

The first Comparative Education manual in Brazil¹

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Abstract

This article analyzes the first manual of Comparative Education written in Brazil. Entitled *Comparative Education: Trends and School Organizations*, it was published in 1938 by Companhia Editora Nacional and written by Milton Camargo da Silva Rodrigues, a professor at the University of São Paulo. At the time, the manual established a way of thinking about teaching and learning in Comparative Education, integrating the discipline for the first time into the curricula of the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters. Incorporating elements of the discipline's "disciplinary code" (Cuesta Fernández), the manual focused on statistical data from specific national education systems and was grounded in international treaties. Since then, Comparative Education has been part of university curricula in efforts to train primary and secondary school teachers as well as educational administrators. The manual under discussion established a way of conceiving and organizing comparative studies in the country, and the present study seeks to contribute to debates on the place of Comparative Education in teacher education. The study contributes to the historiography of Comparative Education in Brazil by highlighting the role of early manuals in the institutionalization of the field and by problematizing its epistemological foundations.

Keywords: Comparative Education; teacher education; history of education; educational manuals; curriculum.

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O primeiro manual de Educação Comparada do Brasil

Resumo

Este artigo analisa o primeiro manual de Educação Comparada escrito no Brasil. Intitulado Educação Comparada: Tendências e Organizações Escolares, foi publicado em 1938 pela Companhia Editora Nacional e escrito por Milton Camargo da Silva Rodrigues, professor da Universidade de São Paulo. À época, o manual estabeleceu uma forma de pensar o ensino e a aprendizagem em Educação Comparada, integrando pela primeira vez a disciplina aos currículos da Faculdade de Filosofia, Ciências e Letras. Incorporando elementos do “código disciplinar” (Cuesta Fernández), a obra privilegiou dados estatísticos de sistemas educacionais nacionais específicos e fundamentou-se em tratados internacionais. Desde então, a Educação Comparada passou a integrar os currículos universitários, contribuindo para a formação de professores e administradores escolares. O manual analisado estabeleceu uma forma de conceber e organizar estudos comparativos no país, e o presente estudo busca contribuir para o debate sobre o lugar da Educação Comparada na formação docente. O estudo contribui para a historiografia da Educação Comparada no Brasil ao evidenciar o papel dos manuais na institucionalização do campo e ao problematizar seus fundamentos epistemológicos.

Palavras-chave: Educação Comparada; formação de professores; história da educação; manuais educacionais; currículo.



El primer manual de Educación Comparada en Brasil

Resumen

Este artículo analiza el primer manual de Educación Comparada escrito en Brasil. Titulado *Educación Comparada: Tendencias y Organizaciones Escolares*, fue publicado en 1938 por la Companhia Editora Nacional y escrito por Milton Camargo da Silva Rodrigues, profesor de la Universidad de São Paulo. En su momento, el manual estableció una forma de pensar la enseñanza y el aprendizaje en Educación Comparada, integrando por primera vez la disciplina en los planes de estudio de la Facultad de Filosofía, Ciencias y Letras. Incorporando elementos del “código disciplinar” (Cuesta Fernández), la obra privilegió datos estadísticos de sistemas educativos nacionales específicos y se basó en tratados internacionales. Desde entonces, la Educación Comparada pasó a formar parte de los currículos universitarios, contribuyendo a la formación de docentes y administradores escolares. El manual analizado estableció una forma de concebir y organizar estudios comparativos en el país, y el presente estudio busca contribuir al debate sobre el lugar de la Educación Comparada en la formación docente. El estudio contribuye a la historiografía de la Educación Comparada en Brasil al evidenciar el papel de los manuales en la institucionalización del campo y al problematizar sus fundamentos epistemológicos.

Palabras clave: Educación Comparada; formación de profesores; historia de la educación; manuales educativos; currículo.



Introduction

Comparative Education consolidated itself throughout the twentieth century as a relevant field for understanding educational systems and for teacher education, articulating analyses of different national contexts and contributing to the international circulation of pedagogical models. In Brazil, its insertion into teacher education curricula was associated with broader processes of institutionalization of the educational sciences, especially following the creation of the Faculties of Philosophy.

The present article presents an analysis of the first Comparative Education textbook published in Brazil, entitled *Educação Comparada: Tendências e Organizações Escolares* (Comparative Education: Trends and School Organizations), authored by Milton Camargo da Silva Rodrigues. The study aims to analyze how Comparative Education constituted itself as a space for teacher education since its first appearance in the curricula of the University of São Paulo, taking as its object and source the textbook prepared by the professor responsible for the discipline within the initial context of its institutionalization. The research is guided by questions that seek to understand the constitution of this field of study: What was taught in Comparative Education? What contents were mobilized? What were the production conditions of these materials? Who wrote them, what was written, and for what purposes?

The study is justified by the still limited attention dedicated to the analysis of textbooks in the historiography of Comparative Education in Brazil, especially regarding their role in the organization and systematization of the field. It is hypothesized that these materials play a central role in the constitution of school disciplines by organizing knowledge, methods, and purposes. The article is organized as follows: initially, the constitution of Comparative Education as a discipline and its relationship with teacher education are discussed; next, the methodological path is presented; subsequently, the analysis of the textbook is carried out; finally, the final considerations are presented.



Comparative Education as a Discipline: Foundations and Teacher Education

Schriewer (1992) points out that “to become truly comparative, the Science of Comparative Education cannot avoid being more theoretical, even more esoteric, and moving away from practical problem-solving.” In this sense, the author points out the need to emphasize research and scientific work over political initiatives in the educational field. Such a perspective allows for the rediscovery of the initial project of Comparative Education, as formulated by its founder Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Nóvoa, 2009, p. 25).

To discuss Comparative Education as a teaching subject, the first question we must ask is: What constitutes a school discipline? According to Chervel (1990), teaching contents, syllabi, and the characteristics given by laws and legislation are crucial points for the construction of school disciplines, since constructing the historical path of a school discipline can refer to other aspects beyond syllabi, given that the latter only prescribe what should be taught. Therefore, from textbooks, we can observe the teaching contents to be addressed in the classroom and, thus, trace the history and construction of the school discipline at a more complex level that goes beyond the analysis of official documents.

Determining how the structure of the history of contents is constructed is a challenge, since it is necessary to historically identify how changes, innovations, and permanences occurred within an education system. Through their contents, textbooks allow for an understanding of how the discipline was organized and how it was intended to be taught in the classroom. Disciplines recreated discourses based on a “theoretical freedom of disciplinary creation” (Chervel, 1990, p. 192), in line with the pedagogical freedom of their institutions and with their prescribed syllabi and contents.

The formation of the discourse of Comparative Education placed the discipline in an advantageous position and drew attention to the interaction between theories and methods, allowing for the exchange of experiences



and visions. This enables analyses not only of the theoretical changes that ground the area but also of their methodological consequences. According to Schriewer (1992), this position allows for analyses that confront theoretical and methodological issues developed throughout the history of Comparative Education, bringing results from social investigations that value alternative paradigms and highlight disputes within the field.

Fernández (1997, p. 8) presents the concept of the *disciplinary code*, which is central to the construction of a school discipline. This code is understood as “a historically configured social tradition composed of a set of ideas, values, assumptions, and routines that legitimize the educational function” attributed to a discipline. It guides teaching work and is constituted by the discourse on the educational value of the discipline, by the teaching contents, and by the references considered foundational to its pedagogical practices.

We may ask: Why teach Comparative Education, or how is Comparative Education taught? These are complex questions without univocal answers, since the disciplinary code of the area transforms over time. Cervi (1986), however, offers a relevant reflection by pointing out that the “formative substrate” of teachers must expand analytical capacity and foster both scientific rigor and critical intervention in educational practices—dimensions widely recognized in the literature of the area.

In this sense, the reflection proposed by José Querino Ribeiro (1955) concerning the “fundamental problem of comparative education” contributes to understanding the epistemological challenges of the field, especially regarding the definition of its object, method, and purposes. Such a debate reinforces the complexity of the area and helps to situate the different approaches that marked its consolidation.

Furthermore, Robinsohn (1971), in an article about the relevance of Comparative Education in teacher education, presents five central principles: the possibility of achieving general explanations through comparison; the appreciation of national or regional experiences; the understanding of political



changes and alternatives; the practical value of the discipline when used critically; and its heuristic function in identifying new educational possibilities.

In this context, the influence of Isaac Kandel's work *Comparative Education* (1933) stands out, which established a fundamental theoretical-methodological milestone for the field. By privileging a historical-social and interpretive approach to educational systems, Kandel contributed to the consolidation of an analytical model that goes beyond merely statistical descriptions—a perspective that can be observed, albeit in a particular way, in the work of Milton Camargo da Silva Rodrigues.

The Institutionalization of Comparative Education at the University of São Paulo

The inclusion of a discipline in legislation (Fernández, 1997) constitutes a fundamental point for the recognition of a school discipline. In the case of Comparative Education, its presence is recorded for the first time in 1932, through the intervention of Anísio Teixeira, and was subsequently “ratified as a curricular requirement in the Pedagogy Section of the National Faculty of Philosophy in 1939” (Cervi, 1986, p. 35).

It is important to consider the historical process through which Comparative Education consolidated itself at the University of São Paulo. According to Bontempi Junior (2001), the institution was a pioneer in higher education for teacher and educational leader education in Brazil, while also serving as the space where the first systematic teaching experience of the discipline was organized, under the responsibility of Milton Camargo da Silva Rodrigues, in 1938.

In 1938, the Institute of Education was incorporated into the then Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters of the University of São Paulo, becoming part of the Pedagogy Section. Santos (2015) describes the process of establishing the Chair of School Administration and Comparative Education, indicating that Milton Rodrigues was responsible for the chairs of Educational Statistics



and Comparative Education, as well as School Administration and Education Legislation. With the institutional reorganization of 1940, he chose to remain in the chair of Educational Statistics, continuing, however, as an interim professor in the chair of School Administration and Comparative Education until 1944.

Research Production Method

This study is characterized as a documentary research of a historiographical nature, centered on primary source analysis. The corpus of the investigation is constituted by the textbook *Educação Comparada: Tendências e Organizações Escolares*, published in 1938 by Milton Camargo da Silva Rodrigues.

The analysis is grounded in the perspective of the History of School Disciplines, based on the concept of the disciplinary code (Fernández, 1997), seeking to understand the modes of organization, selection, and systematization of knowledge present in the work.

The methodological procedures involved the analytical reading of the textbook, the identification of analysis categories—such as the organization of educational systems, the use of statistical data, international references, and the structuring of pedagogical discourse—and the interpretation of data in light of the literature in the field.

Therefore, this is a qualitative investigation that seeks to understand the historical constitution of Comparative Education in Brazil based on one of its earliest systematizations.

Milton Camargo da Silva Rodrigues: A Pioneer

Highlighting the main challenges of the 1930s means contextualizing the historical moment in which Professor Milton Rodrigues began his career at the then Escola Normal Caetano de Campos. After the integration of the Institute into the University of São Paulo in 1935, Milton Rodrigues was appointed as the representative of the 5th chair of Comparative Education combined with Statistics (Cervi, 1986).

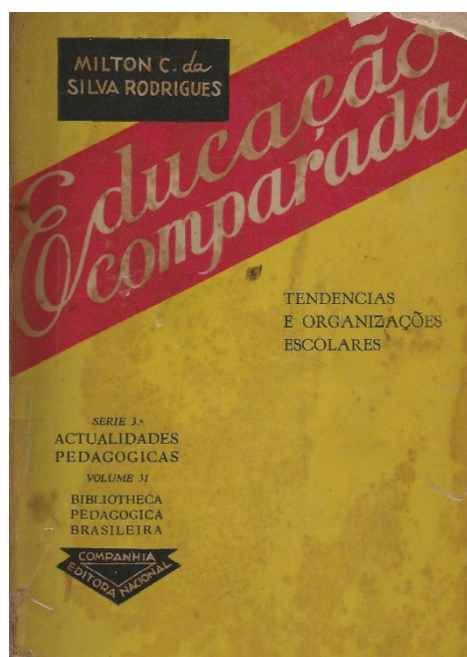


A native of São Paulo, he was born on November 20, 1904. A Civil Engineer graduated from the National School of Engineering of Rio de Janeiro, he also studied abroad: “Statistical Inference” and “Analysis of Variance” at the Department of Statistics and Mathematics of Columbia University, New York, in 1944; “Sampling Theory” and “Theory and Practice of Sampling” as a fellow in the advanced statistics courses at the United States Department of Agriculture Graduate School in Washington D.C., in 1945 (Costa, 2011, p. 9, translation made with the help of Gemini-AI).

We perceive that the initial education of the individual considered one of those responsible for the institutionalization of Comparative Education at the University of São Paulo did not pass directly through the field of Education, but rather through Engineering and Statistics.

Although Milton Camargo da Silva Rodrigues played a central role in the institutionalization of Comparative Education at the University of São Paulo, especially with the introduction of the discipline and the publication of the first textbook in the area within the country, specialized literature recognizes Manoel Bergström Lourenço Filho as one of the main pioneers of Comparative Education in Brazil, above all for his work in the systematization and dissemination of the field at a national level.

Figure 1 - Cover of the textbook “Educação Comparada: Tendências e Organizações Escolares”.



Source: Rodrigues (1938).



The textbook is organized into three parts, preceded by an Introduction in which the author clarifies the bases of comparative studies in education and how Comparative Education is organized in Brazil and worldwide. Among other information, the author treats the discipline as dependent on four factors: i) mesological factors (geographical environment, contemporary social environment, and social environment in historical evolution); ii) philosophical-educational doctrines; iii) national temperament; and iv) scientific progress. Not only through the title but also through the text, it is possible to perceive a recognition of Comparative Education as a science and as a discipline, as stated by the author regarding its “lack of a precise definition” (Rodrigues, 1938, p. ix), since it was at the beginning of its studies in Brazil.

The first part of the textbook, which comprises five chapters, presents the foundations and purposes of education in five countries: England, France, Germany, Italy, and the United States. In this part of the textbook, the author sought to provide a sort of descriptive-introductory text regarding these five educational systems so that the reader would have, at the very least, the conditions to follow the analyses and statistical data presented in the second part of the text. In this second part of the text, we perceive a great concern with presenting data so that the reader could know them, even if superficially, to understand them further ahead in the text and, at the end of the textbook, be able to compare them with Brazil.

The second part, with six chapters, brings data and analyses regarding these five countries and their systems, with each chapter dedicated to one country and divided into three themes: i) history; ii) organization; and iii) administration of the educational systems of each of the countries presented. The first chapter of this part is entitled “Introduction” and provides brief clarifications regarding some concepts on school organizations, such as: systematization, nationalization, structure, trends, problems, and school administration, so that the reader can follow the analyses with greater precision.



Finally, the third part of the text, which comprises four chapters, is dedicated to Brazil, bringing basically the same structure as the previous chapters dedicated to the other countries; a small difference lies in a short introduction presented, called: “The people and their character” (*O povo e sua índole*), which seeks to present cultural and social aspects of Brazilian society and, principally, to differentiate it from the other analyzed nations. Another particularity of this part is that, when the author analyzes the administration of the Brazilian school system, he notes that he will examine, in addition to the federal scope, data relating to the system of the state of São Paulo as well.

The preface of this textbook reveals interesting characteristics about the status of Comparative Education in Brazil during the 1930s and 1940s, such as those listed below. The author terms the textbook a “compendium of Comparative Education” (Rodrigues, 1938, p. xi), highlighting that its function would be to introduce a subject that everyone could later deepen, since he himself states that there are very few textbooks on Comparative Education published in Brazil and worldwide, citing some English and German examples that he considers fundamental to comparative studies in Education. The author also states that, even though he is a professor of the Comparative Education course at the University of São Paulo, his textbook is not a replacement for his course, as it presents important analyses and data for more complex analyses.

Furthermore, in his preface, Rodrigues presents slightly more on the status of Comparative Education at the time he writes his textbook: there are no Brazilian textbooks on the theme; there is no precise definition of what Comparative Education is or how it is done; there are many monographs that use comparative studies as a base, but, according to the author, they merely make indifferent descriptions of the systems, criticizing them and seeking only improvements for the Brazilian system; and finally, the statement that Comparative Education is organic and systematic.

Through the analysis of the data presented above, it is perceived that the author is concerned with making Comparative Education strengthen its



disciplinary status; that is, there is an effort to reform concepts and relationships of the discipline with education, not limiting itself solely to the interpretation of data for the transposition of concepts to distinct realities, but understanding social, geographical, and cultural issues so that Comparative Education can be a science that seeks to reform education through systematic proposals and relationships between different nations.

Statistics versus Meliorism

In the introduction of the textbook under study, Milton Rodrigues provided a definition of Comparative Education as “the contemporary history of education” (Rodrigues, 1938, p. 1), recognizing that it is a simple and broad definition, yet intentional since the author already introduces, in the preface, the idea that Comparative Education is a field and a discipline that is difficult to define, from its object to its method.

Although simple, this definition has the gift of immediately raising a number of doubts. Doubts of method and doubts of object. We all know that within general history itself, two methods have long confronted and combated each other. [...] The same duplicity of methods can exist in comparative education (Rodrigues, 1938, p. 1, translation made with the help of Gemini-AI).

These two methods of Comparative Education proposed by Rodrigues (1938) refer to: i) telling history as a “faithful and dry” account, based on the confrontation between historical facts and geographical conditions; and ii) relating, describing, and systematizing data, as well as criticizing facts. The author points out that he will occupy himself with the second method, though with a restriction: he argues that he will not engage in the criticism of facts, given that the area that should occupy itself with this is the philosophy of education when discussing ideas and ideologies.

Milton Rodrigues also discusses the objectives of Comparative Education as the study of contemporary educational institutions and not their doctrines or ideologies; that is, we perceive that, during the analysis of the educational



systems that follows in the subsequent chapters, the author works essentially with statistical data and descriptions of educational systems without questioning what the philosophical, pedagogical, or theoretical principles are that ground the decisions, legislations, and imperatives of each country. When highlighting the purposes of Comparative Education, we find the following statement: “To questions such as those we have enunciated above, Comparative Education does not answer with an imperative; it does not say whether the solution should be this one or that one; it merely says: in such a country the solution is this” (Rodrigues, 1938, p. 4).

These statements confront a tendency in Comparative Education that was one of the most recognized worldwide at the time: the Meliorist perspective, which, since Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris (1817), has been one of the guiding points for the conception of Comparative Education. The analysis of Milton Rodrigues’s textbook allows us to observe a departure from this trend, since he does not cite, at any moment, a search within international systems for better models or results for the Brazilian school system. Milton Rodrigues cites differences, similarities, and approximations, but not as references; he even presented the idea of an isolated analysis of systems so that they could be understood in their entirety and complexity.

We note, then, a negation by Rodrigues (1938) of the imperatives of change sought abroad; that is, in the textbook analyzed here, data are not presented for a search to improve educational systems and organizations in Brazil, but rather so that, based on the analysis of different systems, the reader can understand what is appropriate for each country from its internal structure across various aspects, such as: i) mesological factors, such as the contemporary geographical and social environment and the historical social environment; ii) philosophical doctrines; iii) national temperament, based on national and cultural issues of each country; and iv) scientific progress.

Therefore, a concern with analyzing data without a meliorist perspective is observed, privileging statistical analysis to understand how these systems



and organizations function, without having a vision of relocating these models to other countries, principally to Brazil.

According to Faria Filho, Neves, and Caldeira (2005), statistics, when allied with education, allows for the analysis of four processes: i) knowing social relations through the mathematization of data; ii) representing reality through tools of control over the course of history; iii) classifying and categorizing results; and iv) reading society and its worldview. Milton Rodrigues succeeded in analyzing his data through the reading path proposed in his textbook, since, by presenting data on the systems and school administration of various countries, allied with their general and school history, he categorized results through tables that allowed him to classify the levels and pedagogical relationships present in each country, ultimately presenting what the worldview is, through the constitution of the peoples of each country, for education in each nation-state presented.

Next, we will see how what was mentioned above manifests in Milton Rodrigues's (1938) writing during the analysis of the educational organizations of the selected countries. In the second part of the textbook, three aspects of each organization are presented: history, organization, and administration, revealing data and facts about each. This is one of the rare moments in the textbook in which Milton Rodrigues (1938) confronts data between different national school organizations, but still without presenting the whys of the differences or changes, only a presentation of the data, concluding merely that "it is almost unnecessary to say that in all countries where this division of the elementary course exists, it articulates with the secondary, independently of the complementary course that remains parallel to it" (Rodrigues, 1938, p. 118).

We have, then, the nod that in each subsequent chapter, we will have access to the information that justifies how each country reached its current educational structure. We begin with England, with a history presented since the eleventh century, passing through different census data on the general population, the school-age population, the founding of the main universities,



the creation of the Ministry of Education in 1899, and various laws of utmost importance for the configuration of the organization of English school teaching at that time. After the historical retrospect, we finally arrive at the data that will serve as the basis for the analysis proposed by the author: how the organization and administration of the English system take place.

Figure 2 - School System of England.

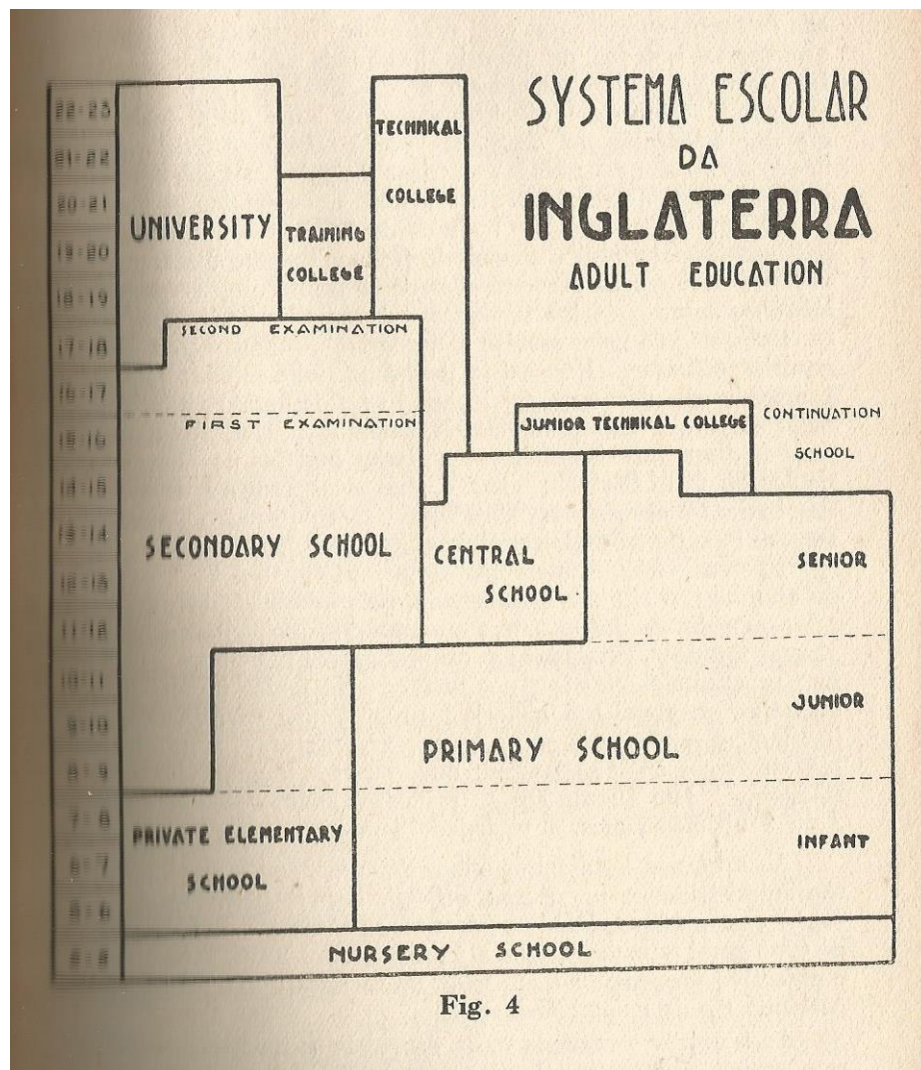


Fig. 4

Source: Rodrigues (1938, p. 141).

This figure synthesizes what is presented by Rodrigues (1938) in the two pages of description regarding the English school organization, merely through an explanation of data related to the age of the students, how the transition from one level to another works, how admission exams are conducted, and

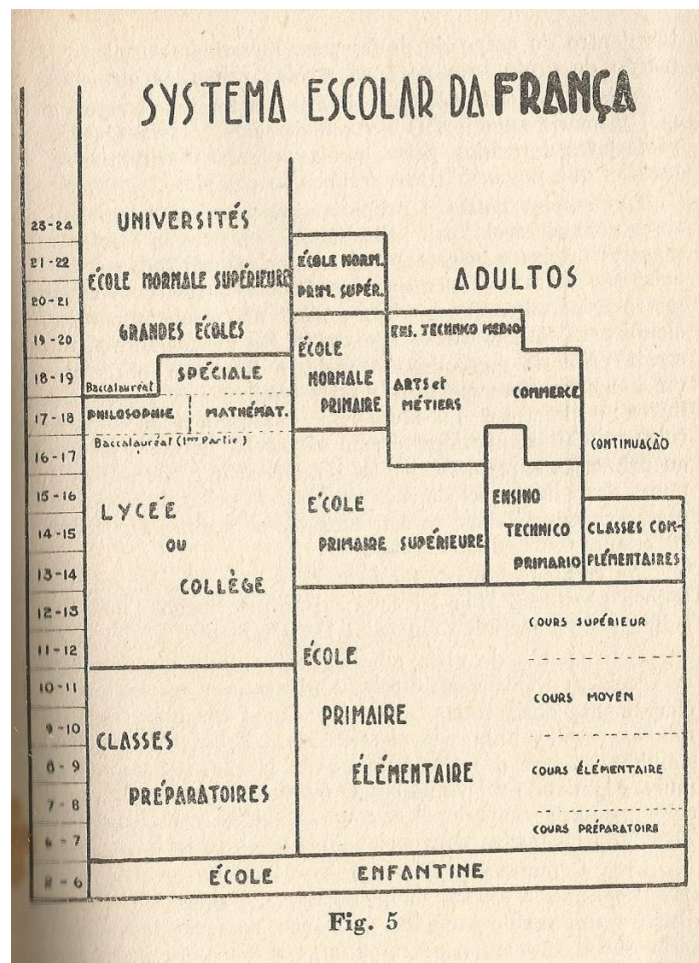


how entry into university occurs; as stated by the author in the introduction, he does not propose to discuss upon which pillars this structure is founded, presenting and justifying it based on national history and the data collected from a bibliography on the system in question. Finally, we have the section that deals with the English educational administrative structure, bringing a compilation of laws and a summary of how the functioning of the Ministry of Education and its councils and deliberations takes place.

Regarding France, the author follows the same proposed path, beginning his historical gaze in the sixteenth century, affirming that Louis XIV was one of the first French monarchs to concern himself with French education, and dedicating a significant number of pages to the French Revolution and its impact on the formation of a republican national identity.

French pioneering is of utmost importance for European educational systems and for all countries to follow this premise brought by Enlightenment ideals, whereby compulsory and free education became increasingly common throughout Europe. The author further passes through the Napoleonic period until reaching the nineteenth century, which the author justifies as the period in which French education reached its current configuration. In the part where he systematizes the organization of French education, the author makes a brief allusion to England, placing, for the first time, two systems face to face: “[...] Its organization [the elementary primary school] corresponds to that of higher primary education in all countries, and in particular to what we have already seen regarding the Central School of England” (Rodrigues, 1938, p. 152).



Figure 3 - School System of France.**Fig. 5**

Source: Rodrigues (1938, p. 163).

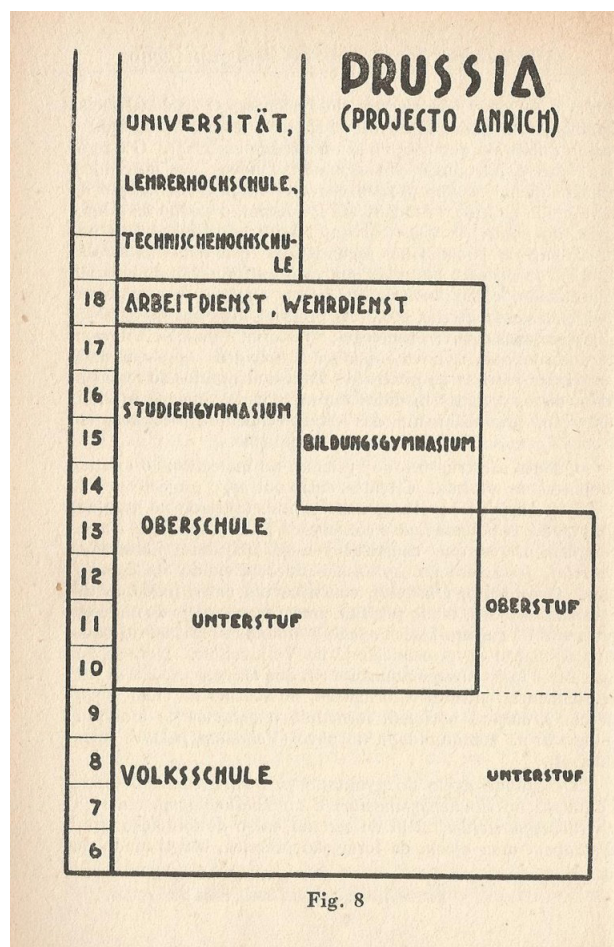
After the presentation of the system above, the author dedicated the subsequent pages to the description of each point, in the same manner as the English system. Regarding administration, there is, in the first paragraph, once again, a citation of England. The historical rivalry between France and England may explain the reasons why the data and systems of the two countries appear in opposition and not the others analyzed in the textbook. Following the analysis, Rodrigues (1938) presents the data, number of politicians, and positions related to the administration of French education.



The next nation to be analyzed is Germany, and the historical path begins even before the German Unification in the nineteenth century (1871); during the Middle Ages, still as Prussia, the founding of the first German universities is marked, which, as in other European nations, passes through unification and reaches the twentieth century with a significant focus on socialist parties—which is curious given the moment Germany was going through in the 1930s, with the rise of the Nazi system to power under Adolf Hitler.

In the section on the organization of education, the author presents, differently from the other two previously analyzed countries, three charts that only present the organization of education before German unification, still as Prussia, as we can see below:

Figure 4 - School System of Prussia (Anrich Project).



Source: Rodrigues (1938, p. 192).



Germany is, so far, the only country to which the author gives a subtitle in the organization section: “Reorganization proposals.” He argues that governmental changes in the Kingdom of Prussia until German unification and the arrival of socialists to power greatly transformed the German educational structure, since it began to meet different political and national interests.

We see here the gaze that Rodrigues casts upon Germany regarding issues related to State control, not only of school organizations but also of all levels present in the system, such as students, teachers, and associations within schools, reflecting that at that moment, only one objective could exist for German education: “it is the political objective of building nationhood” (Rodrigues, 1938, p. 195), seeking a purely professional orientation for not only basic education but also higher education. The administration section, like the other countries, follows a descriptive line with numbers and data on the authorities of German educational policy.

Italy, the next country to be described, presents a different—and smaller—configuration than all the others. There is no presentation of its history as in the previous ones, according to Rodrigues (1938, p. 201):

The study of the school organization in force in modern Italy dispenses with prior consideration of the historical evolution of its school institutions, for it has already been seen to be in exclusive and direct dependence on a doctrine. [...] In Italy, the current school organization is an exclusive product of a doctrine, having originated in a radical reform that preserved nothing of the previous regime.

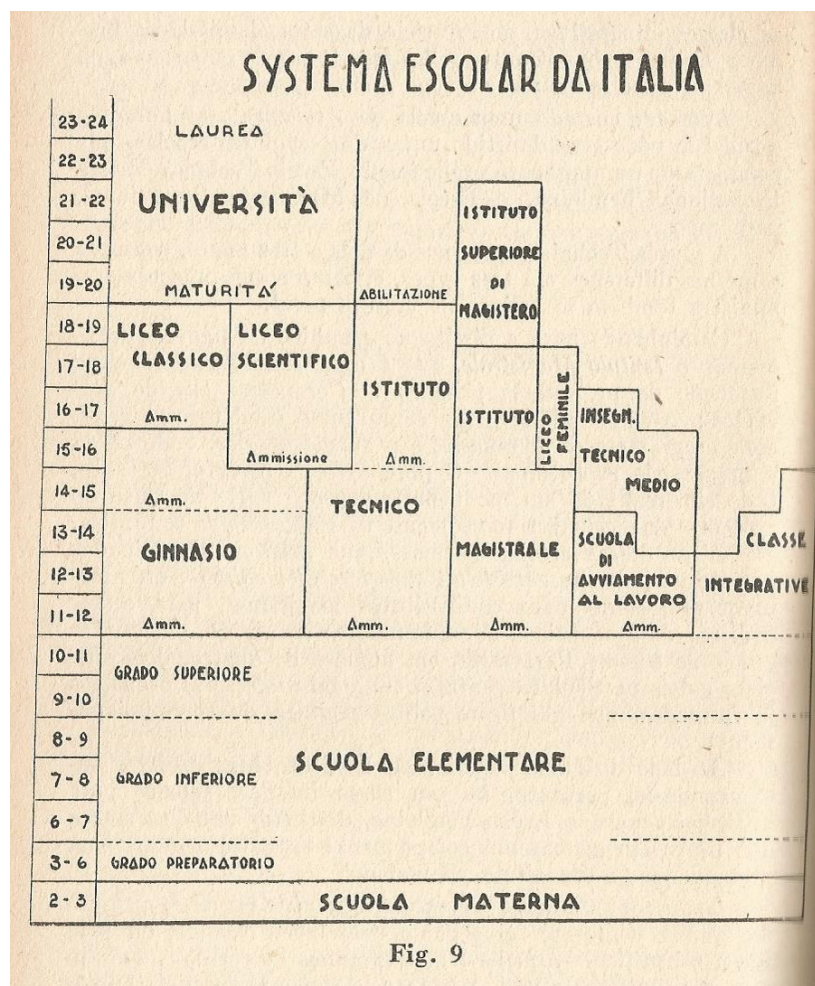
According to the author, this occurs for two main reasons: Italian unification (1815-1871) and the rise of the fascist regime, which, according to Rodrigues (1938, p. 202), is: “precisely the common objective [of fascism], with its expansionist and dominating ideals. This, also, is the objective of Education.” He makes references to Germany in the chapter dedicated to Italy, justifying this approximation by the Nazi-Fascist governmental ideas that dominated both countries during the 1930s, but with less flexibility and control than Germany,



eliminating admission exams and offering broader access to education for all Italians.

The school organization part returns to the models adopted for the previous countries, with a description of each educational level, with a particularity of the Italian system which, according to the author, seeks a general principle of establishing smaller and independent units so that dropout percentages decrease and education thus has a more accessible aspect for Italians, as we can see in the following graph:

Figure 5 - School System of Italy.



Source: Rodrigues (1938, p. 204).



Regarding Italian school administration, Rodrigues (1938) divides it into two moments: the central administration, with functions concentrated in the Ministry of National Education, founded in 1929; and the regional administration, as deliberative bodies responsible for school inspection.

We arrive at the last country to be presented in this part of the textbook: the United States. The path followed by Rodrigues (1938) is the same: history, school organization, and administration. The author begins the history by dating the first laws relating to Education in the country back to the period of English colonization, highlighting a 1624 law in the State of Virginia, passing through the independence process and important moments such as the first compulsory education law of 1852 in the state of Massachusetts and the creation of the Department of Education in 1867, reaching the end of the nineteenth century with no mention, up to this point, of the twentieth century.

The graph that systematizes the North American system presents three variations put into practice throughout the country's history:

Figure 6 - School System in the United States.

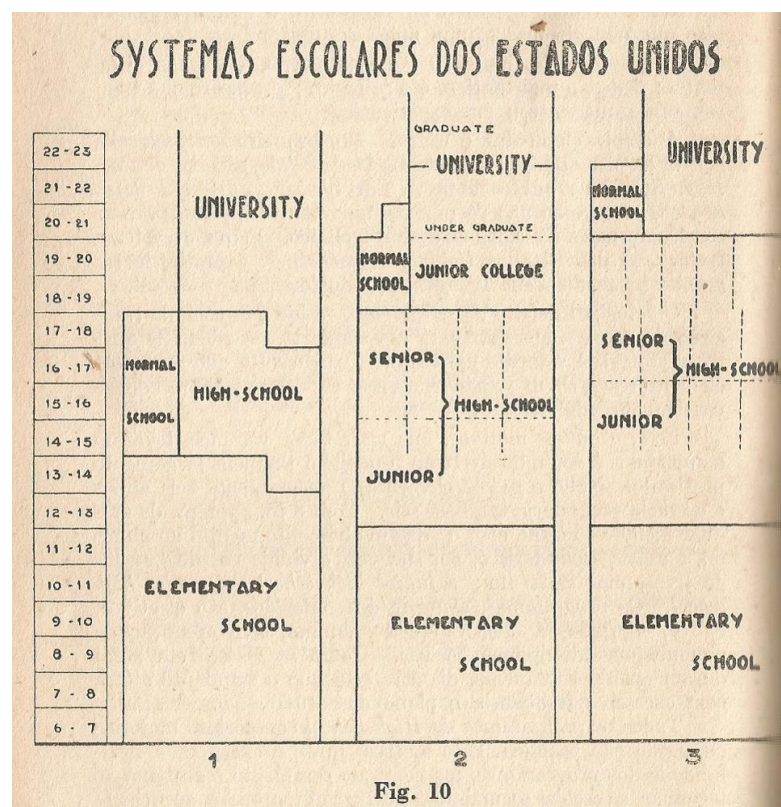


Fig. 10

Source: Rodrigues (1938, p. 222).



Precisely because of the non-existence of a unified national system, Rodrigues (1938, p. 220) draws attention to the fact that the schema presented above should be taken solely as “the expression of a trend,” since even the requirements and recommendations for compulsory education vary, not only between states but even between municipalities. Regarding administration, the author concentrates his writings on demonstrating and explaining how the issue of decentralization works, beginning as follows:

As has already been stated, the North American Federal Constitution abandoned educational matters to the power of the states. These constitute, therefore, the first and largest of the administrative units. However, to this day, their jurisdiction does not always correspond to their position, owing to the habit that tradition had established of giving the people a large amount of direct interference in teaching matters, which resulted in the smaller systems that we will see below and which, historically, were the first (Rodrigues, 1938, p. 225).

Next, the author describes the laws and leveling units that are responsible for each step of North American education, and one of Milton Rodrigues’s main theoretical references appears here to justify the question of teachers’ power in the political sphere of Education. This reference is Isaac Kandel (1933), a theorist who, according to Goergen (1991), sought in his studies to unite an analysis of the educational problems of each national system and the study of the explanatory principles of local society.

At a time that Milton Rodrigues himself states is scarce in research regarding the definition and methodology of Comparative Education in Brazil and worldwide, we see Rodrigues’s pioneering spirit in conducting a work that closely approaches the main reference methodologies idealized nearly thirty years after the publication of his textbook. Milton Rodrigues’s pioneering spirit approaches what Nóvoa (2009, p. 39) categorizes as a “historicist perspective,” in the same manner that he categorizes Kandel’s (1933) work, since it is a category of analysis that seeks to “gather information on teaching in different



countries; explain the causes of educational phenomena and their evolution” (Nóvoa, 2009, p. 39), with the objective of identifying what the main social, economic, and cultural reasons are that explain how the school organization of each country takes place.

Within this perspective of descriptive approaches, statistics presents itself as nuclear, given that “one of the first objectives is the constitution of an encyclopedic knowledge about education systems, which will find in statistical data the easiest element to compare” (Nóvoa, 2009, p. 41). Faria Filho, Neves, and Caldeira (2005, p. 221) emphasize that such work with statistical data in Education does not reveal a neutrality of analyses, but rather a richness showing that statistical data reflect the “gaze of reality upon itself.”

Comparative Education: Organic and Systematic

In his Preface, Milton Rodrigues (1938, p. xii) states that it is necessary to detach oneself from the idea that Comparative Education is an accumulation of reports of educational facts, and that it is necessary to give it a more substantial and continuous character that confers upon it an “organic and systematic contexture.” What would this organicity and systematization be? The author does not provide an exact definition, but he creates paths to understand this discourse.

The idea of systematization is worked through in a more direct and organized manner, with the introduction to the second part bringing as its first subtitle: “Trends toward systematization and nationalization” (*Tendências à sistematização e nacionalização*) (Rodrigues, 1938, p. 95), in which, based on the writings of Kandel (1933), he questions educational systems and their origins, opposing ideas and facts and placing data from different national systems in confrontation. He classifies the systems of Germany, Italy, and England as systems fully defined within the idea of nation-building given by the local political context at that moment (post-World War I, rise of totalitarian regimes, and conflicts) and others, such as the United States, as open to an idea



superior to that of nationhood, involving concepts such as internationalism and democracy.

To conduct the analysis, in addition to defining these criteria so that there is a systematization of countries according to the educational objectives of each, the author further differentiates between the terms *school organizations* (*organizações de ensino*) and *education systems* (*sistemas de ensino*), stating that the former is the most appropriate for analysis because it is a vaguer notion and allows for different approximations of what is placed within a country, with this term being more open to new trends in education, such as systematization, nationalization, and franchise. He justifies that these trends are convergent rather than mutually exclusive, such that nationalization is a basic condition for the systematization of Comparative Education and the trend toward becoming a public and generally accessible discipline so that everyone can understand and study educational systems in order to problematize the reasons why each nation faces and seeks to reflect upon its difficulties.

The author stated that, in an analysis of school organizations, we would deal with two basic structures of systems: the vertical and the horizontal. The vertical structure presents a chronology of courses based on the intelligence and mentality of the students, meeting educational psychology criteria in a gradual manner and designed in isolation.

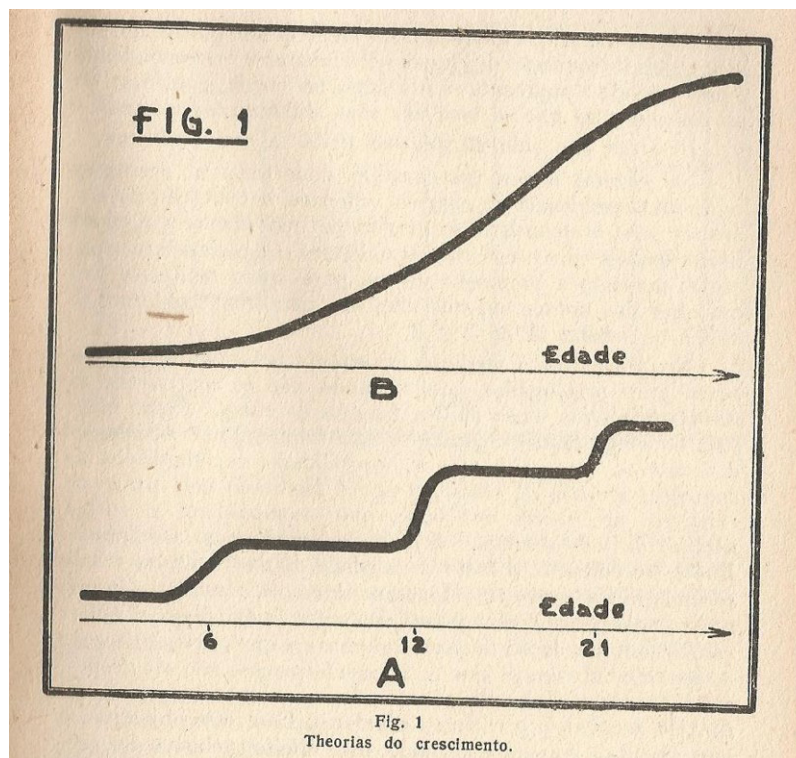
Countries like England organize their school structure through exams; Germany and the United States seek a continuity of levels with moments of deepening content and reading; Italy seeks a division of secondary education; and social welfare countries, such as Switzerland, Sweden, and Norway, seek to guarantee different moments of adaptation for students, regardless of the schooling stage in which they find themselves. Furthermore, the author reflects on the real objectives of education within different countries, proposing a reflection on the difference between theory and practice: the former would set as its objective the formation of a social character in education and life in



society, while the latter would have a highly propedeutic character, preparatory for higher education and the professional market.

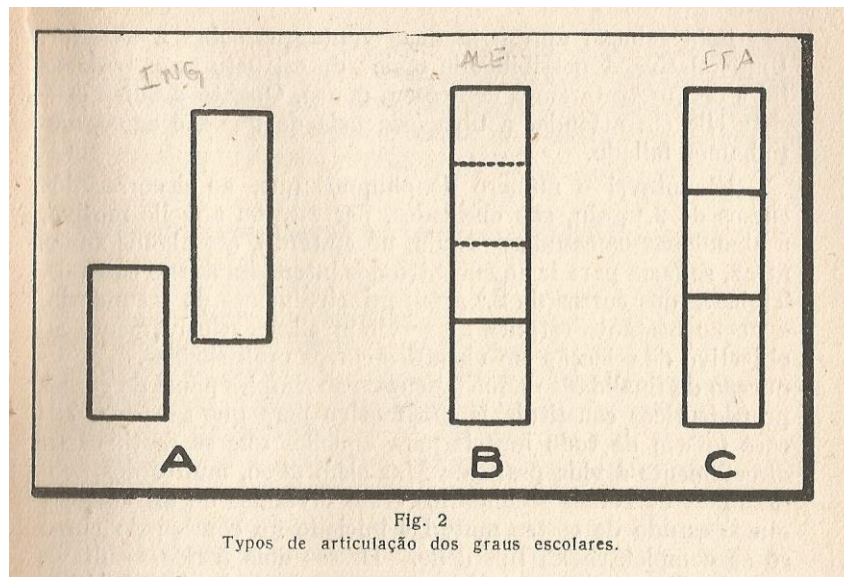
Below are presented two schemas in which Rodrigues (1938) seeks to explain how the vertical and horizontal structure of education organization occurs in the different countries he analyzes.

Figure 7 - Horizontal School System (Growth Theories).



Source: Rodrigues, (1938, p. 103).



Figure 8 - Vertical School System (Types of articulation of school grades).

Source: Rodrigues, (1938, p. 105).

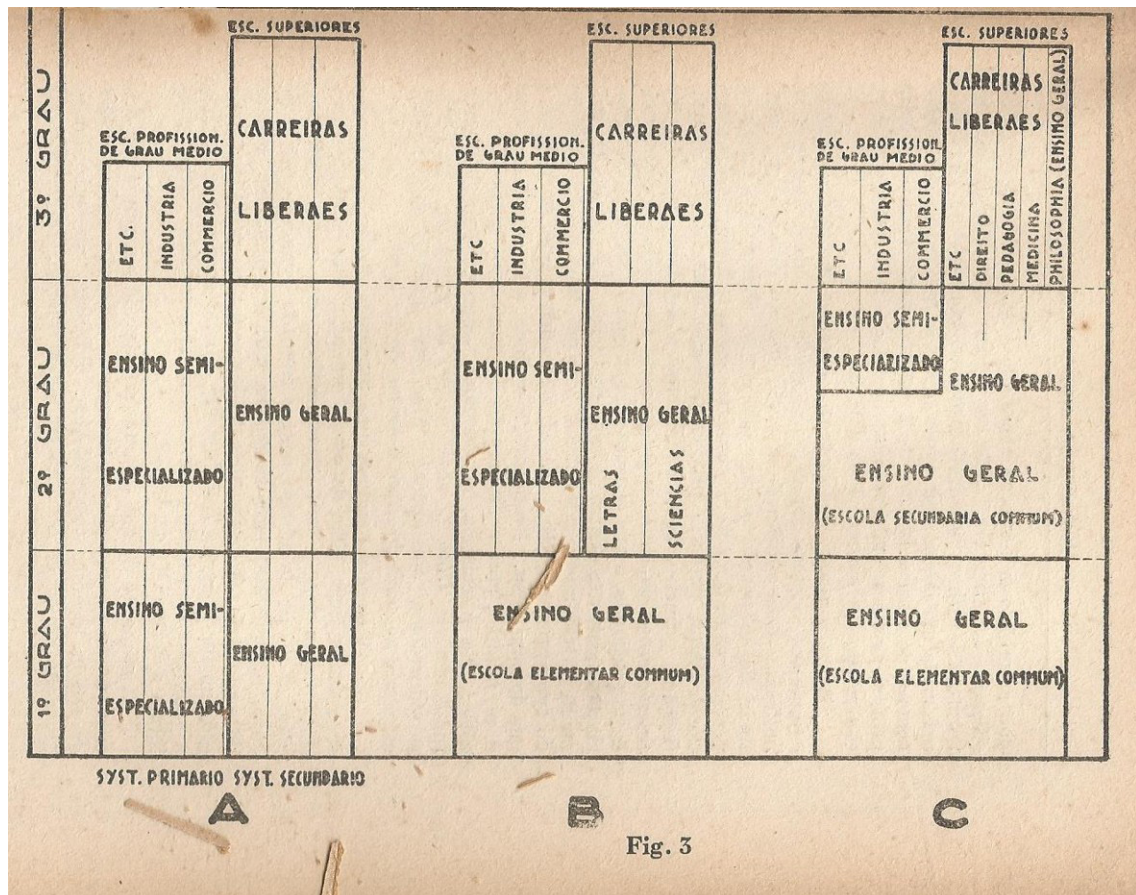
The horizontal system would be based on the idea that the genera and species of the same course would be concomitant and not divided by psychological criteria, but rather based on the search to adapt courses to the different individualities of the learners, or even different course options, as the author exemplifies in the case of Brazil in 1931, based on the document: *Convênio celebrado em 1931 pela União com os diversos estados, Distrito Federal e Território do Acre para aperfeiçoamento e uniformização das estatísticas educacionais e conexas* (Agreement celebrated in 1931 by the Union with the several states, Federal District, and Acre Territory for the improvement and uniformization of educational and related statistics). The document presents a series of different possible pathways for the Brazilian student during that period.

The extension and blending of these two types of systems took place throughout the history of the analyzed nations and showed different conceptions of education, sometimes aiming at the theoretical trend of critical citizenship formation, and at other times at the practical, propedeutic vision, which resulted



in the following chart, in which Rodrigues (1938) schemas his entire theory within a historical comparative idea of school organizations.

Figure 9 - Compared Educational Systems.



Source: Rodrigues (1938, p. 115).

The chart gathers a schema that allows us to visualize the different teaching models that the author has described so far in his textbook; the discussion of vertical and horizontal teaching systems places itself more in relation to the second grade (secondary education), where the discussion is guided by general education, of a reflective and civic character, and semi-specialized education, with a more propedeutic character aimed at preparation for the third grade, higher education. This conclusive chart, which gathers a synthesis of the systems of school organizations around the world throughout history, confirms the idea that Comparative Education, according to Rodrigues (1938), needs



to be systematized, needs an organization of data and information so that a detailed analysis of everything raised by the author can be performed.

With this, he proposed a division of nations into two groups: those governed by norms, which make all their decisions within the political sphere and do not take local experiences into account (France and South America); and those that construct guidelines and suggestions, giving more responsibility to the school and, thus, reinforcing the oversight of schools' autonomy (England, Italy, Russia, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, and the Netherlands). However, he highlights that this second model does not demand a more democratic management, as there is heavy surveillance to know how these guidelines actually reach the school.

The Search for Meanings

We finally arrive at the comparison proposed by Rodrigues (1938) between the analyzed systems and the Brazilian system. The entire third part of the textbook is dedicated to Brazil, divided into four chapters: "Introduction - the people and their character" (*Introdução - o povo e sua índole*), "History and doctrines," "Current organization," and "Federal and State of São Paulo administration." Basically, he follows the same organization as the chapters dedicated to other countries, but carries out a more detailed and specific work regarding his own country.

The Introduction draws attention for dealing with the Brazilian people and their character, a point that the author has already shown to be important when defining Comparative Education as organic, citing countries that are more inclined toward authoritarian models and those that are more prone to a notion of self-autonomy and responsibility. Regarding Brazil, he begins by telling us that it is a people of difficult perception:

A double difficulty belongs to one who, like us, undertakes a study of the Brazilian mentality, its latent or confessed ideals, and what all this implies for the form and essence of the education practiced here. No study on the character of a people dispenses with a concrete basis,



constituted by sociological studies on the environment, and these, still scarce, began to emerge so short a time ago that any attempt at a synthesis, such as this one, is perhaps still premature; for this first reason alone, it cannot fail to be quite subjective and vague (Rodrigues, 1938, p. 233, translation made with the help of Gemini-AI).

Another difficulty pointed out by the author is the fact of being part of this people, which does not allow him a total detachment from everything that happens here. Furthermore, he recognizes the difficulty of unifying the term *Brazilian people* (*povo brasileiro*) due to various factors, such as: regional varieties of Brazil due to its territorial extension, differences between social classes, the ethnic composition of the Brazilian people, and European influences. Nevertheless, he argues that even though it is a people of difficult comprehension, this does not make them less interesting or complex and, from this point, begins to work through historical and, principally, social characteristics of Brazil since its colonization, passing through the imperial period (1822–1889), the first years of the Republic, and reaching the 1930s.

But if Brazil is a child, it is a precocious and robust child; it is not afraid of the bogeyman, nor does it believe in promises of sweets—that is, it is positive and possesses an innate common sense that more intelligent and cultured peoples do not share. For this reason, even if its ideas are sometimes of a shocking, almost aggressive radicalism, in practice, in action, it observes a very Latin measure, which tropical bohemianism sustains (Rodrigues, 1938, p. 244, translation made with the help of Gemini-AI).

For Rodrigues (1938), these metaphors translate the idea of the main defect of the Brazilian school system at the time: the idea of schooling as a means of instruction, whereas for Europeans and North Americans, the school was seen as a place of coexistence—that is, the place where one educates, while for Brazil, it is the place where one learns. This opposition to Europeans and North Americans is recurrent and justified by the author by the fact that Brazil has always been closer to Europeans due to its history than to the nations of Latin America.



Rodrigues presented further indications as to why his textbook is structured the way it was, as well as his opposition to meliorism; the previously presented countries served as a sort of lesson so that we can understand how each system was constituted and organized throughout history, so that the reader may be inspired to understand and reflect upon the Brazilian educational system and seek a new path for it. By questioning and problematizing the character of the Brazilian people as one of the factors differentiating the national system from international ones, Milton Rodrigues (1938) offers us a hierarchical view of educational systems, which is also directly linked to the use of statistical data, since they reinforce Brazil's position as a former colony still in the process of development, which needed to integrate its educational system with clearer objectives so that it would be possible to build a truly Brazilian educational system with its own identity.

Still on this relationship between countries and the "classification" of systems into better or worse based not only on statistical data but also on questions of their character, Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal (1992) analyzed various data based on issues such as urbanization, religion, independence, compulsory education laws, race, and ethnolinguistics, justifying such classifications and pointing out such obstacles to the development and improvement of the countries they analyzed.

The aforementioned researchers, by seeking an analysis that integrated statistical data with cultural and social issues, affirm that Brazil, like the Spanish colonies, failed to develop educationally during the colonial period due to the impediments of their metropolises and, within its internal structure, due to the characteristics of its society, failed to prosper and rank among the most developed educational systems in the world.

In the second chapter, "History and doctrines," Rodrigues (1938) provides us with an overview of the history of Brazilian Education, beginning his path in the colonial period with the actions of the Society of Jesus in the catechization and education of Indigenous peoples and Portuguese guidelines for the colony,



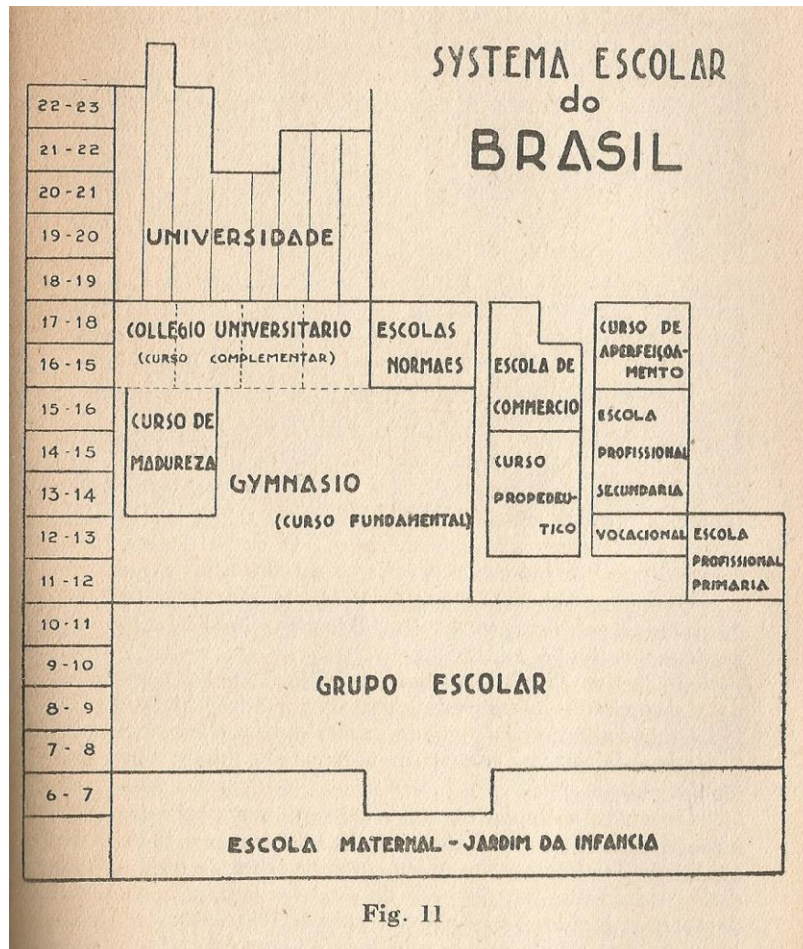
categorized here under the subtitle “Colony” (*Colônia*). Next, under the subtitle “Kingdom” (*Reino*), the author gives us a view of Brazilian Education during the stay of the royal family in Brazil (1808–1821), with an emphasis on the founding and functioning of the first Academies in the country, presenting, for the first time, a timeline of Brazilian history.

Following the historical path proposed by the author, we reach the imperial period (1822–1889), with Rodrigues (1938) justifying the gains and positive points of this period for the construction of a national Education that no longer defended the interests of a metropolis. The author highlights the Brazilian people’s acceptance of literature, which was forming at the time with Romanticism, as a channel for the ascension of Brazilian cultural elements as a creator of a national identity based on miscegenation.

The author finally reaches the republican period, beginning in 1889, highlighting the main reforms and the creation of teaching syllabi for secondary courses. However, what is interesting is that he works only with a period that ends in the 1920s, leaving the subsequent years to a subchapter called “contemporary trends” (*tendências contemporâneas*), where he proposes a political and social analysis of the final years of the Brazilian republic, with important citations from J. Veríssimo, Fernando de Azevedo, and Paulo Assis Ribeiro, highlighting the main reforms of this period, the founding of the University of São Paulo in 1934, and the protagonist role of the state of São Paulo in the current constitution of the country.

Finally, we arrive at the concluding part of the textbook, in which Milton Rodrigues systematizes the organization of the federal and the state of São Paulo administrations regarding Education. Concerning the federal administration: “the supreme organ of teaching administration in the country is the Ministry of Education and Health, created as a consequence of the 1930 revolution and recently reformed in January 1937” (Rodrigues, 1938, p. 284).



Figure 10 - Brazilian School System.

Source: Rodrigues, (1938, p. 279).

The author presented the entire organization of the federal system, explaining all designations and positions in detail, all commissions, and their responsibilities and duties. Within the sphere of the state of São Paulo, the same line is followed: the presentation of the Secretariat of Education and Public Health as the highest state body responsible for Education, created in 1930 and with the following sections subordinated to it: the rectory of the University of São Paulo, the directorate of teaching, the superintendency of professional and domestic education, the department of physical education, the institute of hygiene, the inspectorate of school hygiene and sanitary education, and the warehouse. Following this presentation, in the same manner as the federal sphere, a systematization of São Paulo teaching is presented to us.



Final Considerations

The present study aimed to analyze the first Comparative Education textbook published in Brazil, *Educação Comparada: Tendências e Organizações Escolares* (1938), by Milton Camargo da Silva Rodrigues, seeking to understand its role in the organization and systematization of the field in the country, especially within the context of its insertion into teacher education curricula at the University of São Paulo.

The analysis of the textbook allowed for the identification that the work played a relevant role in the constitution of Comparative Education as a school discipline by organizing contents, methods, and references that guided teaching in the area. It was observed that the textbook privileged an approach grounded in statistical data and the description of national educational systems, articulating itself with a broader movement toward the internationalization of pedagogical ideas and the circulation of educational models. At the same time, the presence of elements of the disciplinary code, as proposed by Fernández (1997), was evidenced, which contributed to the legitimation of the discipline within the scope of teacher education.

The results indicate that the analyzed textbook not only systematized knowledge already in circulation but also actively participated in the construction of a specific way of conceiving Comparative Education in Brazil, marked by the articulation between the description, analysis, and interpretation of educational systems. In this sense, the work of Milton Camargo da Silva Rodrigues can be understood as a central element in the process of institutionalizing the discipline at the University of São Paulo, even while embedded within a broader context of consolidation of the field in the country.

From a theoretical point of view, the study contributes by demonstrating the importance of textbooks as privileged sources for understanding the constitution of school disciplines, allowing access not only to official prescriptions but also to practices, discourses, and forms of knowledge organization. By



mobilizing the concept of the disciplinary code, it was possible to deepen the analysis of the internal dynamics of Comparative Education as a field of teaching and research.

Finally, it is considered that the investigation opens up possibilities for future studies to explore other textbooks, authors, and institutional contexts, expanding the understanding of the formation and development of Comparative Education in Brazil. It also proves relevant to advance the analysis of the relations between the international circulation of ideas and local processes of institutionalization, so as to understand with greater depth the specificities of the field within the Brazilian context.

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Note

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