

# Approximations and Distances between the Educational Systems of Brazil and Nigeria in the Dictatorial Period (1964-1985): Some aspects

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**Abstract**— *The purpose of this article is to show some aspects about the educational system in Brazil and Nigeria, during the dictatorial period (1964-1985). In 1964, Brazil suffered a military coup, leading to the establishment of a civil/military dictatorship that lasted until 1985. This period, when the military used repressive means and torture to suppress the opposition, generated significant changes in the educational policies. Education was seen as an important part of economic development. The army had the intention of proceeding with the industrialization project, so that educational policies were focused on the development of human capital, that is, to create a technical class that could guide the country towards greater productive growth. At the same time, the first military coup to take place in Nigeria was in 1966, which led to a series of other coups in the country, ceasing only in 1999<sup>i</sup>. This regime saw education as a government initiative, which led the state to take on missionary schools. The Universal Primary Education (UPE) program was also launched, making primary education free, in order to reduce illiteracy in the country.*

**Keywords**— *Military dictatorship, Nigeria, Brazil, Educational System.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

This article covers some aspects about the educational systems of Brazil and Nigeria, with the purpose of bringing data of approximations and distances between the two countries. Thus, there is no intention to make comparisons given the singularities of each of them, but as both lived concomitant dictatorial experiences, the curiosity to know about possible similarities and dissimilarities in the educational field of that period was manifested.

In fact, military interventions are the result of a complex mix of historical, political, economic, social, ethnic and cultural factors. Different theories can explain military intervention, such as the *organizational theory*, *custodian theory* and *socioeconomic development theory*, which contribute to characterize the dictatorial formations in those two countries.

In Brazil, the Brazilian army took over the government on March 31 in 1964, through a coup, under the justification of fighting the so-called communists and subversives. The military power lasted twenty-one years and sought to serve capitalist interests, based on the logic of modernization and economic development. With that, after the intervention in 1964, several agreements were

signed in the educational field. Through the educational system, it would be possible to develop the skilled workforce needed for the growing industry. To this end, in 1965, agreements were signed between the Ministry of Education of Brazil and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in order to restructure the educational system in Brazil, since it would be necessary to make it able to meet the demands of the productive universe at the time (germano, 2000).

Thus, it is important to highlight that although it is the *organizational theory* that best explains the dictatorial regime in Brazil (1964-1985), it is possible to perceive, in the case of this country, an approximation with the *economic development theory*. The authors who presented this theory believe in the hypothesis that socioeconomic development reduces the chances of military intervention. Finer (1988) argues that “[...] the density of military interventions is more likely to decrease with an increase in the status of socioeconomic development and an increase in social mobility” (p. 87).

Putnam (1967), in turn, argues that nations with better socioeconomic status have a higher level of urbanization, industrialization and literacy and, therefore, greater mass participation in social activities. This author

presented five major indicators of social mobilization related to military influence in politics: urbanization, literacy rate, circulation of newspapers, distribution of radio sets and higher education.

From the perspective of the *organizational theory*, military organizations are institutions organized hierarchically by nature. In the army, commands are obeyed and not debated. A strong chain of command can only be found in a military institution. These characteristics give the military a distinct status, making it different from all other institutions (Finer, 1988).

According to Finer (1988), “[...] the armed forces have three enormous political advantages over civil organizations: a superiority in the organization, a highly emotional symbolic status and a monopoly on weapons” (p. 6), as well as nationalism and patriotism. In addition, a centralized chain of command, discipline and extensive communication makes military officers a cohesive group capable of organizing an effective coup (Finer, 1988). In another way, Huntington (1957) stated that military professionalism is inversely related to military intervention. He argues that the modern professional sense keeps the military away from intervention in the civilian government, while bringing them closer together, according to their demands on government revenue.

The military’s role in politics is simply the maintenance and survival of the armed forces within a country, and this is often seen when trying to undermine the military hierarchy. This was what led to the coup in Brazil, when President Goulart tried to combat the power of high military officers and, consequently, he was overthrown by the military in April 1964 (Nordlinger, 1977).

Two years after the Brazilian military coup, the military coup took place in Nigeria. In 1966, it happened the first of a series of coups that have afflicted this country for decades. Political leaders of the northern part, including Prime Minister Balewa, were killed in the coup, while President Azikiwe (an Igbo<sup>1</sup>) was not in the country when the coup took place. General Aguiyi-Ironsi (Igbo) became Nigeria’s military head of state. Northerners who have suffered most in the coup did not intend to remain passive while the eastern part of the country came to power, which led to the second coup in July 1966. General Gowon became Nigeria’s Head of State and during this period, the Igbo attempted to secede from Nigeria creating Biafra, leading to civil war between 1967 and 1970. General

Gowon was overthrown in 1975 and Murtala Mohammed became Nigeria’s Head of State, in 1975. Murtala Mohammed was later killed in a coup led by Colonel Dimka (Dummar, 2002).

In 1976, General Obasanjo became Nigeria’s Head of State and later became the first military Head of State to transfer power peacefully to civilian rule in 1979 to Alhaji Shehu Shagari. However, the second republic was interrupted in 1983 by a coup led by Buhari, due to electoral irregularities and allegations of corruption. General Muhammadu Buhari was a Muslim, from the northern part of the country, and tried to implement Sharia law<sup>2</sup> at the federal level. In his regime, many government critics were arrested. He was overthrown in 1985 with a military coup led by General Ibrahim Babangida (Dummar, 2002).

The *Custodian theory* has the most significant impact on the incidence of coups in Nigerian politics. *Custodian theory* states that the armed forces are the guardians of the nation’s constitution and, as such, are free to intervene when the constitutional property is being violated. Huntington (1969) states that the military would generally be willing to “return to the barracks” after a dispute is resolved. Thus, the military only acts as guardians to verify the activities of corrupt civilian administrators and to guarantee political stability. The author stresses that the military must intervene when the civilian government has no legitimacy due to an inadequate and ineffective electoral executive. Thus, for example, the Praetorian army will tend to replace weak and unstable political regimes (Perlmutter, 1969).

Finer (1988) argued that the most important cause of military intervention is the low or minimal political culture of the society in question. Such an interpretation for military coups can relate to the characteristics of the Nigerian army. More than that, Huntington (1969) emphasized the role of corruption in the intervention. In Nigeria, some members of ineffective civilian leaders were found to be corrupt and acted according to their personal interest. In contemporary society, however, the armed forces are no longer content to have leadership by proxy. With a relatively well-educated and highly trained workforce, and in the context of the prevailing crisis in Nigerian development, the army can consider itself a legitimate heir to state power and a legitimate recipient of public funds.

<sup>1</sup> One of the largest African ethnic groups. They inhabit the east, south and southeast of Nigeria, as well as Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea and speak the Igbo language.

<sup>2</sup> Islamic law: body of laws based on the Koran and the religion of Islam.

After this introduction, aspects of the educational system in the two countries in question in the period chosen will be presented.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Research of a historical nature in the field of History of Education. It was developed using bibliographic sources and educational legislation from both countries. About bibliographic research, for Severino,

[...] it is the one that takes place from the available record, resulting from previous research, in printed documents, such as books, articles, theses, etc. It uses data or theoretical categories already worked on by other researchers and duly registered. The texts become sources of topics to be researched. The researcher works from the contributions of the authors of the analytical studies contained in the texts (2016, p. 131).

Legal sources, of documentary character, such as the legislation, will also be used, fundamentally aiming to understand the structuring of the educational systems in the two countries during the period chosen.

This work does not intend to be a comparative study. Far from it. The intention is to proceed with what we call approximations and/or distances between the educational systems of the two countries during a period in which they shared forms of authoritarian relations resulting from military coups.

An attempt was made, both through bibliographic and documentary studies, to carry out a dense interpretive exercise, relying on Geertz (1989), from where we bring the notion of dense interpretation to seek in this materiality to discern what we desire through the objectives previously set. It requires reflection both in the broad sense, for example, of international relations in which the two countries are inserted, as well as specific, from the perspective of their internal relations.

### Aspects of the Educational System of Brazil and Nigeria during the military dictatorships (1964-1985)

As a result of the MEC/USAID agreements, mentioned before, two educational reforms were made in Brazil after the 1964 coup: that of higher education in 1968, through Law no. 5,540 and, later, in 1971, with Law no. 5,692, which reformulated primary and secondary education. Thus, according to Germano (2000),

The educational policy of the Brazilian military regime was an attempt to link education with economy, developing the 'human capital theory', which subordinated education to the demands of the production line or industry. The military wanted improvements in human capital, which can lead to new levels of productivity. Its strategy was to continue to induce growth by investing in the working class, in order to stimulate the country's economy to further growth (Germano, 2000, p. 105).

It is worth mentioning an important aspect that influenced educational policies, especially in higher education: student movements with protests in opposition to the military government, as well as for the defense of greater investments in education (Bethel, 2005). For this reason, educational policies during this period had two main objectives: one, previously mentioned, was to form human capital; the other, to control student movements. The year of 1968, in which the reform of higher education took place, was a period of growing opposition to the regime, with protests coming from workers and students (Bethel, 2005).

Thus, in December of that year, Institutional Act No. 5 was enacted. With the institution of that Act, coercion was consolidated in the name of the state of national security, violating the individual rights and fundamental guarantees of citizens, ignoring the precepts and determinations of Brazilian constitution and even disregarding one of the fundamental principles of the Universal Declaration of human rights: the right and freedom, fundamentally, of expression (Paulino; Pereira, 2006).

A year later, in 1969, Decree-Law No. 477 changed the rules imposed on activities related to Brazilian universities. Together, they eliminated the possibility of student movements with legal bases and, from that moment on, students would be really subject to the dictatorial government's "iron fist" control. The dictatorial state was concerned with maintaining political and ideological control, especially in the university environment, which, despite the harsh repressions, were centers for the development of knowledge and critical rationality (GERMANO, 1993). That is,

[...] the military authorities used various ways to "decapitate" opposition movements within universities. They used ideological

demarcation, with so-called scouts or informants. Students complacent with the military were placed on courses, especially in the Humanities area, to report teachers who were considered subversive and dissatisfied student programs and opponents of the military regime (Germano, 1993, p. 105-106).

In this scenario, repression was strongly exercised, through the control of teachers and students and the expelling of those considered subversives, in addition to acts legitimized by the ideology of national security - which also functioned as an anti-intellectual movement in the name of anti-communism (Germano, 1993).

It follows that, at first, the Armed Forces used educational incentives for the development of the country. On the other hand, the contradiction became evident, since the state invested few resources for public education, and stimulated the private sectors, linked to the accumulation of capital, facilitating and directing towards the policy of privatization of education (Germano, 1993).

Shifting the focus to Nigeria, in the 1960s, period of independence, the educational policy aimed mainly at the use of schools to train labor for economic development and the Africanization of civil service (Woolman, 2001). The legacy of colonialism reinforced nation-building problems since independence. This led to a fragile democratic base that resulted in the first military coup in 1966 and three counter-coups during such period. In addition, the educational policy was of limited scope and did not meet the hopes and aspirations of Nigerians. Criticisms of the educational policy include irrelevant curricula, obsolete methods, high dropout and repetition rates, in addition to the fact that many graduates from the school system were poorly trained (Imam, 2012).

In 1969, the National Curriculum Conference was called, reviewing the educational system and its objectives, identifying new national goals for Nigeria, which would determine the future and direction of education in the country. The conference was the first national attempt to change the colonial orientation of the Nigerian educational system and to promote national awareness and self-confidence through the educational process. Education as a social service and investment in labor received priority from the government (Taiwo, 1980).

In order to consolidate the gains derived from the Curriculum Conference in 1973, the federal government, or the military government of Nigeria, instituted a seminar with different expectations to deliberate on a truly Nigerian national educational policy, involving Muslim and

Christian organizations in the country. The report of the results of the seminar indicated that, after due consideration by the states of the Federation and other groups of interest, the outline of the National Education Policy was presented. In addition, the period was marked by the military government assuming control of mission schools, since education was considered a huge public government enterprise and no longer a private matter (Fagbunmi, 2005; Imam, 2012).

In 1976, when the states of the Federation were increased to nineteen, each enacted a decree for the regulation of education and its provision and management. Each state also changed the federal education law when necessary, which resulted in all state decrees having common characteristics, such as state acquisition of schools from individuals and voluntary agencies, using a similar curriculum and the establishment of school management councils, as well as a unified teaching service (Fagbunmi, 2005).

That same year, due to the substantial improvement in income brought about by the boom in oil, the federal government of Nigeria developed an ambitious Universal Primary Education (UPE) program and expanded the access to higher education, increasing the number of unitary schools in the country. UPE sought to provide free primary education to all people between six and twenty-five years of age, aiming to narrow the educational gap and reduce the increasing levels of illiteracy in the country (Fafunwa, 2004).

Despite this, this program has failed to achieve its goals of eradicating illiteracy, largely due to inadequate planning. When schools were opened to register students, instead of the expected 2.3 million children, 3 million children were there to be registered (Fafunwa, 2004), that is, the classroom provision was underestimated. In addition, there was a lack of qualified teachers. For this reason, the majority of teachers recruited went through a one-year training program at the main colleges created by the government of the time (Imam, 2012).

The most significant change of the period was the government's acquisition of mission schools, resulting in the unified educational system 7-5-2-3: 7 years of primary education, 5 years of secondary school, 2 years of high school and 3 years of University education. In the final stages, students applied for external exams and were certified based on their performance. In addition, large-scale government funding for education included free university education and the context for a national education policy that is relevant and appropriate to people's needs (Fagbunmi, 2005; Imam, 2012).



In 1977, the National Education Policy, conceived during a period when Nigeria's national economy was at its Zenith, an educational system modeled after the American 6-3-3-4 system was introduced: 6 years of primary education, 3 years of junior secondary school, 3 years of senior secondary school and 4 years of university education (Nwagwu, 2007).

Having made this presentation, the following item presents the approximations and distances between the educational systems of the two countries in question.

### **Approximations and distances between the educational systems of Brazil and Nigeria (1964-1985)**

The purpose of this section is to bring approximations and distances between the educational systems of Brazil and Nigeria in the period highlighted in the present study.

During the period of Brazilian military government, education had an American influence. USAID agents, within the scope of MEC, guided proposals for the reorganization of primary and secondary education, in 1971, and higher education in 1968, aiming to adapt them to the demands of the labor market. In this sense, there is an approximation with the educational system of Nigeria, when the National Education Policy of 1977, conceived during a period when the national economy of Nigeria was at its Zenith, introduced the educational system 6-3-3-4, modeled after the American system: 6 years of primary education, 3 years of junior secondary school, 3 years of senior secondary school and 4 years of university education (Germano 2000; Nwagwu, 2007).

In Brazil, concurrently with public schools, private institutions were encouraged by military governments to offer primary and secondary education and higher education, thus distancing themselves from Nigeria, which in this period was marked by the taking of power - by the military government - of private or mission schools, since education was considered a governmental enterprise and no longer a matter of private initiative. Thus, the Nigerian government enacted the decree no. 14 of 1967, which was used in the creation of twelve states, of the four existing regions. Each state enacted a decree for the regulation of education. For example: Education Law of the State of Lagos decree n. 11 of 1970, educational decree no. 5 of the Central-Eastern state, educational decree no. 20 of 1971 of the Southeast state, and educational decree no. 5 of 1973 of the Midwest state. These had a common characteristic: the acquisition of private schools by the state. These decrees were enacted in each state of the federation for the regulation of education. In addition to them, the UPE program was designed to give children free primary

education in order to reduce illiteracy in the country (Fagbunmi, 2005; Amaewhule, 2018; Germano, 1993). This also denotes characteristics of democratic management of education, given the principle of decentralization of decisions about education.

In Brazil, law no. 5,692, of August 1971, provided in article 45, corroborating the provisions of §2 of the 1967 Constitution, states:

The educational institutions maintained by the private initiative will deserve technical and financial support from the Public Power, when their operating conditions are deemed satisfactory by the inspection bodies, and the supplementation of their resources is more economical to meet the objective (Brasil, 1971).

In addition, that same law in Article 1 states the following, in terms of the purpose of education:

Primary and secondary education have the general objective of providing the student with the necessary training to develop their potential as an element of self-realization, qualification for work and preparation for the conscious exercise of citizenship (Brasil, 1971).

This legislation, due to its characteristics focused on technical training, aimed at the insertion of young people in the universe of work.

It should be noted that it was not possible to access the contents of the specific Nigerian laws of each state mentioned above; however, we bring some constitutional principles that give us an idea about the educational intentions of the leaders of that country, during the period chosen for this study. In the Nigerian Constitution of 1979, in article 18, emphasis should be given to the following principles:

- (1) The government should direct its policy to ensure that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels.
- (2) The government will promote science and technology.

(3) The government will endeavor to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end, the government must, however and whenever possible, provide:

- a. Free, compulsory and universal basic education.
- b. Free high school.
- c. Free higher education.
- d. Free adult literacy program (Nigeria, 1979).

From the data above, emphasis should be given to the claim of equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels of schooling, that is, it is in conjunction with the desire to provide the population with free, mandatory and universal basic education. In this perspective, the eradication of illiteracy is aligned with free adult literacy programs and free higher education. In Brazil, similarly to Nigeria, the mandatory and free primary education that would be provided from 7 to 14 years of age (BRAZIL, 1971), here it can be understood in that basic education orientation, as a right to every citizen and equality of opportunities (Brasil, 1967, art. 168).

There is a commitment, both in the Nigerian and Brazilian cases, to the promotion of science and technology. In Brazil, being a prerogative aimed at higher education.

Another issue concerns the scarcity of qualified teachers. In Brazil, the expansion of the primary and secondary education and the consequent democratization of access also brought the need for teacher training, resulting in the so-called precariousness of teaching work, since it resulted in an accelerated teacher training and wage loss. Similar to Brazil, universal access to basic education in Nigeria led to a decline in the quality of public schools in the 1980s. Mission schools were also taken over, with force. Due to excess of oil on the world market, Nigeria's ability to finance its education has been affected (Fagbunmi, 2005).

### III. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The curiosity that motivated this study was to know possible similarities and dissimilarities in the educational field between Brazil and Nigeria, considering that both countries experienced dictatorial regimes that, although they contain particularities, occurred in concomitant periods.

Brazil and Nigeria were governed by dictatorial regimes, characterized by the elimination of civil and

political rights. This is an important approximation between the two countries, since it is a characteristic of exception regimes. Military regimes in both countries were responsible for extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture, arbitrary detention and reduced freedom of expression (Fausto, 1999; Owo, 2000).

Constitutional approximations were noted in terms of universalization of primary or basic education, as well as being free of charge.

The military government in Brazil saw education as an important point for the country's development, since it wished to proceed with the industrialization and modernization project. To this end, the organization of the educational system took place based on human capital formation, and with the strengthening of private initiative in this regard. Thus, there is an important distance in terms of educational principles, since Nigeria understood education as a public, state issue, when it takes its responsibility, removing it from the hands of private initiative (Germano, 1993; Fagbunmi, 2005).

In addition, in Nigeria, the military government saw education as a social service, and considered it important to invest in work, in order to lead to the development of the country (Woolman, 2001).

Finally, there is a distancing from Brazil in relation to Nigeria when it constitutionally refers to the effort to eradicate illiteracy. Although in Brazil, during this period, this was an important topic, it goes beyond both the 1967 Constitution and Law no. 5,692/71.

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<sup>i</sup> For this study, we consider the period from 1966 to 1985, which coincides with the dictatorship in Brazil.