His program helped to teach students through words and situations of their daily reality, explaining through consciousness and critical thinking, while the MOBREAL method used words and situations chosen by the government's educational, technical team.<sup>19</sup> Figure 1 depicts Freire's first classroom.

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<sup>17</sup> Assis, Renata. “A educação Brasileira durante o período militar: a escolarização dos 7 aos 14 anos”. In *Educação em Perspectiva*, Viçosa. V. 3, n. 2, (2012). 320-339.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th Anniversary ed. New York: Continuum, 2000.



Figure 1: Angicos, rural area in Northeast Brazil, the first classroom in which Paulo Freire used his teaching method.<sup>20</sup>

The military had no interest in having a population of capable critical thinkers. Their interest was to have students prepared to be part of the working force. As shown in Figure 2 and 2.1, students are in a classroom where they learned facts (on the blackboard: Brasilia is the capital city of Brazil) and from a textbook. According to Beluzo and Toniosso, education conceived in the dictatorial period, which lasted until 1985, was technologist, that is, focused on the training of labor for the job market, the preparation of the individual.<sup>21</sup> With the end of Paulo Freire's literacy program by the military government in 1965 and the persecution he suffered because of his ideas of justice and equality, he had to go into political exile in Chile.

Although the MOBREAL program received a couple of acknowledgments and prizes from the UNESCO and partially used some of the strategies of Paulo Freire's method such as the reading cards, it never contemplated the previous knowledge and experiences the students had nor considered the process of "conscientização" (conscious learning).

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<sup>20</sup> Costa, Tacito. (2013). "Angicos: As 40 horas que mudaram vidas." Accessed December 5, 2018. <http://substantivoplural.com.br/angicos-as-40-horas-que-mudaram-vidas/>

<sup>21</sup> Beluzo, Maria and Toniosso, Jose. "O MOBREAL e a Alfabetizacao de Adultos: Consideracoes Historicas." In: *Cadernos de Educaçao: Ensino e Sociedade*, Bebedouro-SP., 2 (1) (2015):196-209.



Figure 2: Classroom in Santa Maria, in 1973.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 2.1: Learning from technical books.<sup>23</sup>

The military regime was also known for its censorship, not only in the political and social sphere but also in the cultural and educational settings. The September 1984 typescript in Figure 3 of the report on Luis Fernando Macedo Costa, former Dean of the largest public university of Bahia, Universidade Federal da Bahia, shows the dean's concerns regarding the inequalities of education in 1984, just before the end of the dictatorship in Brazil. The document also shows how the intelligence segments of the regime acted in collecting information from educators who criticized the military government.

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<sup>22</sup> Departamento de Arquivo Geral da UFSM. "Tipo 1973.136.003 - Mobral - Movimento Brasileiro de Alfabetização - alunos em sala de aula." (2012). Accessed December 5, 2018.

<http://fonte.ufsm.br/index.php/mobral-movimento-brasileiro-de-alfabetizacao-alunos-em-sala-de-aula-3>

<sup>23</sup> Departamento de Arquivo Geral da UFSM. "Tipo 1973.136.002 - Mobral - Movimento Brasileiro de Alfabetização - alunos em sala de aula." (2012) Accessed December 5, 2018. <http://fonte.ufsm.br/index.php/mobral-movimento-brasileiro-de-alfabetizacao-alunos-em-sala-de-aula-2>



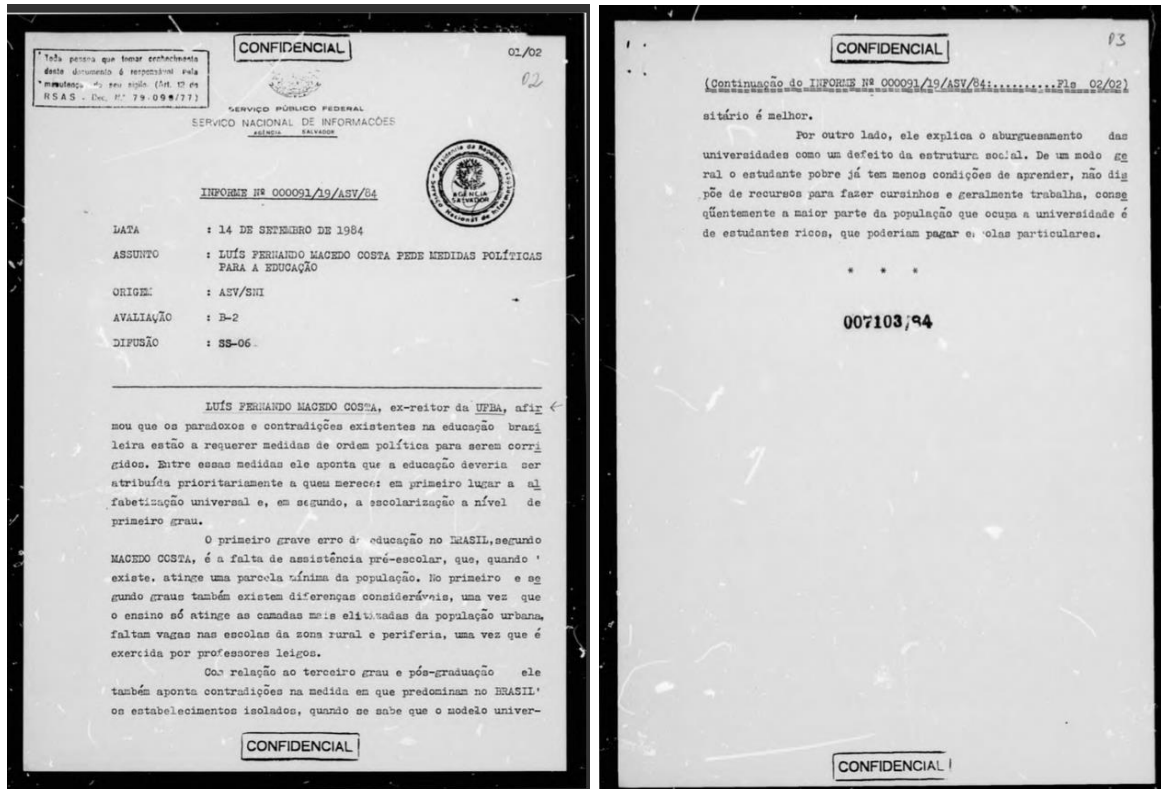


Figure 3: Document issued by the National Information Service during the military regime on the actions of the Dean of the Federal University of Bahia.<sup>24</sup>


There is also a typescript of the report in Figure 4 on Velocino Bruck Fernandes, a teacher or professor, who wrote articles for three local newspapers in the State of Parana criticizing the relationship of the government and the the International Monetary Fund, the demands of the IMF, and how it affected the already impaired Brazilian education. This document is from the base of the SIAN-Sistema de Informacoes do Arquivo Nacional of Brazil (Brazilian Information System of the National Archive of Brazil), and along with the typescript, there are two articles he wrote as depicted in Figure 5 and Figure 6.

<sup>24</sup> Servico Nacional de Informacao, Typescript of the report on Luis Fernando Macedo Costa, former Dean of the Universidade Federal da Bahia, September 1984, Informe N° 000091/19/ASV/84, SIAN-Sistema de Informacoes do Arquivo Nacional, Brazil.  
[http://imagem.sian.an.gov.br/br\\_dfanbsb\\_v8/mic/gnc/ppp/84007103/br\\_dfanbsb\\_v8\\_mic\\_gnc\\_pp\\_84007103\\_d0001de0001.pdf](http://imagem.sian.an.gov.br/br_dfanbsb_v8/mic/gnc/ppp/84007103/br_dfanbsb_v8_mic_gnc_pp_84007103_d0001de0001.pdf) (accessible by login)

**CONFIDENCIAL**

**SERVICO NACIONAL DE INFORMACOES**  
 Agência Curitiba

INFORME Nº 0462/19/ACT/83



DATA : 05 JUL 83  
 ASSUNTO : O FUNDO MONETARIO INTERNACIONAL (FMI) E A EDUCACAO  
 BRASILEIRA  
 - PROFESSOR VELOCINO BRUCK FERNANDES

AVALIACAO : A-1  
 DIFUSAO : SS-06  
 ANEXO : COPIAS XEROX DE RECORTE DE JORNAL (04 FLS).

ACT/SNI  
**ACE 004121/83**

1. O Professor VELOCINO BRUCK FERNANDES, publicou, na "Página da Educação", do jornal "O ESTADO DO PARANÁ", artigo dividido em três partes, intitulado "O FUNDO MONETARIO INTERNACIONAL (FMI) E A EDUCACAO BRASILEIRA", e outro, intitulado "LEI SALARIAL E EDUCACAO" (cópias anexas).

2. Neles, o Professor VELOCINO BRUCK FERNANDES, destaca que a Educação está vinculada ao momento sócio-político e econômico e inserida no contexto dos acordos do Governo com o FMI.

Da matéria, de conteúdo contestatório, expresso em termos contundentes, extrai-se o seguinte:

- o Regime Político do País é espúrio e ilegítimo, assim como o sistema econômico, instituídos que foram com o golpe militarista de 1964;
- as grandes obras, muitas desnecessárias, endividaram e levaram o País ao FMI, cujas imposições imprimem ritmo recessivo à atividade econômica, com os consequentes reflexos à Educação;
- segundo o Professor DARCI RIBEIRO, o mínimo que o "capitalismo tupiniquim" deve proporcionar aos jovens é Educação;
- o milagre econômico brasileiro revelou-se quixotesco, vergonhoso e humilhante fracasso, e na mudança do modelo

**CONFIDENCIAL**

Figure 4: Report issued by the National Information Service on the articles Professor Fernandes wrote criticizing the relationship of the government with the IMF.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Servico Nacional de Informacao, Typescript of the report on Velocino Bruck Fernandes, July 1983, Informe Nº 0462/19/act/83, SIAN-Sistema de Informacoes do Arquivo Nacional, Brazil.



Figure 5: First article written in January of 1983.<sup>26</sup>

Figure 6: Second article written in February of 1984.<sup>27</sup>

Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6 show a glimpse of a period in which it was difficult to hear the educator's voice who was not in favor of the educational project of the military regime and the elite.

### The Constitution of 1988 and the Education Law of 1996

In 1984, a series of demonstrations requesting direct elections for the presidency of the republic began, making public the weakening of the military regime and the need for changes in the country. In 1985, Tancredo Neve was elected president through the Electoral College and began the period of the New Republic, 1985 until today.

In 1988, three years after the end of the military regime, the government wrote the eighth and final version of the Constitution that brought the country's education under the perspective of public interest and inserted instruction as a social right. This Constitution also maintained the organizational structure of the national education systems, preserved the educational systems of the states, but granted that private tuition and funds could be given to those who have insufficient financial resources.<sup>28</sup> Again, education is a considered a right for every citizen, of diverse social-economic class, but it opens the door to favor those who can afford private schools through government funding and a tax break for those who can afford private education.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Constituição da Republica Federativa do Brasil de 1988. Accessed on December 5, 2018. [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/constituicao/constituicao.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/constituicao.htm)

The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 is considered a landmark regarding the fundamentals and principles of citizens' rights.<sup>29</sup> According to Oliveira, the Declaration of the Right to Education appears in Article 6: "Social rights include education, [...] in the form of this Constitution," where for the first time in our Constitutional history it is a Declaration of Social Rights, highlighting education with primacy. The most important aspects consider that education is a right of all; education is the duty of the State; education is the family's duty; and education must be fostered by society.<sup>30</sup> The original text is fundamental to show how educational policies may be implemented from now on in terms of equality or inequalities in Brazilian society.

Bonamino noted the role of civil society in which full mobilization was raised, as well as the start of the revitalization of political parties and the occupation of the states by new progressive forces. Together, this new empowerment of society led states and municipalities to the implementation of social programs characterized by need and low resources to assist the most disadvantaged populations and also by encouragement of popular participation in the process. Another issue discussed by the author is that at the educational level, the policies adopted in this context began to be adapted and implemented in states and municipalities that came to be governed by sectors of opposition to the former military government and sought to push forward significant changes in the system based on structural reforms that focused on expansion and improvement of the public school.<sup>31</sup> Despite the limitations imposed by the government to the return of the democracy, the opposition was able to emphasize educational policies that prevailed quality in public education, decentralization, and democratization of education as well as a greater involvement of diverse sectors of society to discuss and participate in relevant decisions needed to transform the educational setting.

The new Constitution altered roles, responsibilities, and functions from the federal level to states and municipalities. Bonamino pointed out that through the Federal Constitution of 1988, a new framework of educational responsibilities was defined, which altered the relationship between the State (public), the productive private sector, and the non-profitable private sector in the offering and distribution of educational resources/school openings.<sup>32</sup>

The Education Law of 1996 is the last document addressed in this research.<sup>33</sup> Darcy Ribeiro and a group of educational authorities from the Ministry of Education wrote the new document, which faced some criticism. The criticism occurred because at the same time of leverages in the decentralization of educational responsibilities at state and municipality levels, it contributed to strengthening a regulatory framework the federal government started to exercise at all levels through evaluation and curricula reform.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Oliveira, Romualdo. "O Direito à Educação na Constituição Federal de 1988 e seu restabelecimento pelo sistema de Justiça." *Revista Brasileira de Educação*. Mai/Jun/Jul/Ago 1999, vol. 11. 62-74.

<sup>31</sup> Bonamino, Alicia. "O Público e o Privado na Educação Brasileira: Inovacoes e Tendencias a partir dos Anos de 1980." *Revista Brasileira Historia da Educação*. N 5. Jan/Jun. 2003. 252-276.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Lei das Diretrizes e Bases de 1996. Accessed October 4, 2018. <http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/1996/lei-9394-20-dezembro-1996-362578-publicacaooriginal-1-pl.html>

<sup>34</sup> Bonamino, Alicia. "O Público e o Privado na Educação Brasileira: Inovacoes e Tendencias a partir dos Anos de 1980." *Revista Brasileira Historia da Educação*. N 5. Jan/Jun. 2003. 252-276.

The new law presented some guidelines that benefited the population. These included a mandatory free education program from the age of 4 years; minimum hourly load of 800 hours distributed in 200 days for elementary school; requirement of a teaching degree for teachers to work in primary and secondary levels; requirement of undergraduate and graduate degree for specialists; the definition that the Union (federal level) must spend at least 18% of its budget for education, whereas states and municipalities are responsible for at least 25% of their respective budgets for the maintenance and development of public education; the designation of the development of a National Education Plan; that federal money can finance community, faith-based; and philanthropic schools, and specific chapters and articles that guarantee the inclusion and respect of learners with special needs, and indigenous population.<sup>35</sup>

The guidelines described in the 1996 Educational Law concerning human rights that bring more equality among the less privileged and middle-high classes are more transparent and more defined. The specific rules to protect and educate the indigenous population and the inclusion of children with special needs in regular public schools demonstrate that Brazilian education is, in fact, starting to bridge the gaps. But there remain specific investment and curricula issues that private schools are still ahead in comparison to the public schools. One question that shows the difference between the two sets is regarded as teacher preparation. Long before the issuing of the 1996 law, to work in a private setting, teachers were required to have teaching degrees, whereas only in 1996 it became a rule for public school teachers. Another topic is related to the minimum course load that all schools would need to meet this requirement. It was common that students attending private schools had longer school years whereas students attending the public schools had often longer summer and winter breaks as well finished the school year a couple of weeks earlier.

### **Final Considerations**

The purpose of this research was to understand how inequalities have been perpetuated in Brazilian society, considering the private and public-school settings through a historical perspective. Important documents that influence the course of education in the private and public spheres were analyzed and the critical aspects of each were examined.

It is impressive to see the most advanced document for its time that proposed education guidelines to serve the whole Brazilian population, independent of social and economic status, was the Manifest of the Pioneer of the New School of 1932.<sup>36</sup> It is interesting that this document was written by intellectuals who were contemplating the education of the country without personal interests. As we move into the 1950 and 1960s, the government and elites started to define their own interests through the education. It is clear that each one of the documents had a distinguished and noble purpose of making education in general accessible to all as well as implementing it with quality. But the Education Laws of 1961 and 1971 had something in common, they were vague; they maintained issues to favor the choice and availability of private education for the most fortunate, with or without public funding. Another aspect was the

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<sup>35</sup> Lei das Diretrizes e Bases de 1996. Accessed October 4, 2018. <http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/1996/lei-9394-20-dezembro-1996-362578-publicacaooriginal-1-pl.html>

<sup>36</sup> O Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educacao Nova (1932). Accessed October 4, 2018.

expansion in the years of training for the elementary school, which had the purpose to prepare young people for the labor market. However the laws did not provide more funding to achieve the new challenges of Brazilian society.<sup>37</sup>

The backslide was accentuated by the military regime, which not only had specific interests to avoid a real expansion and quality education but also needed to control society by withholding liberties and critical thinking or questioning. At this point, the inequalities grew more across the social-economic sectors of the population and how they were treated regarding their rights, specifically their right to a free and good education.

Finally, the Constitution of 1988<sup>38</sup> and the Educational Law of 1996<sup>39</sup> were not the solution to end the inequalities in society, but started the process of looking at the needs of the whole population. It is clear the elite still have the financial resources and critical knowledge to choose better quality and opportunities for their learners and are still ahead in taking advantage of what the private school setting can provide. In the long run, specifically designated funding and better-prepared teachers with teaching degrees, more awareness of recourses may bring assets to the public-school setting that may contribute to decrease the differences in the private and public educational environment. History showed that it will take time to end the inequalities, but it is imperative to understand where they come from in order to end their perpetuation.

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<sup>37</sup> Lei das Diretrizes e Bases de 1961. Accessed October 4, 2018. <http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/1960-1969/lei-4024-20-dezembro-1961-353722-publicacaooriginal-1-pl.html>/ Lei das Diretrizes e Bases de 1971. Accessed October 4, 2018. <http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/1970-1979/lei-5692-11-agosto-1971-357752-publicacaooriginal-1-pl.html>

<sup>38</sup> Constituicao da Republica Federativa do Brasil de 1988. Accessed on December 5, 2018. [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/constituicao/constituicao.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/constituicao.htm)

<sup>39</sup> Lei das Diretrizes e Bases de 1996. Accessed October 4, 2018. <http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/lei/1996/lei-9394-20-dezembro-1996-362578-publicacaooriginal-1-pl.html>