



## Recent Brazilian academic production on primary education in the Vargas Era: an analysis of dissertations and theses (2008-2017)

A recente produção brasileira sobre a educação primária na Era Vargas: uma análise das dissertações e teses (2008-2017)

La reciente producción brasileña sobre la educación primaria en la Era Vargas: un análisis de las disertaciones y tesis (2008-2017)

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### Abstract

This article presents a review of recent Brazilian academic production focusing on primary education during the "Vargas Era," seeking to realize and understand the "state of the issue". Of a bibliographic type, the text analyzes the master's theses and doctoral dissertations from post-graduate programs in Education and other areas of knowledge available in the "CAPES Thesis Databank", in the "Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations of the IBICT," and on post-graduation program websites. The analytical procedure consisted of reading these works, tabulating the data, and constructing analytical categories for the classification of the objects of study. The results highlight the distribution of investigations in the country and the specificities of each region. At the same time, the study analyzed the theoretical bases, methodological options, and sources used in these works.

**Key words:** Production balance, Primary school, Vargas era.

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## Resumo

O artigo apresenta uma revisão da produção brasileira recente sobre a educação primária durante a “Era Vargas”, buscando realizar e compreender o “estado da questão”. De tipo bibliográfico, o texto analisa as dissertações de mestrado e as teses de doutorado dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Educação e demais áreas do conhecimento, disponíveis no “Banco de Teses da CAPES”, na “Biblioteca Digital de Teses e Dissertações do IBICT” e nos websites dos PPG. O procedimento de análise consistiu na leitura desses trabalhos, seguida da tabulação dos dados e construção de categorias de análise para classificar os objetos de estudo. Entre os principais resultados se destacam a distribuição de investigações no país e as especificidades de cada região. Ao mesmo tempo, foram analisadas as bases teóricas, as opções metodológicas e as fontes utilizadas.

**Palavras-chave:** Balanço da produção, Escola Primária, Era Vargas.

## Resumen

El artículo presenta una revisión de la producción brasileña reciente sobre educación primaria durante la “Era Vargas”, buscando realizar y comprender el “estado de la cuestión”. De tipo bibliográfico, el texto analiza las disertaciones de maestría y tesis doctorales de los Programas de Pós-Graduação em Educação e demás áreas de conocimiento, disponibles en el "Banco de Teses da CAPES", en la "Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações do IBICT" y en los sitios web de los PPG. El procedimiento de análisis consistió en la lectura de esos trabajos, seguida de tabulación de datos y construcción de categorías de análisis para clasificar los objetos de estudio. Entre los principales resultados se destaca la distribución de investigaciones en el país y las especificidades de cada región. Al mismo tiempo fueron analizadas las bases teóricas, las opciones metodológicas y las fuentes utilizadas.

**Palabras clave:** Balance de la producción, Escuela Primaria, Era Vargas.

## Introduction

In 2011 the journal “Cadernos de História da Educação” published in volume 10, number 2, a dossier entitled, “*A pesquisa em História da Educação em perspectiva internacional*,” using two types of works: those that historicize the educational process in a given area, its institutionalization, and means of publication, and those dedicated to the specific analysis of production profiles in different countries.

With respect to the temporal evaluations of the analyses, the works of the first type present relatively long periods, such as the article by Blanco (2011) offering a panorama of the History of Education in Chile from the 19th century to the year 2010, and the text in which McCulloch (2011) presents a historiography of education in England throughout the twentieth century. The first type of works also includes an ample literature on the historiography of Brazilian education, developed by a team of five PhD researchers and professors of the Post-Graduation Program in Education at the Universidade Federal de Uberlândia - UFU (CARVALHO et al., 2011)<sup>3</sup>. These authors have presented a history of Brazilian education ranging from the 1920s until the creation of the Working Group on the History of Education at the Brazilian Association of Post-Graduation and Research in Education (GT-HE/ANPEd), and the creation of the Brazilian Society of the History of Education in 1999.

The works comprising the second type, however, primarily concerned with the production characteristics of the History of Education, feature shorter temporal profiles aimed at more focused analyses. One such example is an article by Pintassilgo and Mogarro (2011) describing the recent production of the Portuguese historiography of education based entirely on the books published in Portugal over a three-year period (2008-2010), and presenting the chief characteristics of the classified works as a “reading script of the edited works” (PINTASSILGO; MOGARRO, 2011, p. 109, *our translation*).

We highlight this dossier to exemplify how chronological samples delimiting the approaches of this type of work are variable and justified by different criteria according to analytical characteristics (whether of a broader or more specific nature) as well as viability (whether developed by extensive teams of researchers or by carried out by individuals).

Another work that helped inspire this article was the text by Pintassilgo and Beato (2015) entitled, “*Balço da produção portuguesa recente: o exemplo das teses de doutoramento (2005-2014)*,” for which the authors considered a period of ten years sufficient to characterize the “state of the art” of production based on doctoral dissertations.

For the same reason, and in light of the limitations associated with an undertaking of this nature carried out by only two authors, this article presents the findings from the analysis of the recent Brazilian production of theses and dissertations defended during a ten-year period (2008-2017) on the topic of primary education between 1930 and 1950, the period corresponding to the Vargas Era.

Among the Brazilian studies of education regarding the institution of the Republic, those dealing with the primary school as a model institution for the development of citizens for the new regime certainly stand out, particularly school groups<sup>4</sup>. Initially developed by the state, this researched expanded within the integrated project “*Por uma teoria e uma história da escola*

<sup>3</sup> This team is composed of professors Carlos Henrique de Carvalho, Décio Gatti Júnior, Geraldo Inácio Filho, José Carlos Souza Araújo, and Wenceslau Gonçalves Neto.

<sup>4</sup> Notable works include those of Souza (1998), Faria Filho (2000), and Vidal (2006).

*primária no Brasil: investigações comparadas sobre a escola graduada (1890-1930)*,” led by Rosa Fátima de Souza and including analyses comparing different states of the federation<sup>5</sup>. These studies, however, focused on the period of the First Republic (1889-1930). With respect to the period following 1930, other themes have been prioritized, such as professional, secondary, and higher education teaching, areas of high priority in the educational reforms implemented within that context (SCHWARTZMAN et. al., 2000).

After the turn of the 19th Century, primary or elementary education was the responsibility of the provinces, remaining under the control of state governments during the first decades of the Republic. Each state organized primary-elementary teaching as it chose, and different modalities for the same grade levels coexisted. These included, for example, the use of the isolated one-teacher schools, generally with shorter-than-normal school days, that have been most common in the hinterland and rural regions of the country, as well as the graduate schools in the major urban areas and capitals that generally resemble in some way the São Paulo school group model.

The creation of the Education Ministry, the reforms, and the efforts to put the National Education Plan into practice in the 1930s, did not address the topic of primary education. Only in the 1940s with the implementation of the National Primary Teaching Fund (1942) and the Organic Primary Teaching Law (1946) were general guidelines for this area of teaching first established. They stipulated that primary education be divided into **primary elementary teaching**, consisting of four years of primary elementary plus one complementary year, for a total of five years, for children 7 to 12 years of age, and **primary supplementary teaching**, lasting two years for students over 13 years of age (BRASIL, 1946).

This legislation affected the organization of state primary education, particularly beginning in the 1950s due to the Ministry of Education and Culture’s policies aimed at expanding and improving Brazil’s primary school system and oriented by the INEP under Anísio Teixeira, that successfully led to the expansion of primary education. According to Rizzini and Schueler (2014), in spite of this considerable expansion, “this problematic has been largely absent in studies on the history of education” (RIZZINI; SCHUELER, 2014, p. 878, *our translation*), especially with respect to the less populated state regions. Therefore, we consider the creation of systematic analyses of the recent academic production focusing on this period useful in order to better understand the *state of the question*. The sources analyzed in this endeavor were the theses and dissertations whose goals were closely aligned with those of this investigation.

Tallies of academic investigations into a specific topic are not only important for the evaluation of the production within a determined time period and the identification of consolidated approaches, but also because they reveal future research avenues for the field, as asserted by Pintassilgo and Beato (2015). Such analytical efforts, generally classified as “state of the art,” are increasingly present in diverse areas of knowledge, especially within the History of Education. The term “state of the art” refers to academic works seeking to quantify what is known with respect to a determined topic. There are, however, different interpretations regarding just what a state of the art study is. For some authors

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<sup>5</sup> The comparative analyses of this project, which received funding from the CNPq, made use of 15 PhD researchers in the investigation of 11 Brazilian states (Acre, Bahia, Goiás, Maranhão, Mato Grosso, Minas Gerais, Piauí, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Sergipe, and Rio Grande do Norte). They are present, for example, in two books. The first is “*Escola Primária na Primeira República (1889-1930): Subsídios para uma história comparada*”, organized by José Carlos de Souza Araújo, Rosa Fátima de Souza, and Rubia-Mar Nunes Pinto and published by Editora Junqueira & Marin in 2012; the second is “*Por uma teoria e uma história da escola primária no Brasil: investigações comparadas sobre a escola graduada (1870-1930)*”, organized by Rosa Fátima de Souza, Vera Lúcia Gaspar da Silva, and Elizabeth Figueiredo de Sá and published by the EdUFMT in 2013.

“state of the art” [studies] receive this denomination when they address a complete area of knowledge, in the different aspects that have generated productions (...), [not only studying] the abstracts of dissertations and theses, [but also] necessary studies on the productions in congresses related to the area, studies on publications in periodicals (...). The study that covers only one sector of the publications on the theme is denominated the “state of the knowledge” (ROMANOWSKI; ENS, 2006, p. 39-40, *our translation*).

Thus a “state of the art” study is understood as a total and encompassing investigation on a topic, while an analytical undertaking restricted only to one type of publication would constitute a “state of the knowledge.”

The “state of the question” study is another type of work related to academic production regarding a determined subject within a determined period of space and time. According to Nóbrega-Therrien and Therrien (2004), this type of analysis distinguishes itself from “state of the art” and “state of the knowledge” ones by being a study based on the construction of a specific research object; i.e., the criteria for the selection of the publications being analyzed is related to their proximity to the investigator’s topic of interest. Because of this, we have classified the present work as a “state of the question” type.

The problematic orienting this exercise involves the comprehension of how interest in this topic is distributed throughout the country as well as the identification of specific differences according to each region. We also seek to analyze the qualitative nature of the studies analyzed with respect to the types of objects sampled, source methodology, and theoretical references used.

## Methodology

In order to proceed to the analysis of the History of Education works, we must consider the diversity that exists in this field as a borderline area

particularly between History *tout court* and the so called Sciences of Education, (...) [always to] attract other perspectives to better penetrate the objects of study, namely (but not exclusively) those stemming from Sociology, Anthropology, and Philosophy (PINTASSILGO; BEATO, 2015, p. 217, *our translation*).

This diversity forms a plural “interpretive community” with respect to “theoretical affiliations, conceptual frameworks, and methodological approaches” (PINTASSILGO; BEATO, 2015, p. 217, *our translation*).

For these reasons, in an undertaking of this nature we see a methodological need to limit the analysis of theses and dissertations in order to increase the study’s precision and viability. Theses and dissertations constitute a specific type of source in the way they delimit objects in chronological and spatial groupings, as well as by their need to specify the theoretical frameworks and methodological choices adopted. Theses and dissertations also represent endeavors involving considerable effort that require years of investment on the part of researchers that at the end of the day are the “object of formal evaluation by senior investigators belonging to the field” (PINTASSILGO; BEATO, 2015, p. 217, *our translation*). Finally, these works, principally dissertations, are recognized as important foundational elements for academic careers, ones that often influence the direction of future research<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> While there is a certain amount of variation among English-speaking countries concerning the use of the terms "thesis" and "dissertation," in this work "thesis" refers to a "master's thesis" and "dissertation" refers to a "doctoral dissertation". Translator’s note.

### Source selection

The first step in the selection of theses and dissertations involved searches in the catalogs and repositories of their respective institutions. The first such location was the *Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações da CAPES*<sup>7</sup>, and involved the use of the keywords “primary education,” “primary school,” “Vargas,” and “school group,” along with the year of publication (from 2008 to 2017) and area of knowledge (Education, Teaching, History, Political Science, Interdisciplinary, Sociology, Linguistics, and Architecture). Using the same keywords and filters, the *Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações*<sup>8</sup> was also consulted. Theses and dissertations linked to at least one of the target keywords were selected.

This step revealed a small quantity of works produced in recognized post-graduate programs relevant to the field of the History of Education, or even a complete lack of such works in certain Brazilian states. Because of this, a new search was performed within the digital online repositories of higher education institutions themselves in each state of the federation. After listing and comparing the results, we had collected a total of 3,536 works, between theses and dissertations.

Next, we eliminated the works whose objectives were inconsistent with those of the analysis. Towards this end, we adopted the following procedures: a) the identification, in works outside the area of education, of studies that were relevant to the field; b) the verification of the presence of a historiographic perspective in the works, both in terms of chronological selection of the object and theoretical-methodological approach; and c) the selection of works whose focuses involved primary education with a chronological selection covering the period between 1930 and 1950.

We performed this process by reading the titles and abstracts of each work. In some cases it was possible to easily identify limiting criteria, though it was necessary to read the entire body of works whose titles and abstracts did not make the selection of the object sufficiently clear. During this step we removed works that, in spite of their titles, dealt with non-target topics, such as professional education and teacher training, for example.

This process yielded 83 master’s theses and 44 doctoral dissertations, for a total of 127<sup>9</sup> works, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** – Distribution of theses and dissertations in the area of primary education between the years 1930 and 1950, by year of publication (2008 - 2017)

Year	Theses	Dissertations	Total
2008	5	3	8
2009	7	4	11
2010	9	3	12
2011	7	2	9
2012	14	8	22
2013	5	2	7
2014	8	5	13
2015	8	9	17
2016	16	5	21
2017	4	3	7
Total	83	44	127

<sup>7</sup> From <http://catalogodeteses.capes.gov.br>

<sup>8</sup> From <http://bdtd.ibict.br/vufind/>

<sup>9</sup> Due to publishing constraints, our References section only contain theses and dissertations cited directly in the text.

It is important to note that this endeavor ended in April of 2018 and thus not all works defended during that year may have been added to the repositories at the time of our consultations. Writing on Portuguese academic production in the History of Education, Pintassilgo and Beato (2015) characterized this type of work as “a work in progress,” considering that “for various reasons (such as academic area, advisor, less obvious title or keywords), [there are] always (...) [some works] that fall outside the first search attempt” (PINTASSILGO; BEATO, 2015, p. 218, *our translation*).

### *Analytical procedures*

Once the selection of the works was completed, we carried out a process of reading and classification. We classified the works according to their year, university, post-graduate program, author, academic advisor, and title. Next, we classified them according to the state of the federation their research objects were focused on. Those whose analysis was at a national level were identified as BR, and all others were identified by their respective state abbreviations. Finally, the works were identified as master’s theses or doctoral dissertations.

The next procedures, of a different nature, involved the categorization of the works based on their abstracts and, when necessary, the parts of the bodies of text that revealed the true nature of the study. Because this step, based on induction, led to the creation of 48 categories, works were subsequently grouped into 9 large categories. The same procedure was employed concerning sources, which, despite their large diversity, were grouped into 16 categories (to be presented in the following sections). Finally, we identified the principal concepts, authors, and theoretical-methodological profiles of the works.

It is important to point out that the principle of mutual exclusion (BARDIN, 2009), or the process whereupon one should not attribute more than one category to the same element, was not observed in this endeavor. On the contrary, considering the multiplicity of perspectives in textual analysis (MORAES, 2003), in most cases it was necessary to assign theses and dissertations more than one category and subcategory.

### **Theses and dissertations on primary education between 1930 and 1950 in Brazil and their distribution over the national territory**

The analysis of the works made it possible to observe the presence of studies on primary education during the Vargas Era in different areas of knowledge (Table 2) as well as the kinds of interest related to this topic with respect to different regions of the country (Table 3).

**Table 2** – Distribution of theses and dissertations published from 2008 to 2017 on the topic of primary education between 1930 and 1955, by area of knowledge

Program Title	CAPES Evaluation Area	Theses	Dissertations	Total	%
Architecture and Urbanism	Architecture, Urbanism and Design	1	0	1	0.8%
Education	Education	70	39	109	85.8%
Scientific and technological education	Teaching	2	0	2	1.6%
Math and Science teaching	Teaching	2	0	2	1.6%
History	History	6	4	10	7.9%
Linguistics	Linguistics and Literature	1	1	2	1.6%
Political Sociology	Sociology	1	0	1	0.8%
Total		83	44	127	100%

According to the latest data provided by the CAPES, in 2017<sup>10</sup> the area of Education was responsible for the fourth-highest number of post-graduate courses in Brazil<sup>11</sup> (a total of 176), behind the areas of Interdisciplinary; Agrarian Sciences I; and Public and Business Administration, Accounting Sciences, and Tourism (BRASIL, 2017). If the 154 courses classified as Teaching are added to those of Education and to the 67 classified as Physical Education, we have a total of 397 courses, a number giving approaches related to education a ranking of first place in the country.

The ten works selected in the area of History contain three theses and one dissertation produced in the Northeast region, two theses and one dissertation in the Southeastern region, and one thesis and two dissertations produced in the Southern region. In the Northeast, the theses defended at the UFPB dealt with the topics of nationalism and commemorative dates (SILVA, 2011; SILVA, 2016) and the biography of a professor from the state of Paraíba (CAVALCANTE, 2012), while the dissertation defended at the UFCE (ALVES, 2015) analyzed the teaching of history in primary education in Ceará during the 1930s. With respect to the theses produced in the Southeast, there were works by Stutman (2014), defended at the USP, also dealing with the teaching of history, and by Botelho (2011), which addressed the education in the Municipality of São Gonçalo during the New State and was defended at the UERJ. Fernandes (2009) defended a dissertation at the PUC-Rio that focused on Fluminense identity based on the historiographic and memorialist production of Rio de Janeiro primary schools. In the South, Ungalub (2008) defended a dissertation at the UFSC on nationalism and orpheonic singing, Dias (2012) defended a dissertation at the UFRGS following the careers of two *gaúcha* primary teachers, and Lemos (2012) defended a thesis at the UFPEL on the political education of Pelotas during the New State.

With respect to the area of Linguistics, there were two works on the primary education of the period of interest. The first was a dissertation defended by Farias (2010) at the UFPB that analyzed the discourse of a Portuguese language didactic collection, and the second a thesis by Nabas (2016) on the teaching of the Portuguese language and the nationalization campaign in the South of the country, defended at the UFSC. The same topic was developed in the only work in the area of Sociology. This was a thesis by Fabro (2010), also defended at the UFSC in the Political Sociology postgraduate program.

The only work selected from the area of Architecture, Urbanism and Design was a thesis by Assal (2009), defended at the *Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo da USP*, addressing the architecture of the practical agricultural schools in the state of São Paulo during the New State.

In all, the Southeast region was responsible for 45% of the postgraduate courses in Brazil in 2017, followed by the South and Northeast, at 22% and 20%, respectively. The Central-West region had 8% of these programs, and the North 5% of the total. Table 3 presents this distribution in absolute numbers:

**Table 3** – Postgraduate Programs in Brazil in 2017, by Region

Region	Postgraduate Courses
Central-West	351
Northeast	868
North	236
Southeast	1.916
South	925
Total in Brazil	4.296

**Source:** original table based on data from the CAPES (2017).

<sup>10</sup> Based on 2013 data, updated annually according to the CAPES *Reenvio do Coleta* calendar.

<sup>11</sup> Including the postgraduate programs offering Master's/Doctor's, only Master's, only professional Master's, and only Doctor's degrees.



When observing the institutional affiliation of the works studied, one finds the same research concentration in universities located in the Southeast region of Brazil (40.9%), in numerical terms. However, the production volume specifically dealing with primary education during the Vargas Era in the Northeast (33.9%) surpassed that of the South (22.8%), the North (1.6%), and the Central-West (0.8%). The Northeast's predominance here is largely related to the Education postgraduate program at the UFPB, where a total of 20 works (14 theses and 6 dissertations) were defended between 2008 and 2017. These numbers gave this program the number one ranking in terms of production numbers on primary education works during the Vargas Era produced between 2008 and 2017 and helped place the state of Paraíba behind only São Paulo, in numerical terms, as shown in greater detail in Table 4:

**Table 4** – Distribution of the theses and dissertations published between 2008 and 2017 on the primary education between the years of 1930 and 1955, by sponsoring institution, Federative Unit (FU, i.e., state), and Region

Region	FU	Institution	Theses	Dissertations	Total Institution /	Total / FU	Total / Region
Central-West	MT	UFMT	1 (1.2%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)
Northeast	CE	UFCE	1 (1.2%)	1 (2.3%)	2 (1.6%)	2 (1.6%)	43 (33.9%)
	PB	UFPB	14 (16.9%)	6 (13.6%)	20 (15.7%)	20 (15.7%)	
	PB	UFPE	4 (4.8%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.1%)	4 (3.1%)	
	PI	UFPI	7 (8.4%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (5.5%)	7 (5.5%)	
	RN	UFRN	5 (6.0%)	1 (2.3%)	6 (4.7%)	6 (4.7%)	
North	SE	UFSE	4 (4.8%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.1%)	4 (3.1%)	2 (1.6%)
	PA	UFPA	2 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.6%)	2 (1.6%)	
South	PR	UFPR	0 (0.0%)	2 (4.5%)	2 (1.6%)	2 (1.6%)	29 (22.8%)
	RS	UNISinos	1 (1.2%)	1 (2.3%)	2 (1.6%)	9 (7.1%)	
		UFRGS	2 (2.4%)	1 (2.3%)	3 (2.4%)		
		UFPEL	1 (1.2%)	2 (4.5%)	3 (2.4%)		
		UCS	1 (1.2%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.8%)		
	SC	UESC	3 (3.6%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.4%)	18 (14.2%)	
UFSC		12 (14.5%)	3 (6.8%)	15 (11.8%)			
Southeast	ES	UFES	2 (2.4%)	2 (4.5%)	4 (3.1%)	4 (3.1%)	52 (40.9%)
	MG	UFMG	2 (2.4%)	3 (6.8%)	5 (3.9%)	12 (9.4%)	
		UFU	4 (4.8%)	3 (6.8%)	7 (5.5%)		
	RJ	PUC-Rio	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.3%)	1 (0.8%)	15 (11.8%)	
		UERJ	6 (7.2%)	3 (6.8%)	9 (7.1%)		
		UFRJ	1 (1.2%)	2 (4.5%)	3 (2.4%)		
		UFF	0 (0.0%)	2 (4.5%)	2 (1.6%)		
	SP	UNISantos	1 (1.2%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.8%)	21 (16.5%)	
		USP	5 (6.0%)	5 (11.4%)	10 (7.9%)		
		UNICAMP	1 (1.2%)	1 (2.3%)	2 (1.6%)		
UNESP		2 (2.4%)	2 (4.5%)	4 (3.1%)			
UFSCar		1 (1.2%)	3 (6.8%)	4 (3.1%)			
Total			83 (100.0%)	44 (100.0%)	127 (100.0%)	127 (100.0%)	127 (100.0%)

Despite the low number of works produced in the North and Central-West regions, there were investigations into states of these regions conducted by postgraduate programs located elsewhere. These include a dissertation defended at the USP by Coelho (2008) on primary education in Pará and a dissertation defended at the UNESP by Paes (2011) on primary education in rural Mato Grosso. The Central-West region was also the subject of two works on the state of Goiás. One was a dissertation defended at the UFSCar in São Paulo by Araújo (2012) and dealing with pedagogical ruralism and the New School, and a thesis defended at the UFU, in Minas Gerais, by Silva (2013) on the Grupo Escolar César Bastos.

This dataset reveals that postgraduate programs from other states have produced investigations that surpass the spatial limits of the regions hosting them, and show that researchers traveled extensively in order to carry out their studies. Table 5 presents the spatial composition of the objects of study, regardless of the geographic production location. One can observe the presence of the works cited above focusing on the North and Central-West regions, as well as two works on Rio de Janeiro, the erstwhile Federal District (FD) that was not officially a part of the state of Rio de Janeiro.

**Table 5** – Distribution of the theses and dissertations published from 2008 to 2017 on Vargas primary education, by spatial limit of the object, Region, and Federative Unit (FU)

Region	FU	Theses		Dissertations		Total / FU		Total / Region	
Central-West	GO	1	(1.2%)	1	(2.3%)	2	(1.6%)	4	(3.1%)
	MT	1	(1.2%)	1	(2.3%)	2	(1.6%)		
Northeast	CE	1	(1.2%)	1	(2.3%)	2	(1.6%)	42	(33.1%)
	PB	14	(16.9%)	4	(9.1%)	18	(14.2%)		
	PE	4	(4.8%)	1	(2.3%)	5	(3.9%)		
	PI	7	(8.4%)	1	(2.3%)	8	(6.3%)		
	RN	5	(6.0%)	1	(2.3%)	6	(4.7%)		
	SE	3	(3.6%)	0	(0.0%)	3	(2.4%)		
North	PA	2	(2.4%)	1	(2.3%)	3	(2.4%)	3	(2.4%)
Southeast	ES	2	(2.4%)	1	(2.3%)	3	(2.4%)	33	(26.0%)
	MG	7	(8.4%)	6	(13.6%)	13	(10.2%)		
	RJ	2	(2.4%)	4	(9.1%)	6	(4.7%)		
	SP	8	(9.6%)	3	(6.8%)	11	(8.7%)		
South	PR	0	(0.0%)	1	(2.3%)	1	(0.8%)	28	(22.0%)
	RS	5	(6.0%)	5	(11.4%)	10	(7.9%)		
	SC	14	(16.9%)	3	(6.8%)	17	(13.4%)		
FD	DF	1	(1.2%)	1	(2.3%)	2	(1.6%)	2	(1.6%)
Brazil	BR	6	(7.2%)	9	(20.5%)	15	(11.8%)	15	(11.8%)
TOTALS		83	(100.0%)	44	(100.0%)	127	(100.0%)	127	(100.0%)

As can be observed, the works on the states of the Central-West and North regions together represent 5.5% of the total production. The two dissertations on the states of the Central-West and the dissertation on the state of Pará, in the North region, were defended in São Paulo (UNESP, UFSCar, and USP). Among the two theses on the Central-West was a work developed at the UFU (MG) by Silva (2013), focusing on the history of a school group in Goiás, while the thesis on the biography of a Mato Grosso teacher (GODOI, 2015) was defended at the UFMT, in the same state. These were the same circumstances regarding the two theses on Pará, in the North region.

With respect to the South region, we wish to highlight the recent productions in the state of Santa Catarina with time periods consistent with our target period. These consist of fourteen theses and three dissertations addressing topics dealing with school spaces and facilities, pedagogical knowledge and practices, rural education, school models, and life histories based on teacher memories, as in the case of the dissertation by Geane Kantovitz (2017) defended in the Education program of the UFSC.

Turning to the Southeast, there were thirteen works focusing on the Minas Gerais context. One, a thesis by Rezende (2010) defended at the UFSE and analyzing the influence of Edward Lee Thorndike thinking on the teaching of mathematics in Minas Gerais, was produced outside the Southeast region. Three others were produced outside the state of Minas Gerais, although within the limits of the Southeast region. These include a thesis defended at the UERJ by Barros (2009) on the relationship between the State and the Catholic Church, and two dissertations. One was defended at the UFRJ by Alves (2010), dealing with the topic of nationalism in the school culture of Juiz de Fora, and the other was defended at the USP by Caldeira-Machado (2016), and focused on the use of school statistics in reinforcing nationalism.

Although the overall production totals were concentrated in the institutions of the Southeast region, the largest segment of the research on primary education in the Vargas Era concerned itself with the states of the Northeast. There were forty-two works on this region, representing 33.1% of the total. This fact is not only due to the previously mentioned production of the UFPB, but also to the movement of researchers through the different regions of the country. One such example was a dissertation by Sousa (2009) on the history of the teaching profession in Piauí and defended at the UFU. Similarly, the postgraduate programs located in the Southeast region contributed the highest number of works with spatial focuses on other states or analyses at a national level.

There were fifteen works (six theses and nine dissertations) whose objects involved a national scope. Among the dissertations, four were developed at institutions located in the state of São Paulo (USP, UNESP, UFSCar), two in those of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ and UFF), one in Paraná (UFPR), one in Espírito Santo (UFES), and one in Paraíba (UFPB). With regard to the six theses, three were defended in institutions located in the state of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), two in the state of São Paulo (USP and UNICAMP), and one in Santa Catarina (UFSC). Table 6 presents the spatial delimitations of the studies in relation to the states where they were produced.

**Table 6** – Spatial delimitation of the study objects on the topic of primary education during the Vargas Era of the theses and dissertations defended between 2008 and 2017

<b>Spatial delimitation</b>	<b>Theses</b>		<b>Dissertations</b>		<b>Total</b>	
National	6	(7.2%)	9	(20.5%)	15	(11.8%)
Same state	75	(90.4%)	27	(61.4%)	102	(80.3%)
Other states	2	(2.4%)	8	(18.2%)	10	(7.9%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>(100.0%)</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>(100.0%)</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>(100.0%)</b>

The table demonstrates the regional character of the academic production with respect to the analyzed topics, with 80.3% of the works focused on the context of the same states where their host postgraduate programs were located. This is especially apparent in the case of theses, while investigations with focuses outside of the state limits, whether as research on other states or that covering a national scope, were more common in the dissertations.

It is important to note that the number of studies with analyses at the national level was increasing, as between 2008 and 2012 at least one such work per year was published. In 2013 there were two dissertations and, in the year 2015 alone, five of the eleven works investigating the Brazilian national reality were defended. In addition to revealing an interesting future trend, these works included comparative analyses of different state experiences, as in the case of the dissertation by Ávila (2013), entitled “*História do ensino primário rural em São Paulo e Santa Catarina (1921-1952): Uma abordagem comparada*”.

### **Thematic selections of the study objects**

In order to classify the theses and dissertations, we created a list of analytical categories for the selected works using initial pre-established criteria. This process allowed us to discern the similarities and differences related to the possible approaches within the areas. After reading the individual works and the reference literature of a topic, we created nine categories, cognizant of the inevitable subjectivity entailed in such an undertaking. Table 7 presents these categories with the number of appearances for the theses and dissertations.

**Table 7** – Distribution of the theses and dissertations published between 2008 and 2017 on primary education in the Vargas Era, by category<sup>12</sup>

Categories	Theses	Dissertations	Total
Pedagogical knowledge and practices	33 (39.8%)	14 (31.8%)	47 (37.0%)
History of pedagogical ideas	27 (32.5%)	13 (29.5%)	40 (31.5%)
Education and politics	25 (30.1%)	11 (25.0%)	36 (28.3%)
School models	22 (26.5%)	11 (25.0%)	33 (26.0%)
Life histories/biographies	19 (22.9%)	12 (27.3%)	31 (24.4%)
National identity	9 (10.8%)	13 (29.5%)	22 (17.3%)
School spaces and facilities	11 (13.3%)	8 (18.2%)	19 (15.0%)
Rural education	8 (9.6%)	9 (20.5%)	17 (13.4%)
Education and religion	6 (7.2%)	7 (15.9%)	13 (10.2%)

Among these categories, the most frequent one, appearing in thirty-three theses and fourteen dissertations, is that involving research on **pedagogical knowledge and practices**, a category ranging from investigations seeking to comprehend the practices of individual teachers (a total of twelve works) to those analyzing the history of primary school curricula and course teaching (eighteen works). This category was also composed of research on disciplinary methods, commemorative dates and events, academic exams, and strategies such as cinema and educational radio broadcasting.

The influence of New School principles oriented debate among Brazilian educators during the initial decades of the 20th Century, especially after the creation of the Brazilian Education Association (ABE) in 1926. It was only after 1930, however, that these newer principles fully confronted more traditional attitudes and methods. Twenty-seven theses and thirteen dissertations dealt with the **history of pedagogical ideas**. This category reflected the research involving studies on the New School or Active School, a topic present in twenty-six works, followed by investigations revolving around hygiene, intuitive teaching, the activity of intellectuals, and debate covered by the pedagogical press.

The third most numerically frequent category encompassed research that in some way articulates the relationship between **education and politics**, either in administrative terms (school networks, school inspection, education statistics, educational policy) or ideological ones (school and the republic, plutocratic interests, or political thinking). Thirty-six works comprise this category, notably analyses of the educational policies implemented by new administrative departments (*interventorias*) and state governments between 1930 and 1950, a focus of half the works of this category. Another considerable part of the research was that identifying the primary school as an important instrument for the propagation of Republican principles during the period, such as the study by Vaz (2012) on the promotion of a “work ideology” in Minas Gerais primary schools based on the analysis of didactic materials and pedagogical press releases.

We classified the thirty-three works belonging to the area of the history of school institutions, featuring the different types of the period’s primary schools, as “**school models**.” This category includes the research covering the relationship between public and private teaching in the process whereby primary scholarship expanded beginning in the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a discussion present in three theses and two dissertations. It also contained studies on the specificities and permanence of isolated schools as well as research dedicated to

<sup>12</sup> The data presented refers to the number of works containing the target theme. It is important to note that, as mentioned in the Introduction, the principle of mutual exclusion was not employed, and thus the same work could receive more than one classification. Because of this, the percentages presented refer to the categorical incidence in relation to the universe of theses (83), dissertations (44), and total works (127).

the study of school groups, a theme present in seventeen theses and six dissertations. School group research approaches varied between studies that explored the expansion of this type of Republican school from the 1930s on and those studying a specific school group.

The category **life histories/biographies** was used for the classification of thirty-one works (24.4% of the total analyzed) presenting the biographies or life histories<sup>13</sup> of teachers, intellectuals, and other primary school actors. Most of the research in this category focused on the history of the teaching profession (thirteen theses and four dissertations in all), some of which used the History of Women as a referential field (explicitly present in five theses and seven dissertations). Others addressed ethno-racial relations in Vargas Era primary schools, such as the work by Cavalcante (2012) on the trajectory of Adélia de França, a black female teacher in Paraíba.

One notable feature of the Ministry of Education and Health policies, especially during the New State, was that of nationalization. This policy framework had three main aspects: the standardization, including of didactic material, for example, and of a national system for the control and regulation of schools; the promotion of national content by highlighting Brazilian authorities, the history of the country's heroes, Brazilian Catholicism, and adequate use of the Portuguese Language; and the eradication of ethnic minorities, above all those associated with the European immigrant colonies that had settled in the South of the country, then considered a national security concern (SCHWARTZMAN; BOMENY; COSTA, 2001). Research on this topic was classified as the **national identity** category, totaling nine theses and thirteen dissertations, such as that by Dias (2012a), on the primary schooling process in Nova Iguaçu, RJ. Carvalho (2010), for example, discussed the eugenics present in the discourse and pedagogical practices of the period in a thesis on the *Primeiro Congresso de Brasilidade*, held in the Federal Capital in 1941. Bombassaro (2012) defended a dissertation in the Education Department of the UFSC on the nationalization campaign in the South of the country, while Fabro (2010) and Nabas (2016) defended theses at the same university in the Sociology and Linguistics Departments, respectively, and Lemos (2012) defended a thesis in History at the UFPEL. The other works dealt with the topic of nationalism while focusing on commemorative dates, didactic materials, and pedagogical publications.

The presence of topics involving **school spaces and facilities** and the relationship between **education and religion** was less constant among the works developed over the ten-year period analyzed. It is noteworthy that these are the categories, along with the research on national identity, where the number of dissertations surpassed that of theses. The studies on school spaces and facilities comprise investigations dealing with school architecture, present in eight of the nineteen works classified, didactic materials, the topic of nine works, and museums and other school objects, appearing as the object of one thesis and one dissertation. The category of rural education included works on rural schools and pedagogic ruralism and was present in seventeen works. The research classified as the relation between education and religion included investigations into the history of confessional schools, the role of catholic intellectuals within pedagogic debate, and the relation between the State and the Catholic Church, which was present in seven of the thirteen works covering the topic.

The classification of works based on their study objects revealed that determined categories appeared more frequently in certain regions of the country. In the North region, the category of **school models** was present in 66% of the research, while the only two works on the

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<sup>13</sup> Works were classified as biographies when the narrative was constructed from diverse documents collected by the researcher, without the participation of the biographed individual, while life histories were articulated by the researcher in conjunction with information provided by the subject/object of the investigation, generally through the use of oral histories (PEREIRA, 2000).

city of Rio de Janeiro, the erstwhile capital of the Republic, explore the relation between education and politics, a trend that applied to the works of the Southeast region as a whole and was present in 39.4% of this region's investigations.

In the South region, despite the more balanced distribution of categories (a result also observed in the Southeast), there was a higher incidence of studies related to **pedagogical knowledge and practices** (42.9% of the works). This category was highly represented in studies from the Northeast region (47.6%), with a significant number of studies on the subcategories of history of the curriculum and course teaching. National level studies also had a high percentage of studies (46.7%) pertaining to this category. In the Central-West, the predominant topics were pedagogical ruralism and rural primary schools, included in the category of **rural education**, present in 50.0% of the works in this region.

This process of classification made it possible to identify certain Vargas Era primary education topics that had previously been well researched, and thus appeared less frequently in more recent works. They included the question of nationalism and the policy repressing the German communities in the South of the country as well as the relations between the Catholic Church and the State and the State and its influence on primary schooling.

In addition, these charting efforts allowed us to identify those approaches that have been used more frequently and that thus have potential for the future. In addition to the ongoing strong showings of studies on the history of pedagogic ideas and those related to pedagogical knowledge and practices, we observed an increase in recent years of studies on the life histories and biographies of education actors. In 2015, 23.5% of the production on Vargas Era primary schools belonged to this category. The number increased to 33.3% the following year, and reached 42.9% in 2017. In spatial terms, we observed a trend favoring the development of analyses at the national level, at times of a comparative nature, based on the knowledge accumulated from the local and regional research.

### **Theoretical assumptions and methodological options of the theses and dissertations produced between 2008 and 2017 on the history of primary education during the Vargas Era**

As we asserted in the introduction of this article, the History of Education is a field spanning the area between History and the sciences of Education. It also approaches neighboring areas such as Sociology and Linguistics, for example. This proximity reflects the transformations after the *Annales* movement, which not only stimulated the use of new sources, but also the problematization and use of new outlooks in a “history from below” perspective (BURKE, 1992a). In this approach the great political narratives were substituted by new thematic interests, such as death, holidays, childhood, and, especially beginning in the 1970s, the so-called “anthropological turn” (BURKE, 1992b), as approaches such as Social History, Microhistory, and Cultural History offered new perspectives for objects such as education. From then on authors like Pierre Bourdieu, Roger Chartier, Dominique Julia, Jacques Revel, and Michel de Certeau began to exert strong influence within historiographic production. Concepts such as “strategy,” “representation,” and “habitus” increased the opportunity to question and problematize a wide-ranging number of sources in order to better comprehend aspects of popular culture and daily life, as well as the social relations of the past.

This approach has grown since the 1990s among Brazilian historians of education, a fact evidenced by the works selected for the present study. Of the one hundred and twenty-seven theses and dissertations analyzed, eighty-four (66.1% of the total) declared affiliation with the so-called “New Cultural History,” although in one specific case the authors

professed allegiance to this theoretical tradition while failing to employ its operational concepts in the empirical research.

There are cases in which authors, due to the analytical scales chosen for their objects, make use of microhistory investigations, either with the scalar variation suggested by Jacques Revel or following the indicial paradigm set forth by Carlo Ginzburg. There were eight works in which the authors declared use of the microhistory methodology: two of which were articulated vis-a-vis the New Cultural History, making use of Michel de Certeau's concepts of "strategy" and "everyday life"; one work based on dialectical historical materialism of the so-called "historical-critical pedagogy"; one dissertation supported by New Political History of a group led by René Rémond; and four works assuming exclusively the field of microhistory.

In their investigations of Portuguese productions within the History of Education, Pintassilgo and Beato (2017) maintain that

there is no legitimate way to investigate the History of Education. During the exercise of delimiting the study object and formulating the problematic, authors must confront decisions relating to the theoretical grounds and methodological procedures to be followed, and these decisions, while some are more appropriate than others, are not inevitable. One must always be conscious of the fact that any decision allows us to illuminate one part of the study object, but never its totality (PINTASSILGO; BEATO, 2015, p. 234, *our translation*).

In this passage, the authors highlight the importance of the delimitation of the object and the elaboration of the problematic in order to select the theoretical approach and methodological procedures of the historiographic operation. In most of the works analyzed for the present study, the authors expressed a need for theoretical grounding to analyze their empirical data, though some did not present this in a clear fashion. Including the example cited above, seven works (representing 5.5% of the total) presented this characteristic. There were cases in which theoretical references were stated in the abstracts or introductions, but whose concepts were not clearly applied to the object, a fact rendering such works exclusively empirical and purely descriptive.

In thirteen works, corresponding to 10.2% of the total of theses and dissertations analyzed, the authors aligned their studies with the social approach, inspired by Marx. Among them, ten professed to belong to the Dialectical and Historical Materialism schools, while the rest chose to identify themselves as Social History. Dear to these works were the Gramscian concepts of "civil society," "hegemony," and "organic intellectual," and Arendt's concept of "domination," among others. Specifically related to the focus utilized in this study, Sônia Regina de Mendonça's concept of "Ruralism," and "conservative modernization" as used by Carlos Nelson Coutinho or Luiz Werneck Vianna were also employed, signaling proximity with Political Sociology and Brazilian social thought.

Also recurrent in this group were the Hobsbawmian concepts of "nation," "nationalism," and "rupture" and E. P. Thompson's notions of "political peculiarities" and "experience," though these concepts and authors were also used in Historical Cultural approaches. However, we also observed the use of Le Goff's concept of "memory" and Peter Burke's notion of "experience" in several works of this field, indicating the possibility of theoretical pluralism. Thus, we consider it important to highlight those cases where, although the authors don't consider it necessary to adhere to a specific historiographic field, theoretical and

methodological construction is based upon an array of concepts and authors from different areas, as, for example, in the dissertation by Bombassaro (2010).

With further reference to the pronounced eclecticism found in some of the research, it is worth noting the presence of works approaching Discourse Analysis, either by works developed in Linguistics postgraduate programs or due to their conceptual use in the research of the other areas. The concepts of “language,” “polyphony,” and “interaction,” advanced by Bakhtin, for example, were utilized to study religious (NARCIZO, 2008) and political (GOMES, 2008) discourse, as well as the discursive strategies surrounding education during the Vargas Era, such as in school radio broadcasting (COSTA, 2012).

Among the most used concepts in the sample set was Roger Chartier’s notion of “representations,” present in twenty-seven works and corresponding to 21.3% of the total. Chartier was the most frequently cited author in the works, present in thirty-six works (28.3% of the total), works that also made use of his concepts of “appropriation” and “strategy.” Another frequent conceptual framework was related to Michel de Certeau, especially the concepts of “strategy,” “tactic,” “social place,” and “trajectory.” Similarly, the concept of “school culture,” advanced by Dominique Julia was also widely used, though other authors are also associated with this concept, including Viñao Frago, Agustín Escolano, André Chervel, Luciano Faria Filho, and Diana Vidal.

As previously mentioned, teaching knowledge and practices, the history of pedagogic ideas, and the life histories and biographies of individual teachers were the topics most frequently covered in the research. This fact helps explain the high incidence of the concepts mentioned in the last few paragraphs, as does the wide use of the concept of “memory,” with special mention for Maurice Halbwachs, utilized by sixteen authors vis-a-vis the “social memory” and “collective memory” frameworks. Others chose to make use of the concept of memory used by Jaques Le Goff or Eclea Bosi.

Finally, we much report the strong presence of Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptual framework, present in nineteen works (15.0% of the total), especially the notions of “field,” “cultural capital,” “habitus,” “symbolic power,” and “biographical illusion.” Likewise, we observed the importance of Michel Foucault, an author cited in seventeen works. Foucault’s concepts that appeared most frequently were “power,” “discourse,” “body,” “biopolitics,” and “subject.”

With respect to the methodology of the works studied, the most common practice involved articulating the study’s analytical object in the Introduction of the work, discussing the relevant academic literature, specifying the documents and sources selected, and indicating the work’s structure by chapters. While presenting sources, a majority of the works cited Le Goff and Bloch’s contributions to the critical analysis of documentation, though eight works claimed to adopt the methodological procedures proposed by Carlo Ginzburg in his “indicial paradigm.” In spite of this, we observed that in a large number of the works there was no effort to specify methodological procedures, an area frequently confused with theoretical underpinning. Twenty-seven works asserted methodological affiliation with the oral history field, produced either by primary data through interviews (twenty-five works) or by collecting oral accounts from data banks. Sixteen other works, despite claiming to work with oral sources, failed to articulate the oral history techniques employed in their methodological discussions.

### **Source types and their use in the studies**

An important contribution of historiography developed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century involved promoting the use of a variety of sources. The positivist historiography of the 20<sup>th</sup> century considered the study of History a scientific endeavor grounded in the use of direct sources, notably official written documents bearing seals thought to confer authenticity. The expansion of the concept of historical sources took place after the introduction of the new approaches and



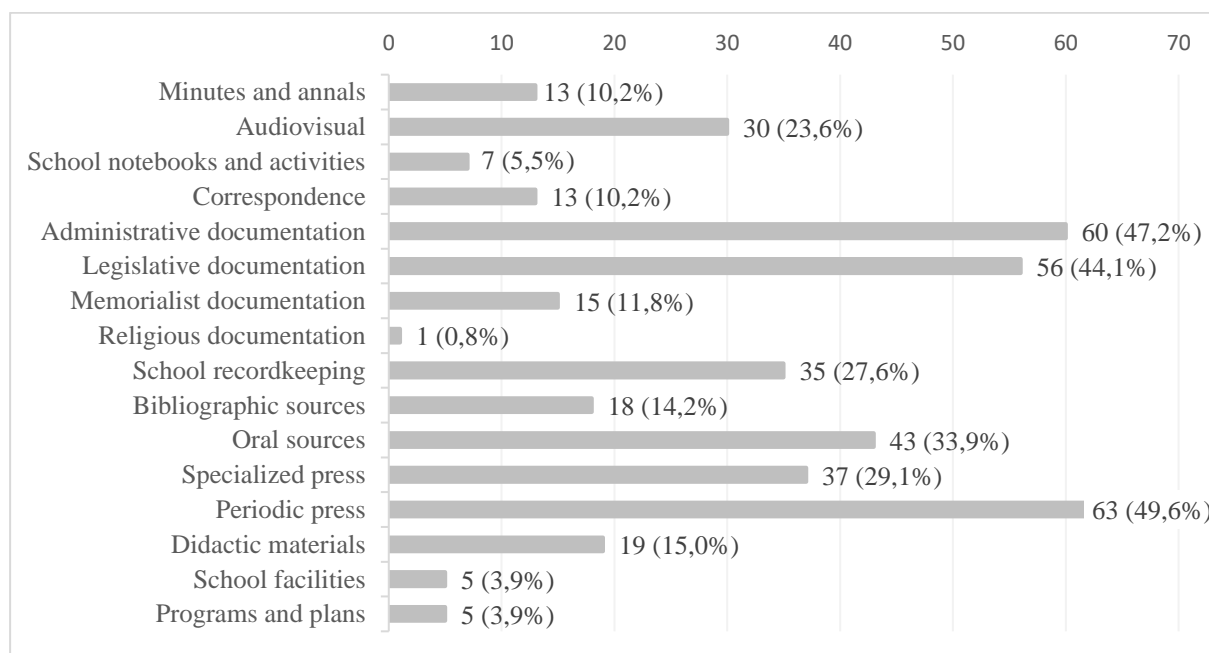
themes that appeared in conjunction with the *Annales* movement. During this process, it became the job of the historian to examine critically official sources and to supplement them with diverse personal written accounts, images, and other registers produced by a variety of agents.

According to Le Goff (2001), due to the complexity of human relations, “history is only achieved by consulting a wide variety of documents and, therefore, of techniques” (LE GOFF, 2001, p. 27, *our translation*). Bloch (2001) maintains that documents “only speak when we know how to interrogate them...; every historical investigation assumes, from its first steps, that the investigation already has a direction” (BLOCH, 2001, p. 21, *our translation*), in other words, a starting point.

The dissertations and theses analyzed were produced from a considerable array of sources. We initially detected, to a greater or lesser extent, the use of direct sources in all the studies. It is also noteworthy that only four of the one hundred and twenty-seven works selected made use of a single type of direct source. All the others utilized a varied set of sources, in some cases making use of so-called “data triangulation.”

Despite the challenges related to the classification of a diverse range of sources, Figure 1 presents the types of documents used as well as their incidence in the theses and dissertations.

**Figure 1** – Types of sources used in the theses and dissertations on Brazilian primary schools during the Vargas Era, produced between 2008 and 2017.



After analyzing the works, we classified the sources in sixteen categories by type and origin of document. These categories are presented below in order of their incidence in the sample set selected, from least to greatest.

Episcopalian letters and messages, classified as **religious documentation**, were only used by Nascimento (2010) in a thesis on the presence of the Catholic Church in public education in Santa Catarina. These involved pastoral letters and other written samples created by ecclesiastical agents that help clarify the relations between the Church and State.

Next, there were the categories of **school facilities** and **programs and plans**, present in five works for each category. School facilities was used to refer to analyses of school architecture use through architectural plans, sketches, and images, school furniture and uniforms presented by the works as sources. For its part, programs and plans involved part of the documentation produced by the schools, specifically referring to the lesson plans designed

by the teachers. Another common type of source are the **school notebooks** and other registers of student activities, present in only five works.

The infrequent use of this type of source, registered in this study, does not merely relate to methodological choices made by academic authors, but also to the difficulties associated with the preservation of school collections and the organization of school files in Brazil. Scholastic institutions generate large quantities of bureaucratic and administrative documentation, required by extensive legislation that even calls for the preservation of such documentation. However, the lack of more consistent policies regarding the preservation of documents “is responsible for one of the most serious challenges confronted by Brazilian researchers in the History of Education” (HILSDORF; VIDAL, 2004, p. 179, *our translation*). In addition to legal documentation, school archives hold documents of another nature, including photographs and notes, among other things. Yet, because they represent documents produced only for immediate use, with no plans for future use, and insufficient understanding regarding their historical value, lesson plans, notebooks, and school activities end up with the teachers and students who produce them and are rarely archived in school institutions.

This may be the reason that a large portion of the studies using school archive sources were chiefly based on bureaucratic documentation, classified here as **school record keeping**. The majority of the archival documents consisted of the minutes of pedagogical meetings and the registers of formal ceremonies, present in 57.1% of the thirty-five dissertations and theses employing school archives. The other documents were divided between reports written by school principals (37.1% of the category), books containing the reports of regional supervisors (28.6% of the category), student enrollment and attendance records (34.3% of the category), bookkeeping records (17.1% of the category), documents related to food and medical/dental assistance (17.1% of the category), and records pertaining to disciplinary measures (8.6% of the category).

The **correspondence** of teachers and intellectuals was also used as a source, in addition to the minutes and proceedings of pedagogical conferences, such as the Brazilian Catholic Confederation Conferences on Education, studied by Narcizo (2008), and the minutes of meetings of institutions that assisted the schools, such as Masonic Lodges in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, analyzed by Guedes (2010).

**Memorialist documentation** was present in fifteen works and included books on regional history and teacher biographies written by memorialists, present in ten works. In addition, there were personal documents of teachers and other intellectuals, including the professional identification cards and electoral titles analyzed by Cavalcante (2012) in a study on Adélia França, a teacher in the state of Paraíba. Among this category’s documents, we wish to highlight the importance of personal diaries as sources for studies whose approaches belong to the History of Women field. According to Sousa (2009), diaries constitute a

Privileged location on the written “I” (..), the refuge of women massacred by the imposition of the silence of a patriarchal society that relegated them to the private realm, forcing on them the care of the household, the children, and their husbands. They were deprived of the public realm, and their voices, feelings, and desires were silenced by a society that upheld modesty and prevented feminine writing from covering topics related to the body, sexuality, participation in political life, and love affairs (SOUSA, 2009, p. 148, *our translation*).

Diaries are valuable sources for allowing access to an otherwise invisible source universe and constitute a fundamental part of the scholastic processes of other historical periods. Their importance notwithstanding, this type of source is of limited access due to its infrequent presence in school archives and other research institutions. Diaries are generally only encountered in the trunks and drawers of family relatives, and it is probably for this reason that only three studies used this type of source.

It was chiefly in works on the history of pedagogic ideas of the Vargas Era that authors made use of pedagogical books and manuals produced during that period. This type of source, classified here as **bibliographic sources**, was present in 14.2% of the dissertations and theses analyzed in this article. One such example was a dissertation by Fernandes (2009) on the intellectual production in the state of Rio de Janeiro between the decades of the 1930s and 1950s and the reinforcement of a regional identity marked by agrarianism.

The category **didactic materials** includes investigations using schoolbooks, maps, and parietal frames as important research sources. Works using schoolbooks are predominant in this category, present in seventeen of the nineteen works in this source category. Only one dissertation (CALDEIRA-MACHADO, 2016) employed cartographic maps as sources for the study of school statistics as an instrument that reinforces national identity, and one other (SILVA, 2012a) cited parietal frames as a source.

The **audiovisual** category encompasses the radiophonic and image sources that were used in the research analyzed. While the use of photographs is common in theses and dissertations, in many cases such sources play the role of illustrating work without necessarily receiving any further analytical treatment. Twenty-nine of the works we analyzed presented photographs as research sources. We divided these works into three groups:

a) those that, despite citing photographs among other varied sources, did not present specific methodologies or references for the application of their use, rendering such photographs illustrative elements;

b) works that treated photography as a specific source requiring the treatment of its own methodological procedures but that did not articulate photographic content in a qualitative manner, and usually limited this treatment to the identification of the image. The opposite was also present, when interpretive analyses were applied to photographs without the specification of theoretical-methodological references used in this endeavor. This was the case in Silva (2012), for example, who, upon describing and interpreting a photograph, reported that

the expression of the local community studied is apparent in the photograph (...). Men and women, segregated and well-dressed, stand watching the theatrical presentation in the church courtyard. In the same location where religious services were held, artistic plays, religious events, festivities, and rituals took place in the crude structures used by the school (SILVA, 2012, p. 6, *our translation*).

We also have the interpretation supplied by Soares Júnior (2015) who, working with physical education photographs, reported:

We can observe in the photograph (...) twenty-nine girls in gym class (...). Standardized by a uniform composed of a shirt and skirt and white sneakers, the girls stretch their arms to exercise. (...) The photograph does not show the use of any instruments for the exercising, a fact that allows me to infer that even during a period when sports competitions were growing in schools and gym classes, the principal model (...) in use in public primary schools was Swedish gymnastics (SOARES JÚNIOR, 2015, p. 225, *our translation*).

One notices that besides the descriptive tone, the comparison of the image elements with other sources revealed meanings that were not always evident in the images. In spite of this, these works do not present the standardized benchmarks that oriented this analytical exercise.

c) The theses and dissertations that considered photographs as sources to be analyzed according to their own points of reference and clearly applied this procedure throughout the investigation.

The majority of the investigations analyzed were in the last group, with thirteen works analyzing photographic sources based on clearly defined benchmarks, using the guidelines, for example, proposed by Boris Kossoy and Ana Maria Mauad, among others. There were ten works that stated the methodological standards for using photographs, but did not do so explicitly, or that developed analyses from photographic sources without specifying the benchmarks. There were only six works in the first group, the one that used photographs as a source, but only in an illustrative manner.

With respect to the audiovisual sources, we consider it important to highlight the innovation found in the work by Costa (2012). This was achieved through the use of educational radio program recordings, available at the archives of the *Museu da Imagem e do Som*, as research sources, and based on standards pertaining to oral and written material furnished by authors like Michel de Certeau and Viñao Frago.

From here, we will cover the most recurrent sources encountered in the investigations analyzed. We denominate as **specialized press** the category that includes statistical annuals, almanacs, religious, cultural, and pedagogical publications, present in thirty-seven works, representing 29.1% of the total analyzed. The number of works using **oral sources** was also considerable, with forty-three works using interviews and/or statements preserved in oral archives and centers of oral documentation.

Almost half the studies selected made use of legislation as sources. Present in 44.1% of the theses and dissertations, **legislative documentation** maintained its traditional relevance within research in the history of education in the sample set analyzed.

The official sources produced by municipal, state, or federal governments were classified as **administrative documentation**, referring to demographic censuses, teaching yearbooks, administrative inquiries and processes, official correspondence, memoranda, teaching programs and rules, among other things. In all, seventy studies (47.2% of all the theses and dissertations) utilized this type of source, most notably in the form of education departments or secretariat reports, present in 65.0% of the investigations using such sources, along with messages from governors and government representatives, which comprised 50.0% of the administrative documentation.

Finally, the most recurrent sources were the newspapers and magazines of the category **periodic press**. Newspapers were used by sixty-three authors. Some reported the use of specific clippings, selected by third parties, either from the personal documentation of teachers, or from school files. Most of the studies, however, made use of digital archives.

## Final considerations

After analyzing the Brazilian academic works produced between 2008 and 2017 on the history of primary education in the Vargas Era, using theses and dissertations, we first highlight the regional character of the production in the majority of the works, especially given the continental proportions of the country and their local specificities, even while we identified an increase in comparative analyses between states as well as investigations at the nationwide level.

In general terms, research interests involved pedagogical knowledge and practices, a tendency that was especially pronounced in the Northeast and South regions, and in the analyses focused on the national level. With specific regard to the studies on the Southeast region and Federal District, works on educational policy and the relations between education and politics predominated. In the three works published on the North region, the greatest interest was with respect to school models, and among the four publications on the states of the Central-West, the topic of rural education was predominant.

With respect to topics, our tabulations allowed one to observe the consolidation of certain approaches, such as those dealing with nationalism and nationalization campaigns. At the same time, we were able to identify the growth of new interest areas like life histories and the biographies of educational actors.

From a theoretical standpoint, there was a predominance of the assumptions associated with New Cultural History, followed by the works deemed to reveal a social perspective, either by invoking the standards used in historical materialism or social history. At the same time, we must recognize the at times pronounced eclecticism inherent in a varied conceptual universe sometimes claimed by other areas of knowledge, most notably sociology and linguistics. The exceptions were the some purely descriptive works we identified that failed to offer theoretical reflection during their treatment of the research object.

Lastly, and related to sources, periodic press sources, especially newspapers, were the most frequently used source type, being present in 49.6% of the works, followed by administrative and legislative documentation. There were also a large number of studies that used oral sources and made constant reference to the methodological assumptions of oral history. However, in some cases — not only in relation to this type of source, but in general — we observed a lack of concern with the specification of methodological procedures, and methodology was often confused with theory.

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