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# ANÍSIO TEIXEIRA

(1900–71)

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On 12 June 2000, Brazil, and particularly Brazilian educationists, commemorated the centenary of the birth of Anísio Spínola Teixeira. Many tributes were paid and an effort will undoubtedly have been made to review the work, action and thought of this great educationist. The occasion was marked by documentaries, the opening of a virtual library on the Internet and several scientific and commemorative events. The basis of Teixeira's educational views was that a democratic education prefigures a democratic society and forms a core group of people who are able to see others as equals.

Anísio Spínola Teixeira was born in Caitité, in the centre-south of the state of Bahia, on 12 June 1900. He was the son of Deocleciano Pires Teixeira and Ana Spínola Teixeira, both of whom belonged to the important land-owning class. His father, a cultured man from an influential family, trained as a doctor at the National Faculty of Medicine in Bahia. He was also a landowner, politician and was held in high moral regard. His mother came from a wealthy Bahian family prominent in rural society.

Anísio began his primary studies near the family home, and then transferred to the Instituto São Luiz, a Jesuit institution. He completed his secondary studies in a large residence, donated by his father to the Jesuits, who had turned the building into a school. The wealthier children of Caitité and surrounding area attended classes at the Jesuit institution until the third year of secondary (*ginásio*) school. At 15, Anísio moved to Salvador and continued his studies at the Antonio Vieira School, also run by Jesuit fathers. During this period, Anísio received his classical humanistic training from relatives and friends who came to his home. His humanistic studies reflected the Jesuit character of his education and demonstrated the considerable influence of Father Luis Gonzaga Cabral. He completed this phase of his training with a course in legal sciences. He spent his first two years in Salvador in Bahia, and then moved to Rio de Janeiro, which was the federal district at that time. He graduated with his Bachelor of Law degree in 1922.

During his education, numerous concerns, doubts and problems affected the young Bahian. As well, his own living experience during his studies changed him into an active, thoughtful individual, whose sensitivity was offended by the social inequalities he saw in the contrast between the opulent refinement in the houses of the rich and the corrugated iron shacks of the slums.

After working for a time in a public prosecutor's office in Rio de Janeiro, he returned to Bahia in 1923 with the intention of pursuing an ecclesiastical career, but abandoned the idea when he met with opposition from his family. In April 1924, at the invitation of the Bahian President Francisco Marques de Góis Calmon, he became General Inspector for Education in Bahia, a position that came to be known in the following year as Director General of Public Education. During his time in the post, Teixeira proved to be a great administrator. Between 1924 and 1927, he was able to reform the Bahian school system by nearly doubling its percentage share of the state budget, while tripling the number of places

available for students. In spite of these changes, however, the school system still served only 20.5% of the school-age population.

During this time, the young inspector took advantage of the Holy Year celebrations of 1925 to travel to Europe with the then Archbishop of Bahia, Dom Augusto Alvaro da Silva, from June to September, in order to study educational reforms in France and Belgium. He visited the shrine of Ignacio de Loyola in Spain, and was later permitted a personal audience by Pope Pius XI in Rome. While in Rome, he stayed at the Pius Latin American College, the first layman granted such an honour. He then went on to Paris, where he spent four months attending classes at the Sorbonne and studying the French educational system.

Undoubtedly, Teixeira was impressed by the French public school system and the debates about secularization and free education in France. The presence of the State as a countervailing power was fundamental to ensure that the school, in exercising its democratizing function, did not allow existing structures to prevent national reconstruction based upon new foundations. On the other hand, this great educationist, who was never a supporter of atheism or communist ideas, would advocate secularization as a means to promote tolerance and defend non-Catholic minorities.

Social inequality and secularization in education were two themes that marked the career of this public figure, whose main interest was the development of individuals and of the country as a whole. The school, by training persons who identified with democracy, would construct a basis upon which to support equality through educational action. To achieve this, the school, as an educational institution, had to support dialogue and participation in its own activities. To this end, it was necessary to follow the active methods advocated by the New School (*Escola Nova*). The motivation of students would lead to egalitarian educational socialization, producing individuals capable of changing the unequal or antidemocratic character of society. For Teixeira, school was not simply for the privileged. Privilege was a form of discrimination, perpetuated by an unequal society, in which individuals did not enjoy equality of opportunity and were therefore unable to develop their potential.

In pursuit of his educational goals, Teixeira met with severe criticism from the clergy in the 1930s and 1950s. In his view, the religious nature of individuals had to be respected, but only to the extent that religion should not intrude in the area of schooling. For Teixeira, respect for religious pluralism, and the right to worship and the freedom of religious expression were complementary. Religious pluralism, as a policy, respects the school system, and, therefore, religion itself does not need to be present in the school, except to the degree that religious pluralism promotes respect and tolerance. Thus an absence of religious teaching in official schools did not mean a similar absence in families, churches and in individual social organizations. Throughout his public life, Teixeira consistently held this point of view.

Teixeira was never satisfied with his own understanding of educational reforms, and was constantly searching for new information and approaches to education in other countries. Therefore, he always attempted to obtain the most current information regarding the theories and practice of new teaching and management methods. He consistently defended his comparative approach to education, an approach that made education more accessible for the people.

He read a number of American books expressing ideas about a new concept of education and a greater social and technical dimension. In his search to increase his own understanding, he decided to pursue further studies in education in the United States. As a result, in 1928, he continued his studies at Columbia University, where he received his Master of Arts degree from the Columbia University Teacher's College. During this time, he wrote an important report, published in 1928, under the title, *American aspects of education*. The document outlined the way educational establishments operated in the U.S. It was during his

time at Columbia that Teixeira became acquainted with the work of American philosopher and educationist, John Dewey. He became a supporter of Dewey's ideas, and translated several of his books. Also, while studying at Columbia, Teixeira met the author, William Killpatrick. As a result of these experiences, both in France and at Columbia, Teixeira was greatly influenced by the democratic approach to education that placed emphasis upon a State presence, especially as highlighted in France, as the driving force behind a form of schooling that was free, compulsory, secular and public.

When he returned to Brazil, Teixeira presented his first paper written under the influence of his studies abroad, entitled, *Suggestions for the gradual reorganization of the Bahian education system*. His paper was, however, rejected by the state governor, on the pretext that its proposals were not feasible. The same attitude led to his dismissal as General Inspector of Education.

In 1930, under the provisional government of Getúlio Vargas, Brazilian life entered a new phase and Teixeira returned to the government. He immediately started preparing new programmes for primary and basic education in Bahia. Soon after, he moved to Rio de Janeiro and joined a commission set up by the Ministry of Education and Public Health in charge of studying and reorganizing secondary education in the country. Then, in 1931, he was appointed Supervisor of the Secondary Schools Inspection Service in the same ministry. Teixeira also joined the Brazilian Association for Education (ABE), and became the association's president. The ABE was a diverse movement that favoured expanding public education. As one of the leaders of the movement for the reform of the Brazilian educational system, he signed a famous manifesto in 1932, entitled *Educational reconstruction in Brazil: to the people and the government*, which became known as the Manifesto of the Pioneers of New Education. The manifesto advocated the adoption of an educational system that was public, free of charge, compulsory and secular. The publication of the document proved to be a decisive moment in the history of Brazilian education. The document is now considered a founding text of State-guaranteed public education

By this time, Teixeira had rejected the religious control of education in favour of reformist, modernist ideas. His stand met with strong resistance from conservative circles, particularly those connected with the Catholic Church. The religious hierarchy and clergy at that time, imbued with conservative and reactionary doctrines, maintained that Catholicism was inherent in the national character of Brazilians. Teixeira's espousal of secularization and state control of education appeared to the church as a betrayal of the national character, and they accused him of being a naive servant of communist and atheistic ideologies. However, in 1931, he was invited by Prefect Pedro Ernesto to take up an appointment as Director General of Public Education for the Federal District. The post later became known as the Directorate General of the Department of Education of the Federal District, and in 1935, the General Secretariat for Education and Culture.

In 1934, Teixeira presented an admission thesis at the Federal District Institute of Education, where he was to lecture in educational philosophy until 1961. He became Rector of the Federal District University in 1935, where he attempted to introduce an exemplary spirit of dynamism, modernism and democracy. He invited well-known Brazilian professors, as well as European professors, especially from France. The reforms he proposed for the university were so extensive that they became incompatible with the New State (*Estado Novo*) dictatorship.

At that time, Teixeira joined forces with other liberal, democratic and even socialist educationists in an effort to introduce the principle of education as a right into the 1934 constitution. These efforts were to lead to a new chapter in Brazilian education, admitting the principles of free, compulsory primary school, the mandatory allocation of resources for

education and the notion of a national education plan derived from national guidelines for Brazilian education.

Apart from this battle over principles, Teixeira, whether in Bahia or in Rio de Janeiro, brought his innovating influence to bear in the educational sector both as an administrator and as a teacher. He became Professor of Educational Philosophy at the Teacher Training College of Salvador and at the Institute of Education in Rio. In the latter institute, he worked to introduce pre-school, primary and secondary education into the old teacher training college, so as to combine theory and practice in the same establishment. His objective was that the teacher training college, as part of the Institute, would encompass all teaching levels within a single, model system of education. The Institute itself was to be part of the Federal District University.

As Director General of Public Education in the Federal District, Teixeira worked with Prefect Pedro Ernesto. He acquired a reputation as an educational reformer, especially through his efforts to create a closer connection in terms of the perceived value between the curricula of traditional and occupation-oriented schools. The political mood of the time was becoming increasingly radical, leading to the violent repression of different factions of the democratic opposition, many representatives of which were jailed, including Pedro Ernesto. Teixeira was also affected by the repressive measures prevailing in Brazil at the time, as they undermined his attempts to modernize and democratize education. He was forced to leave his post at the Federal District University, together with all his assistants, and was replaced by Francisco Campos, an advocate of reactionary political ideas. In response, Heitor Villa-Lobos, the great musician and composer, resigned in protest from his post as director of artistic and musical education in the Federal District.

The state of emergency in 1935 degenerated into war the following year. On 10 November 1937, a coup d'état led by Getúlio Vargas introduced the New State (*Estado Novo*), a form of dictatorship which dominated Brazil until October 1945. Whatever democratic initiatives there had been in the period preceding the coup were repressed, controlled or censored. From 1936 onwards, with the Brazilian democratic movement suffering, though not entirely destroyed, Teixeira spent his time on other activities. By 1938, he had translated works of authors such as Adler, Wells and Dewey for a number of national publishers. Even this activity was interrupted on account of the very strict censorship imposed by the *Estado Novo*. For a period of ten years, Teixeira resided in Bahia, living either in Salvador or on the family estate, with occasional visits to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo on business. His business interests led to his becoming one of the main exporters of manganese in the State of Bahia. Also during this time, he married Emilia Ferreira Teixeira, with whom he had four children.

In 1946, Julian Huxley, the then head of UNESCO, which had been set up at the end of the Second World War, personally invited Teixeira to work with the organization as Advisor on Higher Education. Huxley had earlier collaborated with Wells on his book *The science of life*, which Teixeira had translated in 1938. His experience as Rector of the Federal District University, and his time at UNESCO spurred his interest in all matters related to higher education. As a result of this new focus, he was to take a series of initiatives to improve and open up higher education for a greater number of his countrymen. As part of this movement, he started to look carefully at the training of teachers, and its relation to research and the development of basic education. As well, his occasional visits to London and Paris rekindled his interests in intellectual activities, which he had to relinquish, when he was excluded from public office.

Brazil was slowly returning to democracy, and the 1946 constitution revived the principles that Teixeira had fought for in 1934, in the fields of both politics and education. He defended and expanded the same principles, especially as regarded his study of the

constitution in the State of Bahia in 1947. He returned to public life when the Governor of the State of Bahia, Otávio Mangabeira, offered him an appointment as Secretary of Education. Teixeira accepted the appointment, though private businesses were simultaneously soliciting him to work on a major industrial project to extract manganese in the Territory of Amapá. In 1947, he left UNESCO and took up his duties as Secretary of Education and Health in the government of Bahia, setting up municipal councils on education throughout the state. He inaugurated the Carneiro Ribero Educational Centre, a pioneering experiment in comprehensive education for young people, which was later to serve as a model for the educational system adopted in Brasilia. The enrolment deficit in basic schooling in the State of Bahia was approximately 73%, which placed the state second to last when compared with other states in the country. By the third year of Teixeira's term, the school population had doubled, rising from thirty-three students for every thousand inhabitants in 1946, to sixty-three in 1949. In the same period, the number of teaching staff grew from 2,479 to 6,200.

While Teixeira favoured the State playing an active part in the field of education, he made every effort to encourage political and administrative decentralization. According to him, since Brazil was a continental, federated state, it would develop better educationally if the responsibility for education were left to individual states and municipalities. In order to offset the possible negative factors of political favouritism and a decline in the uniformity of national objectives, however, he suggested the establishment of municipal and community councils to give education a sense of value and purpose. His support of public authority, in a spirit of harmony between federal, state and municipal governments, encouraged decentralization without relieving the State of its duties. Following this principle, Teixeira defended diversity, subject to general, common guidelines and fundamental requirements, under the aegis of the federal authorities. He believed that the federal level of government should exert a positive influence in the individual states through its technical and financial support. In this respect, his views were influenced by democratic federalism. Eventually, recognition for his work and thought began to spread beyond Brazil's borders, and in 1950, he was awarded the title of Officer of the French Legion of Honour.

At the federal level, then under the control of the constitutional government of Getúlio Vargas, the Bahian, Ernesto Simões Filho, was appointed Minister of Education. The latter invited Teixeira to become Director of the National Department of Education, though Teixeira declined the offer. Despite this, Ernesto Simões again contacted Teixeira in 1951, asking him to become General-Secretary of the National Campaign for the Improvement of Higher Level Staff (CAPES). This time he accepted the offer. Shortly afterwards, he also took on the duties of Director of the National Institute of Pedagogic Studies (INEP). During this period, he created the Regional Centres for Educational Research (CRPE), with regional headquarters in São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul, Bahia and Pernambuco. The CRPEs then began conducting surveys on the situation in intermediate and elementary schools in Brazil. He also inaugurated national centres for post-graduate training, linked to the CAPES, and launched a textbook and teaching manual campaign.

These three initiatives constituted significant milestones in Brazilian education. The CAPES became the main agency promoting the qualification of post-graduate teaching staff. The CAPES, which is now a foundation attached to the Ministry of Education, was, and continues to be, an indispensable agency for the design, maintenance, evaluation and improvement of the post-graduate system in Brazil. Teixeira's numerous international acquaintances encouraged him to extend the experiments. He needed practical knowledge, however, in order to assess his current possibilities and advance still further. The INEP was devised, not only as a centre for the dissemination of thought about education, but as an indispensable support for educational planning. Hence the stimulus provided by the Brazilian Review of Pedagogic Studies (RBEP) and the appreciation shown for increasingly reliable

and up-to-date statistics, and for the presence of researchers in several regions of the country. Working on that basis, educational administrators were better able to take measures conducive to greater equality and efficiency. These initiatives were also intended as important means to educational production suited to a large and diversified country like Brazil. They could also act as a brake on tendencies towards centralization and bureaucratization that threatened to paralyse creativity.

In line with the principles established in the 1946 constitution, Teixeira worked on the drafting of a bill concerning the guidelines and foundations of national education. He sought to make these guidelines at once democratic, decentralized and supported and controlled by the local communities. Apart from his struggle to have this bill approved, Teixeira undertook new battles on behalf of public education. In the period from 1954 to 1964, he took part in a number of national and international conferences. In 1954, he presented an important paper on the financing of education at the Tenth National Conference on Education in Curitiba. In 1956, he attended the Latin American Regional Conference on Free, Compulsory Primary Education as a delegate from the Ministry of Education, as well as the Second Inter-American Meeting of Education Ministers, in Lima, Peru. He was also present at the State Conference on Primary Education in Ribeirão Preto, where he gave a talk on universal, free public education. He took part in the Twelfth National Conference on Education in Salvador, and the First International Conference on Educational Research, held in the United States and sponsored by UNESCO. During the conference, he presented a report on the Brazilian Centre for Educational Research.

In 1957, Teixeira participated in the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science (SBPC) and the Inter-state Teachers' Seminar in São Paulo, where he gave a talk entitled, The Science and Art of Educating. In 1958, he joined a commission of experts on educational matters, at the invitation of the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States, with a view to carrying out a critical survey of education programmes in the Pan-American Union. In 1959, after visiting the main university centres in Argentina, Peru, Chile and Colombia, as well as several North American universities, he attended the Inter-American Conference on University Teaching in Mexico. That same year, he received the title of Doctor *honoris causa* from the Federal University of Bahia. Pursuing his busy schedule of activities abroad, Teixeira travelled to Chile to take part in the meeting of the Council for Higher Education in the American Republics. Soon afterwards, he joined the Committee of Nine of the Organization of American Programmes in the United States. In Paris, He participated in the International Universities Association, and attended the Conference on the Progress of Science in the New States in Israel. In 1961, he appeared at the Council for Higher Education in the American Republics, held in San Francisco, USA. In Beirut, Lebanon, he joined the Commission of Experts for the international study on admissions to university. Again in Paris, he took part in the International Committee for the Development of Adult Education, and in Bogota, participated in another meeting of the Council for Higher Education in the American Republics.

He was appointed a member of the Deliberative Council of the National Association of School Administration Teachers, an organization that he had been directing since 1957, at the National Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Brazil. In 1962, under João Goulart's government, he was appointed a member of the Federal Council on Education, and the following year became president of the National Commission on Primary Education. He also took part in another meeting of the Council for Higher Education in the American Republics in Mexico City. Over a period of four months, he gave a series of lectures as visiting professor at Columbia University. During this time, the university presented Teixeira with its medal of honour, inscribed with the following words:

To Anísio Teixeira, a master for his pupils, his colleagues and his country, whose erudition illuminates education throughout the Americas; a leader in Brazilian schools and universities, whose example is an inspiration to the whole world; a man who loves knowledge and devotes his life to the progress of education and the improvement of schools.

Though he enjoyed international prestige as an educationist and held the Chair of School Administration and Comparative Education at the National Faculty of Philosophy (1957-1964), and, despite his reputation as a public figure devoted to the cause of democratic education, the Catholic Church continued to show hostility towards Teixeira. The hostility was aggravated by Teixeira's efforts supporting the passage of a bill on guidelines and foundations for national education. At that time, the debate was diverted from the question of religious education and decentralization to that of the allocation of public funds. The controversy became a public issue, and, at the height of the debate on the role of the state in the educational system, the metropolitan archbishop of Porto Alegre, Dom Vicente Scherer, and other bishops of Rio Grande do Sul, intervened in the discussion. They sent a memorandum to President Juscelino Kubitschek denouncing Teixeira as a champion of public education, which would be 'paving the way for social claims'. This memorandum was published by the Brazilian Review of Pedagogic Studies, the official mouthpiece of the INEP, and Teixeira was officially informed that he was being removed as head of the Institute. In the end, Teixeira was not removed, due to numerous protests by both academics and journalists from across Brazil. When the new bill was approved, Teixeira published a famous article in which he expressed his appreciation for the bill's passage. The article was entitled: 'Half a victory, but a victory all the same'. Teixeira's influence in the Federal Council of Education was felt in all aspects of the council's work, but was especially noticeable in its efforts to increase educational funding. Such funding, always seen as a form of investment, would be combined with other planning instruments as ways of promoting the development of education.

In 1963, Teixeira provisionally replaced Darcy Ribeiro as Rector of the University of Brasilia (UnB). It was during his rectorship that President João Goulart was overthrown in the coup of 31 March 1964. These events led to Teixeira's inclusion in the proceedings opened to investigate alleged administrative irregularities in the university. Protests were organized against the new government's actions, and, in a show of solidarity, the Universities of California invited Teixeira to join their teaching staff. With a special authorization issued by the office of the President of the Republic, he obtained a passport for the United States, where he taught for almost two years. From that time onwards, Teixeira never assumed public office again and retired from his official professorship.

Teixeira returned to Brazil in 1966, where he became legal adviser to the Getúlio Vargas Foundation and the Companhia Editora Nacional publishing house in Rio de Janeiro, directing an education and social sciences collection. In 1967, he took part in a conference on The World Crisis in Education sponsored by the departments of education and health of several Brazilian states, as well as by the American government, and by the University of Williamsburg in Virginia. In 1970, he received the title of Emeritus Professor from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

Anísio Teixeira influenced every aspect of education in Brazil; he participated in the preparation of countless bills and government acts, and represented Brazil at international events, always in defence of public, democratic education. He lectured in several Asian and American countries, he initiated university exchange programmes, and reformed the educational programme of the Organization of American States. His presence at UNESCO was significant. On his friends' insistence, he applied for admission to the Brazilian Academy of Letters (ABL), but fate intervened. After giving a lecture at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, he went to visit a friend's flat in an apartment building. Though sharply aware of important

events occurring in his country, and an ardent defender of public education, Teixeira inexplicably fell down the elevator shaft in a friend's apartment building on 11 March 1971. His body was found three days later. He was buried in Rio de Janeiro, with numerous tributes. In July 1973, the Ministry of Education posthumously awarded him the National Order of Educational Merit.

Despite the disputes surrounding him, Anísio Teixeira's intense and lengthy work is aimed at the construction of a democratic society, less and less unequal, thanks to social mobility facilitated by open, active school education. In a country with a historically hierarchical social structure, subject to discrimination and prejudice derived from a slave-owning society, the struggle for effective civil and social rights continues to be controversial and requires courage. In education, Teixeira saw a non-violent path, both to political democracy and to the dismantling of social privileges. Without education, the majority of the people would remain not only prisoners of ignorance but also victims of archaic, anti-democratic structures. Hence the defence of civil rights as a peaceful way to guarantee the equal status of all as regards both opportunity and the law. Where conflicts arise in civil society, these conflicts can be resolved through the democratic procedures. Teixeira, however, did not view the realization of equal opportunity and equality before the law as a simply natural occurrence. In his view, the backwardness derived from ignorance and historic circumstances could not be tolerated by a country so full of potential. The state had to intervene in education in order to allow free interaction among equals, and to prevent the perpetuation of privileges and ignorance. It was up to organized society to pressure the state to adopt democratic procedures.

According to Teixeira, the state, especially in the case of Brazil, would need to decentralize power in order to adapt education to local communities, while remaining an essentially public institution. It should be pointed out, however, that a defence of regionalism was not part of Teixeira's intentions. The recognition of local rights should not be confused with narrowness of thinking. Thus, Teixeira supported the use of international resources in order to train teachers and researchers, who, on their return to the country, would raise the standard of science, research and university teaching. The university, in turn, would become integrated with the lower levels of education in order to offer pedagogic tools for the training of teachers. Closely tied to the lives of their students, teachers would be prepared to reform the school by active and dynamic methods.

Being sensitive to civil rights, and with his great breadth of vision, Teixeira was not opposed to religion. He merely saw it within the school as a force that tended to reinforce the sort of particularism that he wanted to avoid. In addition, he never opposed the existence of private schools. For him, their real role had to be understood within the existence of a comprehensive, qualified public educational system. Convinced that the State must play a part in amending archaic structures, Teixeira saw planning as a way of accelerating reforms and avoiding the regional fragmentation of education in Brazil.

The centenary of Anísio Teixeira's birth should be an occasion for a commemoration that reminds us of the challenges of Teixeira's own life and one that thereby challenges us. Many of the advances achieved in education in Brazil are due to men such as Anísio Teixeira, who dared to relate democratic equality to modernity and science.

## Note

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programme deals with education policy in Brazil and he lectures on the structure and functioning of education in undergraduate courses. Research covers the relationship between education and law. A member of the National Council for Education.

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(In chronological order.)

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