

INEQUALITY, INCLUSION & DEMOCRACY IN BRAZIL: ORIGIN & EVOLUTION OF EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT POLICY¹

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Abstract

By making use of a broader literature in political science concerning issues such as path dependence, institutional reproduction and institutional change, this work approaches the problématique of skill formation in Brazil from the perspective of its origin and evolution. It seeks to understand the dynamics of skill formation regime, in general, and of the education to employment policy, in particular, as crucial institutional components of the country's hierarchical capitalism.

This paper concludes that the framework of skill formation in Brazil - implemented during Getúlio Vargas dictatorship (Estado Novo, 1930-1945) -, helped the country to make the transition from a slavery-based economy into a skill-intense industrial system. However, the way its institutional arrangements evolved did not contribute to improve political accountability, policy effectiveness, and the quality of the Brazilian educational system in the 21st century.

Keywords: skill formation, education to employment, political regime, Brazil

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1. Introduction. The approach & general questions

This work seeks to dialogue with scholars who have studied the issue of skill formation in order to define *varieties of capitalism* in developed democracies, as well as in Latin America (Thelen 2001, 2004, 2014; Thelen & Busemeyer 2012; Busemeyer & Trampusch 2012; Schneider 2012, 2013). In order to contribute to such debate, it makes use of a broader literature in political science concerning issues such as path dependence politics, institutional reproduction, and institutional change. With such procedure, this paper attempts to find out, on the one hand, the dynamics of skill formation regime as a crucial component of the Brazilian *hierarchical capitalism*² (Schneider, 2013). On the other hand, it aims at clarifying whether skill formation policies and institutions - designed and implemented in a context of dictatorship and socioeconomic inequalities – have contributed to expand democratic governance, citizen rights, and the country's capacity to compete in the international market. How has the Brazilian state *connected* to private sectors to produce vocational education and training (VET) policies and institutions? How have these institutions and policies evolved? What is the impact of this institutional environment for governance network, policy effectiveness, and “democratic practices”? These are some of the general questions that this paper aims to address.

By “democratic practices,” I understand the quality of public policies that responsible governments implement to provide social protection in several policy-areas (such as education and skill formation) expanding citizen rights. Thus, the notion of democratic practices I refer to is not an abstract one; it relies on public policies and institutions, whose effectiveness is “context dependent” (Mainwaring & Scully 2010). The study of democratic practices is especially important for contexts where political representation is precarious, and the state lacks a traditional democratic institutional framework - like most of the Latin American countries (O'Donnell 2004). In such context, governments tend to make policies for those classes/economic sectors that are willing to lend either political support or the adequate resources to finance policies that *they* want to see implemented.

In this environment, governments/state may even enjoy governability, i.e., the appropriate financial and administrative conditions to implement policies (Bresser Pereira 1998; Diniz 1997), but the policies they make enhance neither accountability nor the expansion of citizen rights. This panorama nurtures the insulation of policy-making (Nunes 1997), which, driven by “particularistic” practices (O'Donnell 2010), produces policies that respond, mostly, to the demands of those (few) actors who can afford to finance them³ and/or have the “voice” to shape policy-making processes (Hirschman 1970). In any case, such policies do not aim at executing collective goals, sharing responsibilities, nor improving political accountability. In fact, even in advanced industrial societies, democratic practices must also be systematically improved.

To illustrate this point, it is worth mentioning the study by Busemeyer & Trampusch (2012), in which, building on the works by Crouch et al. (1999) and Thelen (2004), the authors discuss a typology of

²According to Schneider (2013), low skills and informal institutions are two important characteristics of Latin American “hierarchical capitalism.”

³Until today, nearly all companies in Brazil “still have controlling blockholders, in most cases families” (Schneider 2013: 39).

collective skill formation systems⁴. According to their study, institutional changes in advanced industrial democracies usually contemplate the fact that, in the 21st century, skill formation “responsibilities are not clearly delegated to the state, the market, or individual firms, but they are *shared* between the relevant stakeholders” (Busemeyer & Trampusch 2012: 33-34). Although this environment of shared responsibilities (or democratic governance) still leads to conflictual renegotiations, the institutional transformations that stem from political conflicts in consolidated democracies are more likely to reinforce the effectiveness of policies that these systems provide than in contexts where democracy is not a tradition, in the first place, and - perhaps for that reason - private sectors end up shaping decision-making processes in specific policy-areas.

In this sense, the study of skill formation systems provides insights into the general dynamics of political interrelations (state <-> private sectors <-> labor market <-> worker’s associations and so on), which, unveiling the degree of democraticness of *practices* (policies), as well as of the political regime reach beyond the narrow sphere of vocational education and training (VET).

2. Skill formation in Brazil. Origin & evolution

In order to elaborate on the argument that policy effectiveness is “context dependent,” this paper tackles two important questions. The first relates to the *origin* of skill formation institutions and policies; the second, to their *evolution*: Where do the Brazilian skill formation policies and institutions come from? How did we get from there to here?

2.1 Origin

Considering the high degree of Brazil's socioeconomic inequalities and political exclusion, the answer to our first question relies upon important aspects of the Brazilian history: the impact of slavery and authoritarian regimes on society.

In relation to the first aspect, it is worth emphasizing that Brazil was the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery, in March 13th, 1888. Thus, by the end of the 19th century, while firms in the United States, as well as in some European countries (such as Germany) were already adopting a common strategy of developing their own in-plant capacities for skill formation (Thelen & Busemeyer 2012), Brazil was still growing out of a slavery-based agricultural system - which, of course, did not require an educated population of workers.

In order to address the problem of skill formation under those circumstances, José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva (1763–1838) and Joaquim Nabuco (1849–1910), two of the most important Brazilian statesmen of the 19th century, attempted to design a policy agenda to be discussed within parliament, in which they proposed that heavy investments should be directed to implement labor, educational, and training policies, in order to include those who were to leave the condition of mandatory work for the emerging free labor market (Nabuco 2000; Dolhnikoff 2012). Their claim, however, found no echo among their parliamentary fellows, since there was little governmental interest, social pressure, or institutional initiative for change (Chagas 1967:50).

⁴This typology consists of the *liberal* solution of *on-the-job-training* (United States), which is distinguished from the *segmentalist* solution of *self-regulation* (Japan) and from the *statist* solution of state-run training (Switzerland), as well as from the *collective* solution (Germany) - where *firms*, *associations*, and the *state collaborate* in providing and financing skills (Busemeyer&Trampusch 2012:12).

In these terms, the implications of slavery not only for the Brazilian society, but also for the country's late industrialization process, as well as the late implementation of skill formation policies and institutions, were tremendous. Moreover, the arrangement that combined the transition from a slavery-based economy into a skill-intense industrial system *with* dictatorship was crucial for the articulation of social policy preferences, in general, and foundational for the Brazilian skill formation regime, in particular⁵.

Then, the coalition alignments among the three key groups examined by Thelen (2007) for the German case (employers in skill-intensive industries, traditional artisans, and early trade unions) were absent in the design of skill formation during the 19th century, as artisans (and emergent trade unions) were deliberately excluded from decision-making processes (Cunha 2000).

Academically oriented education, in turn, was designed mostly “to fulfill the expectations of upper-class youth” (Teixeira 1968:50), “to train personnel for the governmental bureaucracy” (Silva 1977:3), or “to train doctors, engineers, and lawyers to serve the upper class” (Ribeiro 1962:11). In any case, the number of students who passed through the system did not justify a more ambitious educational policy.

In such institutional environment, one important aspect related to the origin of skill formation in Brazil relies, precisely, on the combination of the *New State* dictatorship (1937-1945) with Getúlio Vargas' personal ability to convince employers to implement, fund, and supervise – without any oversight – the policy of vocational education and training. In this context, where responsibilities over skill formation were clearly delegated to industrialists, there was no room for *shared* responsibilities between relevant stakeholders (Cunha 2000; Assumpção-Rodrigues 2013).

Furthermore, the reason why so many Brazilian workers with skills that are “general” and “low” have had little social protection (if at all) along the years is not that the nature of their skills has made protection indispensable for them, but that they never had the allies and the power needed to get it. For that reason political cleavages the distribution of power between the classes, and market conditions must come to the fore as principal explanatory factors (Streeck 2012: 323)

In these terms, prior centuries of extreme socioeconomic inequalities, low education, and rigid social hierarchy became important ingredients that led Brazil to “hierarchical capitalism” - a type of capitalism that, reinforcing “authoritarian practices,” perpetuates inequality, exclusion, and the “low-skill trap” (Schneider 2013: 191). The impact of this combination on development of the Brazilian vocational education and training system is presented next.

2.2 Evolution

The answer to our second question - related to the *evolution* of skill formation institutions and policies in Brazil - is twofold. On the one hand, it refers to the argument that institutional reproduction *and* change are complementary and, for that reason, they must be studied together. On the other hand, institutional arrangements that emerged from the connections that the state has nurtured with the National Industry Confederation for the last 70 years, though they have been forged in a rather distant past, they still *make* it to the present.

During the military regime (1964-1985), for example, institutional *transformations* brought about by the public administration reforms of the 1960s, drove changes that allowed the military *junta* to control and

⁵It was in a context of dictatorship, during Getúlio Vargas' New State [*Estado Novo*, 1937-1945], that the first VET institution was created in Brazil: The National Industrial Apprenticeship Service [*Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial-SENAI*], in 1942.

oversee financial resources that were available to skill formation institutions, such as SENAI⁶. Institutional reproduction, in turn, was emphasized not only by the historical and systematic exclusion of worker's associations from decision-making, but also by the systematic support of the National Industry Confederation⁷ to dictatorships (military or not).

More recently, this support has also been evidenced by the fact, unveiled by the National Truth Commission [*Comissão Nacional da Verdade*], created in 2011, of a close collaboration between the military junta with a group linked to São Paulo Industry Federation [*Federação da Indústria do Estado de São Paulo-FIESP*]⁸ by providing “the necessary material to military operations.” Among these operations, it was the *Bandeirantes Operation-OBAN*, which consisted of a police station that was transformed, in 1969, into a place where opponents of the authoritarian regime were tortured and murdered in São Paulo⁹.

These findings indicate that the same coalition alignment that helped Getúlio Vargas to implement the first skill formation institution, in the 1940s, continued to support military governments, from 1964 to 1985, helping to fund their repressive apparatus. From this perspective, institutional reproduction of the Brazilian skill formation framework remained.

However, although institutional reproduction still persisted, the democratization process also brought about important changes to the Brazilian skill formation framework. In 1998, for example, in the context of the state reform, Fernando Henrique Cardoso signed the new Education Law [*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases/LDB*, n.9394/96], and with it, the ministries of Education and Labor implemented the first state program of vocation education and training [*Programa de Expansão da Educação Profissional- PROEP*]¹⁰ (Coelho 2002). Data collected by the first census on professional education, coordinated by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research [*Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais-Inep*], that aimed at evaluating the PROEP, showed that, in 1999, 67% of VET schools were private, and only 25% of the enrollments were free of charge.

⁶On November 21, 1966, the military created the National Institute for Social Security [*Instituto Nacional de Segurança Social-INPS*] (decree n.72/1966), which allowed government to manage and allocate funds collected by the payroll levy scheme that financed several skill formation institutions, as the Commerce Social Service [*Serviço Social do Comércio-SESC*], and the Industry Social Service [*Serviço Social da Indústria-SESI*].

⁷ The National Industry Confederation [*Confederação Nacional da Indústria-CNI*] is the industrial organization responsible for designing and implementing skill formation policies and schools, during the Vargas' dictatorship.

⁸Permanent Group of Industrial Mobilization [*Grupo Permanente de Mobilização Industrial-GPMI*].

⁹ http://www.cnv.gov.br/images/pdf/publicacoes/claudio/publicacoes_uniao_industrial_militar.pdf (accessed September 28, 2014).

¹⁰ The PROEP was created by Decree n.2.208/97.

As an attempt to face that problem, and promote the expansion of citizen social rights, several social policies have been designed for the last twenty years¹¹. In relation to skill formation - increasing the number of enrollment that are free of charge for low-income workers -, as well as policies addressed to promote the country's competitiveness, Dilma Rousseff administration implemented, in partnership with the National Industry Confederation, the PRONATEC - the National Gateway Program of Technical Education and Employment [*Programa Nacional de Acesso ao Ensino Técnico e ao Emprego - Pronatec*]¹², in 2011. Most of these enrollments has been offered by SENAI's VET schools, as well as by other organizations of "System S"¹³. From 2011 to 2014, PRONATEC has offered 6.8 million free enrollments - from which four million covers skill formation; by 2015, it will be offering 8 million free enrollments; from it, one million will be directed to *Bolsa Família* beneficiaries¹⁴.

Thus, the answer to the question related to the *evolution* of skill formation system refers to the fact that, since the transition to democracy, Brazilian rulers are beginning to promote "contracted balances" among distinct socioeconomic interests, by leading public and private actors to cooperate in the execution of policies that envision more collective goals - such as PRONATEC. However, due to long lasting "authoritarian practices," the gap that still needs to be bridged is between "education to employment" and "education for upper-class youth."

3. Contextualizing education to employment. Final remarks

This paper has studied the issue of skill formation in a context of hierarchical capitalism (Schneider 2013) - a type of capitalism that, instead of promoting equitable development, rising productivity and good jobs, reinforces socioeconomic inequalities, informality¹⁵, and policy ineffectiveness. In Brazil, hierarchical capitalism stems from a historical path of almost 300 years of slavery - a system which favored the reproduction of archaic institutions (such as *latifúndios*), and led the country to a late industrialization process.

In this context, the impact of slavery on the Brazilian society, in terms of limited training and education, was the emergence of a lasting *low-skill trap* (Schneider 2013). By the turn of the 21st century, Brazilian firms still had no incentive to invest in production processes that require skilled labor, as persistent school leaving produced masses of unskilled workers who engage in high job rotation or informality.

However, social policies implemented by three consecutive administrations (Cardoso, Lula, and Rousseff) have provoked *changes* in a scenario that resulted from the rapid expansion of middle class consumption. Also, fueled by the high competition in the international market, the growth in demand for skills led government to increase investment, in partnership with private sectors in the education to employment policy-area, implementing, for instance, the PRONATEC, in 2011. Although this program represents a major top-down policy measure to increment incentives in demand for skilled labor, it is only a

¹¹Such as *Bolsa Família*, the most important conditional cash transfer program of the country.

¹²The PRONATEC was created by Law n. 12.513/2011.

¹³"System S" refers to a set of non-state organizations, such as SENAI, SESC and SESI.

¹⁴Needless to mention that PRONATEC became the most important issue of Rousseff's agenda for reelection this year (2014).

¹⁵In Brazil, almost half of jobs are informal and not subject to formal regulation.

“first step” facing the problem of “low-skill trap”; a lot must still to be done, in terms of sustained policies that aim at expanding access to vocational, secondary and tertiary education, as well as to improve quality.

In these terms, considering the argument that policy effectiveness is context dependent (Mainwaring & Scully 2010), it is worth concluding this paper presenting some aspects related to the social context in which these policies designed to combat poverty and promote inclusion are taking place. This procedure will enable us to evaluate the extent to which “these policies could deliver a supply shock to the low-skill trap and generate positive complementarities” (Schneider 2013: 196).

Data presented in Table 1, for instance, allow a comparative understanding of the percentage of the Brazilian population aged 15-19 enrolled in vocational education and training and in secondary schools, in relation to other countries. It shows that, while in Brazil, only 6.6% of this population was enrolled in VET and secondary schools, in 2012, in Japan, 55% were.

Table 1

% of population aged 15-19 enrolled in VET and in secondary schools
2012

Brazil	6.6
South Korea	41.0
France	41.0
Germany	52.0
Japan	55.0

Source: CNI 2013:31.

Also, according to the Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014, Brazil remains in the 112th position - out of 148 countries -, in terms of the “availability of scientists and engineers” (WEF 2013). Data collected by the National Confederation Industry show that, in 2007, out of 10.000 inhabitants, only two finished Engineering in Brazil, while, in Korea, 16.4 did. Table 2 presents these numbers for eight countries:

Table 2

Number of engineers for 10.000 inhabitants
2007

Korea	16.4
Portugal	13.9
China	13.4
Japan	10.2
Germany	5.1
US	4.6
Chile	4.1
Brazil	2.0

Source: CNI 2013:31.

In Latin America, Chile is the country that has pushed harder with sustainable investments in education. As a result of numerous policies that affected this area, in the 2011, 41.3% of the 25-34-years-olds Chileans had a tertiary degree, while, in Brazil, only 12.7% did.

Table 3

% of 25-34-years-olds with tertiary degree
2000 & 2011

Korea	36.9	63.8
Russia	-	56.5
US	38.1	43.1
Chile	-	41.3
Finland	38.7	39.4
Turkey	8.9	18.9
Mexico	17.5	22.5
Brazil	-	12.7

Source: OECD 2014.

In opposition to this situation, whereas in Chile, 12.2% had not finished high school in 2011, in Brazil, 43.3% did not have a secondary degree (OECD 2014).

Table 4

% of 25-34-years-olds without secondary degree
2000 & 2011

Turkey	72.3	56.5
Mexico	62.9	56
Brazil	-	43.3
Chile	-	12.2
US	11.8	11
Finland	13.7	9.8
Russia	-	6
Korea	6.7	2

Source: OECD 2014.

Although these tables show how far behind Brazil is relation to Chile in the education policy-area, the most striking point relates to the fact that, from the 12.7% of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary degree, in Brazil, only 2% declare they want to become teachers; in Korea and Finland, this percentage increases to 30% (UFRJ 2014). Taking this scenario into account, it is quite puzzling to notice that the unemployment rate in Brazil is decreasing considerably for more than one decade.

Table 5

Unemployment rate, Brazil

2000	2008	2011	2012	2014
12.7	7.9	6	5.5	5.0

Source: OECD 2014.

Data presented above indicate that either Brazilians are employed – which is positive - or that those who are unemployed have given up looking for jobs – which is negative.

In relation to the former hypothesis (Brazilians are employed), it might be the case that, paradoxically, this is not an entirely positive alternative, since – as we have seen - firms do not offer high-skill or high-wage jobs under hierarchical capitalism, and, for that reason, workers have no incentive to invest (time and money) in acquiring skills (Schneider 2013: 35). Moreover, in such context, the low-skill trap finds fertile soil, since those *with* jobs perform activities that are less sophisticated requiring no more than four years of study.

The latter hypothesis (unemployed may have given up looking for jobs), in turn, is not only negative but also perverse, especially considering the NEET¹⁶ rate for the population aged between 15-19, and between 20-24 years old. In Brazil, the percentages of the youth who are not in education, nor in employment are similar to countries that have recently faced deep economic crises, such as Greece and Spain. The following table brings to light those percentages:

Table 6

Youth who are not in education nor in employment, in selected countries

	Youth aged between 15-19			Youth aged between 20-24		
	2007	2009	2011	2007	2009	2011
Brazil	14.5%	14%	13.1%	23.4%	23.3%	24.3%
Mexico	17.5%	18.4%	18.9%	26.5%	27.6%	27.2%
Spain	10.9%	13.4%	12.8%	17.2%	26.3%	29.2%
Greece	8.5%	7.9%	8.3%	17.7%	18.2%	24.3%

Source: OECD 2014.

Also, considering the distribution of unemployment rate, according to age and region, inequality, again, prevails in Brazil. While the national unemployment rate is 5% in 2014 (Table 5), data collected by IBGE (2014) show that it increases to 10.7% for the population aged between 18-24 - the target audience of vocational education programs. Moreover, the unemployment rate increases to 12.5% for the 18-24-years-old in the poorest region of the country – the Northeast –, whereas in the richest region South region, it decreases to 6.7%. This situation is aggravated by the way political decisions have been made in a context of extreme inequalities, since they entail important changes that are still underway.

To illustrate this point it is worth mentioning that social policies designed to combat poverty may promote important *changes* by increasing citizen (social) rights – in the sense that low-income workers have had greater opportunities *to go to market* -, at the same time they favor *institutional reproduction*, as no improvement of the quality of the educational system has been achieved.

For example, measures taken by the Brazilian government for the last 11 years (since 2003) to promote redistribution have increased the wages of workers with low skill formation *eight times more* than those with high qualifications (INSPER 2014); however, instead of just decreasing inequality, these policies may result as an incentive for the youth not to invest in acquiring skills. According to data collected by the Ministry of Education, since 2011 (when PRONATEC was implemented), for instance, from 6.8 million new enrollments offered to low income workers, until 2014, one million students have already dropped out vocational education and training schools in Brazil (Folha de S.Paulo, 2014).

¹⁶NEET – not in education, employment or training.

Despite the fact that the start of the 21st century was a very dynamic period for Brazil, the country seems to be losing that window of opportunity. After all, only policies sustained over time that aim at improving quality can contribute to shift the profile skill of the Brazilian labor market and, possibly, start attracting more investment dependent on those skills. In other words, only sustained policies that envision quality in a systematic way can generate a reputation for labor markets with large pools of high skilled and of well-educated workers that today's globalizing economy requires. In this sense, education, in general, and vocational education and training, in particular, constitute not only key policy-areas for countries facing the challenges imposed by global competitiveness, but also the most efficient tools for state intervention in processes of social inequalities in the long run.

Data collected by Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014, however, show that Brazil is, precisely, in the opposite trend. Out of 149 countries, the ranking of the Brazilian quality of educational system (121st), of primary education (129th), and of math and science education (136th) has remained among the worse in the world (for many decades), as well as the ranking related to the "public trust in politicians" (136th).

In fact, the way the evolution of skill formation policies and institutions is taking place in Brazil, instead of promoting policy effectiveness, and the improvement of democratic practices and institutions and, with it, increase the country's capacity to compete in an international market, it has, in fact, favored institutional resilience, high regulation (for minority), and continuing high levels of informality.

Numbers like these indicate, on the one hand, that the Brazilian democratic governments are failing to expand citizen rights; skill formation policies and institutions are not evolving towards genuine inclusion, and vocational education and secondary schools have not succeeded in providing a reasonable quality of education.

On the other hand, the environment of mistrust in politicians and institutions reinforces the feeling that decision-making remains insulated, mechanisms of accountability are still to be improved, as well as the *know-how* of democratic practices.

In this context, we are losing our students along the way; and, with them, our capacity to combat inequality, compete in the international market, and succeed in the democratic path.

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