



The (dis)organization of primary education in the Vale do Paraíba in the state of São Paulo: from isolated schools and school groups (1893-1908)

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ABSTRACT. The article analyzed the organization of primary school in the Vale do Paraíba region in the state of São Paulo between 1893 and 1908, a period marked by the first republican actions for this educational segment. The main objective was to check for a differentiation between school groups and isolated schools in the region, regarding the material structure, the organization of teaching and the didactic-pedagogical activities of teachers, taking into account that these differences were legitimized by specialized literature. The sources were composed of reports and letters of directors of school groups, inspectors and teachers, as well as regional newspapers and the *Anuário do Ensino do Estado de São Paulo* de 1907/1908. We concluded that, unlike the dedicated interpretations of the theme, the location presented overlapping and mutual interference between these school models, especially by similarities revealed in everyday school life. This reality has raised possibilities of new perspectives on the composition of the primary school in their different contexts, assuming that school forms prior to the modern education paradigm - graduated, simultaneous and intuitive - not only resisted but found spaces for coexistence and confluence..

Keywords: elementary school, teaching methods, material structure, primary school teachers.

A (des)organização da educação primária no Vale do Paraíba paulista: entre escolas isoladas e grupos escolares (1893-1908)

RESUMO. O artigo analisou a organização da escola primária na região do Vale do Paraíba paulista entre os anos de 1893 a 1908, período marcado pelas primeiras ações republicanas para esse segmento de ensino. O principal objetivo foi averiguar se, de fato, havia uma diferenciação entre os grupos escolares e as escolas isoladas da região, no que tange à estrutura material, à organização do ensino e à atuação didático-pedagógica dos professores, levando em consideração que essas distinções foram legitimadas pela literatura especializada. As fontes foram compostas por relatórios e ofícios de diretores dos grupos escolares, de inspetores de ensino e de professores de escolas isoladas, além de jornais regionais e do *Anuário do Ensino do Estado de São Paulo* de 1907/1908. Conclui-se que, diferentemente das interpretações consagradas sobre o tema, a região apresentou imbricações e ingerências mútuas entre esses modelos escolares, especialmente pelas similaridades manifestas no cotidiano escolar. Essa realidade suscitou possibilidades de novos olhares sobre as composições da escola primária em seus diferentes contextos, partindo do pressuposto de que formas escolares anteriores ao paradigma do ensino considerado moderno - graduado, simultâneo e intuitivo - não só resistiram como encontraram espaços de convivência e confluência.

Palavras-chave: escola elementar, métodos de ensino, estrutura material, professores primários.

La (des)organización de la educación primaria en Vale do Paraíba paulista: entre escuelas aisladas y grupos escolares (1893-1908)

RESUMEN. El artículo analizó la organización de la escuela primaria en la región de Vale do Paraíba paulista entre los años de 1893 a 1908, período señalado por las primeras acciones republicanas para este segmento de enseñanza. El principal objetivo fue verificar si, de hecho, había una diferenciación entre los grupos escolares y las escuelas aisladas de la región, en lo que se refiere a la estructura material, la organización de la enseñanza y la actuación didáctico-pedagógica de los maestros, llevando en consideración que estas distinciones fueron legitimadas por la literatura especializada. Las fuentes fueron compuestas por informes y oficios de directores de los grupos escolares, de inspectores de enseñanza y de maestros de escuelas aisladas, además de periódicos regionales y del *Anuário do Ensino do Estado de São*

Paulo de 1907/1908. Se concluye que, diferentemente de las interpretaciones consagradas sobre el tema, la región presentó interrelaciones e injerencias mutuas entre estos modelos escolares, especialmente por las similitudes manifestadas en el cotidiano escolar. Tal realidad fomentó posibilidades de nuevas perspectivas sobre las composiciones de la escuela primaria en sus diferentes contextos, partiendo del presupuesto de que formas escolares anteriores al paradigma de la enseñanza considerada moderna – graduada, simultánea e intuitiva – no solo resistieron como encontraron espacios de convivencia y confluencia.

Palabras clave: escuela elemental, métodos de enseñanza, estructura material, maestros primarios.

Introduction

The article presents an overview of the primary school organization in the São Paulo Paraíba Valley region between the years 1893 and 1908. The time frame and the analysis of the sources were based on the comparison between the first school groups and the existing isolated schools to find out if, in fact, there was a differentiation of these school models, either in their material structures, in the organization of teaching or in the didactic-pedagogical activity of the teachers.

The research was based on the assumption, consacrated in the specialized literature, that school groups turned into the republican primary school paradigm by adding principles of the modern pedagogy emerging in the 19th century, while isolated schools were characterized as inadequate because they were models marked by the imperial past.

In order to conduct the proposed research, a documentary *corpus* was composed of reports and letters of principals of school groups, school inspectors and teachers of isolated schools, as well as regional newspapers and the *Educational Yearbook of the State of São Paulo, 1907/1908*.

The option for a regional approach is related to the productions of the historiography of Brazilian education, which started to prefer objects and themes of state, regional and/or local dimensions (Souza, 2013). It was sought, in this case, to examine whether or not the educational norms in the daily life of the primary schools of Paraíba Valley are effective, as well as the possible correlations between isolated schools and school groups.

We started from the perspective that cultural formations, including school formations, derive from the result of different interactive, conjugated or conflicting processes that produce distinct and dynamic social realities. In the words of E. P. Thompson (1998, p. 17), “[...] culture is also a set of different resources, in which there is always an exchange between writing and oral, dominant and subordinate, village and metropolis; it is an arena of conflicting elements”.

For this reason, the primary school organization in the Paraíba Valley of São Paulo was not

understood as an immediate product of the actions of the public authorities, nor the school groups as an overcoming of the old forms of primary education, but as a complex network of intersections and circulations of subjects, ideas, practices and knowledge conceived in and to the school, engendered in a given context.

The formation of the 'republican primary school'

In the face of the economic and political transformations that have occurred since the second half of the 19th century, Brazilian society experienced the expectation that the emergence of a republican regime would translate into material and intellectual benefits for the people. Education, more specifically the primary, became the hope of a rapid transition from a secular monarchist regime, a mark of a slave-based and illiterate society, to a modern model, inspired by the educational reforms that industrialized nations had made (Carvalho, 1989).

Because it concentrates the highest production of coffee, the Southeast region had the largest flow of wealth and investment, a factor that motivated government authorities in the state of São Paulo to promote changes in the public education system since the late 19th century, such as the construction of school buildings and the use of new teaching methods and materials (Reis Filho, 1995).

The so-called intuitive method became the symbol of the São Paulo republican propaganda. As with the entire conception of the educational system being implemented, its choice was also because it was the most propagated method in the international scientific circles (Schelbauer, 2003). This schooling procedure emerged in Germany in the late 18th century from the contributions of Basedow, Campe and Pestalozzi. Its innovation with respect to the so-called traditional methods consisted of the belief that the acquisition of knowledge came from the senses and the observation (Souza, 1998).

Valdemarin (2004) states that the intuitive method involved at least three definitions: 1) lead the student to acquire abstract concepts through concrete objects; 2) stimulate learning through the five senses through observation and touch to discern

the qualities of the objects employed; 3) sharpen the ability of the student to observe the knowledge and facts, using nature and industry, in their different aspects.

Despite the pretensions of transforming intuitive teaching as the method par excellence in primary schools, notably in São Paulo, the last decades of the 19th and early 20th centuries were marked by the coexistence of different modes of teaching by the variety of schools and their material conditions.

It was not uncommon to find teachers who were still guided by the individual method of teaching, characterized by the fact that the teacher teaches his students individually; it was a remnant of the domestic education that found its difficulties by the expansion of students, by the increasing compulsory education. As a consequence, the students stayed for a long time without direct contact with the teacher, there was an increase in indiscipline and the fragmentation of knowledge. In most cases, the choice by the individual method was due to the lack of materials capable of applying the mutual or intuitive methods (Vidal & Faria Filho, 2005, p. 47).

The mutual or 'lancasterian' method, attributed to the English educator Joseph Lancaster, was the attempt to resolve the expansion of students on account of the States assuming the duty to provide primary education, which made the individual method ineffective and costly. According to Faria Filho (2000, p. 141), the supporters of the mutual method believed that

[...] by establishing the appropriate material conditions, among which the main refers to the existence of an ample space, a teacher, with the help of the most advanced students, could serve up to one thousand students in a single school. Considering also that students would be busy and monitored by colleagues and the facility filled with an intense emulation between students, the time necessary to learn the first letters would be rather short in contrast to the individual method.

Although so popular in Brazil in the first half of the 19th century, the mutual method did not find conditions to be predominant in Brazilian schools, especially because there were no minimum material conditions for the application of this type of teaching, such as adequate spaces, didactic-pedagogical materials and appropriate teacher training (Souza, 2011).

In this way, since the course of 1830, the mutual method gave way to the so-called 'mixed methods', which corresponded to the combination of the individual and the mutual, or the latter with simultaneous teaching (Faria Filho, 2000).

According to Bastos (2004), simultaneous teaching, developed in France by Jean-Baptiste de La Salle from 1850, was disseminated in primary schools for its advantages in allowing a greater number of students to learn at the same time in contrast to individual or mutual teaching. Through blackboards, pictures, maps and other resources, the teacher addressed simultaneously to all the students who, in turn, performed identical tasks at the same time. In order for the education to become collective and homogeneous, it was necessary for the students to be organized in groups or classrooms where their levels of knowledge about the subject or the discipline were close to each other, which reinforced the choice of graduate schools in Brazil and their division by age group.

Concerns about combining all the innovations in progress – intuitive method, simultaneous teaching, graduated and serial classrooms – led the São Paulo government to express an intense propaganda about the need to build specific school spaces, consistent with the scientific knowledge that invaded the field of education, emphasizing medicine and, within it, hygiene, as parameters of spatial and behavioral organization (Gondra, 2004).

The most significant results of these orientations for primary school were the creation of the first school groups¹, the multiplication of isolated schools and the avant-garde role assigned to teachers in the execution of the project of civilization and modernity for the Republic.

The school groups were considered by republicans of São Paulo as 'temples of civilization', a school organization that would be able to implement an education system based on administrative and pedagogical rationalization devices. These schools were characterized by their own buildings, graduate rooms, principal and teachers capable of applying simultaneous teaching and the intuitive method (Souza, 1998). Their mission would be to bury the monarchist subject to establish the republican citizen, a term commonly used to describe the confidence in the new educational institutions and their methods for the modernizing project (Carvalho, 1989).

In contrast to school groups, isolated schools were located in rural or peripheral areas, they were reduced to a small room coordinated by a single teacher responsible for teaching children with different levels of learning and different age groups.

¹ Following the specifications of Souza (1998), the references of the handwritten and printed reports, in addition to the letters used as documentary sources in this research, will be listed with the following indication: SG (School Groups), IS (Isolated Schools), REP (Report), TI REP (Report from Teaching Inspectors) TCH REP (a), (Teacher Report) and LTR (Letter), preceded by the order number, by the Order Box (OB) and followed by dates when the sources indicate.

Besides, the responsibility of providing the place, the furniture and the educational materials was usually of the teacher, which implemented the precariousness of these establishments due to lack of resources (Faria Filho, 1996).

To Vidal and Faria Filho (2000), school groups gained the status of 'republican schools', called by the authors as 'monument schools', whereas previous teaching and school organizations, such as isolated schools, were qualified as 'schools of improvisation', starting from the assumption of a transition of these school models at the end of the 19th century.

However, it is necessary to relativize not only the assertion that the teaching organization of school groups was a republican creation, in view of similar experiences in the imperial period (Schueler, 2008), as it is necessary to consider the 'dialogues' built between the different forms of preliminary education that have coexisted, which did not mean a simple replacement of school groups over other school modalities, but rather an intense competitiveness, coexistence and interaction.

The correlations of Isolated School and School Group in the Paraíba Valley of São Paulo

This state panorama of primary school was observed in the Paraíba Valley of São Paulo with the advent of the Republic, making school education the "[...] emblem of the new political order" (Gonçalves & Mariotto, 2004, p.9). Thus, the first school groups emerged, bringing with them a whole set of conceptions linked to progress and modernity, at the same time as there was an expansion of isolated schools as an alternative to peripheral and rural populations.

The first school group in the region was inaugurated in Guaratinguetá in January 1895, called 'Doctor Flaminio Lessa'. In the same year came the SG of Jacareí, Lorena, Paraibuna, Pindamonhangaba and São Luiz do Paraitinga. Table 1 indicates the regional scope of the installation of the first school groups.

As shown in the table, the first ten years of the Republic in the region resulted in the creation of nine school groups, located in cities that, even with the decline of the coffee culture in the Paraíba Valley of São Paulo at the turn for the 20th century, managed to preserve some economic support by starting a certain diversity of enterprises beyond the agro-export sector².

² According to Ricci (2006, p. 23), "Coffee production in the Paraíba Valley [...] of São Paulo and the subsequent coffee price defense policy [...] maintained a flow

Table 1. School groups installed in the Paraíba Valley of São Paulo – 1894-1900.

Year of creation	City	Denomination	Installation date
1894	São Luís Paraitinga	'Coronel Domingues de Castro'	November 24, 1895
1895	Guaratinguetá	'Doutor Flaminio Lessa'	January 24, 1895
1895	Lorena	'Gabriel Prestes'	June 3, 1895
1895	Pindamonhangaba	'Doutor Alfredo Pujol'	January 24, 1895
1895	Paraibuna	'Dr. Cerqueira César'	June 28, 1895
1895	Jacareí	'Coronel Carlos Porto'	October 1, 1895
1896	São José dos Campos	'Olympio Catão'	July 3, 1896
1896	Taubaté	Grupo Escolar de Taubaté	September 1, 1896
1900	Bananal	'Coronel Nogueira Cobra'	September 22, 1900

Sources: São Paulo (1909) and Souza (1998).

In the same period, without the fuss created for the installation of the school groups, isolated schools went through a process of growth. The general situation of the isolated schools in the region can be analyzed from some numbers extracted from the reports of school inspectors João Mario de Freitas Brito and Olympio Catão, referring to the years of 1894 and 1895, and the *Educational Yearbook of the State of São Paulo* (1909), as seen in Table 2.

Table2. Isolated schools in the cities of the Paraíba Valley of São Paulo – 1894-1908.

City	No. of isolated schools (1894-1895)	No. of isolated schools (1907/1908)	Growth (%)
Buquira	5	6	16
Caçapava	12	25	52
Guaratinguetá	26	36	28
Jambeiro	3	8	62
Pindamonhangaba	12	40	70
Redenção da Serra	5	11	54
São Bento	7	39	82
São José dos Campos	20	32	37,5
Taubaté	37	58	36
Total	127	255	50

Source: TI REP from João Mario de Freitas Brito (1894-1895); São Paulo (1909).

Data confirm an increase in the number of isolated schools in these cities within the circumscribed period³, which indicates the governmental option (state and municipalities) to expand the primary education network through the less costly routes to the public coffers, especially because the maintenance of these schools was the direct responsibility of teachers. Because of this, the lack of materials was almost unanimous in the

of capital [...]", which provided, in the face of the rural exodus and swelling of cities, the first steps of industrialization, especially by the textile industries.

³ No data were found of isolated schools of some cities in the period of 1894-1895 and, consequently, it was not possible to make a wider evaluation of the Paraíba Valley. However, the data extracted from the *Educational Yearbook of the State of São Paulo of 1907/1908* point to the same growth effect of isolated schools in other cities in the region: Cruzeiro (23), Cunha (22), Jacareí (38), Lorena (39), Natividade da Serra (14), Paraibuna (40), Queluz (27), São Luís do Paraitinga (22) and Tremembé (8).

isolated schools, a regular mark of the reports sent to the district inspector of education.

An example found in the words of teacher Francisco Gabriel Guimarães, who, had been for sixteen days in the IS of Sertãozinho neighborhood in São José dos Campos, revealed that his school suffered from “[...] the lack not only of an appropriate building but also of furniture, books and other objects necessary for teaching” (Guimarães, 1895, Cx. 5101).

Another difficulty of teachers rested on the need to assume with their own resources the rent of the room and, at the same time, to acquire the furniture for the operation of the school. Teacher Glicério Rodrigues reported that he exercised

[...] the duties of his public function in a relatively inadequate room, unable to meet any hygienic requirement; this because it – the classroom – costs the sum of a part of my private resources, too small to be able to improve the lot of disciples (Rodrigues, 1890b, Cx. 5101).

The teacher himself already pointed to the need for changes as to the priority that education should have in the new government, since his work reality was little different from imperial times: “[...] we continue to aim at overcoming a new reform that will improve our salaries, that give us furnitures and buildings for classes, since the School Fund⁴ does not meet these needs” (Rodrigues, 1890a, Cx. 5101).

The reform sought by Glicério Ramos came from the Law No. 88, of September 8th 1892, when establishing a remodeling in the primary education of São Paulo (São Paulo, 1892). However, one year after the law was enacted, teacher Sebastião Hummel emphasized that “[...] we are still teaching in the old regime, that is, with the resources that the students themselves bring, since to this day it has not yet been extended to all places the benefits of the current Reform”. Months later he stated that “[...] we continue to expect the provision of school books and other advantages promised by the present laws governing public education” (Hummel, 1893a, 1893b, Cx. 5101).

It was recurrent after the precarious description of the school to recall the state’s duty on education, as did teacher Júlio Marcondes do Amaral, who, after saying that “The furniture is not good and can not meet the specific requirements for the convenience of girls [...]”, recalled that

[...] it is necessary to reform, at that point, the chair of the Alto Ribeirão, a reform that I hope to happen in a few days, thanks to the attentions that you have always known to connect with everything that refers to the improvement of the Public Education (Amaral, 1890, Cx. 5081).

In other cases, teachers stressed the fact that this was not the first time they had mentioned the matter in their reports:

As I have narrated in other reports that I have sent to this Directorate, the school that is under my direction needs a lot of furniture and utensils, because those it possesses were purchased at my expense, and, besides being insufficient for the governance of the school, they are also little appropriate for this purpose. To express the difficulty with which I struggle, it suffices to say that I only have room for nine boys to write; however, there are thirty-nine writing, as can be verified by the map attached to the report (Silva, 1891, Cx. 5081).

Even those teachers who taught in schools located near urban centers lacked better conditions for their function. Teacher João Mário de Freitas Brito, from Pindamonhangaba, celebrated for his school “[...] was located in a place that, to a certain extent, satisfies the pedagogical and hygienic demands, [...] in downtown city, in a way that facilitates daily frequency”. However,

As for the furniture, I am really sorry to tell you that it is very poor, and what is there is in a deplorable state. The love I have for teaching makes me work with determination, only discouraged, when a visitor, a father, a guardian, when noticing the poor state of the furniture, judges me with the duty to replace it and advises me to renovate it (Brito, 1890, Cx. 5081).

A year later, the material situation of the school had not changed according to the description of the teacher: “It penalizes me, a citizen, to add that the furniture is bad, having only three seats and two broken desks; the rest of the existing furniture has been borrowed” (Brito, 1891, Cx. 5081).

Others were even more emphatic in describing the little furniture and other materials they had, such as the description of the couple of teachers Fidêncio Lopes Trigo and Adelaide de Azevedo Trigo. While the husband remembered that most of the objects that his room possessed were purchased with his expenses and were not appropriate for teaching, the wife was categorical in reporting that

[...] the school under my direction suffers from the intolerable lack of furniture with hygienic conditions, since the one I have consists of: 10 desks,

⁴ The mentioned School Fund was an attribution of the Municipal Councils in raising funds for the operation of the elementary schools, however, most of the municipalities of the Paraíba Valley of São Paulo were not able to keep this Fund that was capable of meeting the demands, so that the burden of this obligation was on the teachers themselves.

in the format of the North American ones. The classroom that is an integral part of the house where I live does not excel in the hygienic conditions such as by the lack of light. Due to the substantial lack of personal books and within the reach of the children's intelligences, besides that there is not, for now, a support point for the development of the current program of preliminary schools as well as due to the thousands of obstacles that I have encountered in the development of the aforementioned program; currently, it is impossible standardizing class teaching (Trigo & Trigo, 1893, Cx. 5101).

In another revindicating way, teacher Amélia de Godoy Correa took the opportunity in her report to emphasize the discrepancies between her training and the reality of the school where she was nominated: "For those who practiced at the Model School and had the occasion to appreciate the joy and conveniences that children who go there experience [...], it is very unpleasant the perceived impression when entering a poorly furnished school such as this one" (Correa, 1894, Cx. 5081).

The school deficiencies were also presented by the teaching inspectors, such as the occurrence described by João Mário de Freitas Brito⁵, when visiting the IS from the Mellos neighborhood in São Bento do Sapucaí, finding it "[...] completely devoid of furnitures". In a meeting with the teacher and the students' parents, "[...] they committed themselves to supply the necessary tables and benches, however being necessary that they send 15 booklets, 10 first books, 6 second, 6 third, 6 arithmetic and 6 Portuguese grammar, as well as some notebooks for writing" (Brito, 1896a, Cx. 5081).

The sources indicate that, at that time, the school was answered, since three months later the same inspector again requested books for the city of São Bento do Sapucaí, but this time for the teacher of the district of Quilombo. Conscious of the possible refusal by the State to provide the materials, if they interpreted that the materials were intended for the same school, Freitas Brito was keen to stress: "[...] since it was not the same teacher endowed with this provision" (Brito, 1896b, Cx. 5081).

Not very far from the realities found in isolated schools, the creation and operation of school groups was also marked by a series of improvisations. Of the first nine school groups in the region, none of them were built with their own building. All of them had to live, at least during their early years, with adapted facilities and unusual situations to

receive certifications such as 'palaces' (Faria Filho, 1996), 'temples' (Souza, 1998) or 'real schools' (Schueler, 2008).

In Bananal, Jacaré and São Luiz do Paraitinga, their respective school groups operated initially in old buildings, demanding changes of buildings because they did not comply with the demands of modern pedagogy. In the SG of Guaratinguetá, 'Doctor Flaminio Lessa', the problems to find a suitable building forced the separation of the male and female sections in its first year of operation. For the SG 'Dr. Alfredo Pujol' of Pindamonhangaba, the separation between its sections was even more distant, lasting seven years (São Paulo, 1909).

In Taubaté, the first six years of operation of the school group were in rented private buildings. In the meantime, the situations in which the municipality and even the principals elaborated letters to the educational authorities requiring better material conditions for the teaching work were not uncommon. It was the case of Principal Arthur da Gloria who consulted the then inspector to determine the possibility of "[...] acquiring another building with other adaptations, because the existing building did not offer". In order to prevent himself to have one more request denied, the principal argued:

We do not intend, nor expect from the government, a palace for the education of youth in a population of more than ten thousand souls, but we have the right to count on one Group with the conditions of so many others disseminated by the government (Jornal de Taubaté, 1899, p. 2).

Besides the structure of the buildings, the school groups also suffered from the lack of didactic-pedagogical tools. The constructed representations of the graduate school made improper the use of the same materials of the isolated schools that were grouped. For this reason, the request for objects by inspectors and principals became constant, which also evidenced the inability of the State to supply even the basic items such as seats, blackboards, books and didactic materials, especially items of Physics, Chemistry, Geography, Natural History and crafts (Souza, 1998).

This can be exemplified by the SG of Paraibuna, which, since its creation, lacked quality school material (São Paulo, 1909). In Taubaté, two days before the inauguration (Sept/ 01/1896) of the school group, the report of the school inspector Olympio Catão to the Superior Council of Public Education stated that, for the functioning of the school,

⁵ From 1893, he assumed the position of teaching inspector in the 9th and 12th Literary District.

There is a shortage of school supplies; in some classrooms kerosene cans replace seats; rare are those classrooms having blackboard and none have geographical maps and globes yet. As for books, there were only 12 Galhardo booklets for each classroom as well as 8 first and second and 4 third grade books from the Kopke collection and 4 practical readings for each classroom (O Imparcial, 1896, p.2).

The same inspector, in a report sent in February 1896, requested the State to provide a series of materials claimed by the principal of the SG of Jacaréí. The extensive list requested the sending of more than forty items, such as a wall clock, a world map, a complete collection of Froebel, a thousand blank notebooks, twelve knives, etc. In response to the principal, the inspector informed

Despite the struggle in which I find myself, because the list does not include desks, lockers, daises, etc., so that, naturally, the Government does not give you such objects, but that only speaks about school utensils – properly; there is only authorization in this list for a wall clock (Catão, 1896a, Cx. 5101).

The situation of the SG of São José dos Campos was not different, because the report of the inspector Antonio Rodrigues Alves Pereira denounced a series of problems, which, according to his evaluation, compromised all the efforts of teachers and principal to equate with the Model School, especially because the lack of materials prevented a true differentiation of the institution from the isolated schools. In view of his discouraging description, the Secretary of the Interior demanded further explanation in the following report:

What [...] impressed me the most, in such a way as to think that the physical facility was terrible, was the part regarding the conditions and the placement of the furniture, and the lack of material and textbooks.

The school furniture is made up of chairs and desks of different types, and if some meet the requirements of the school, by the model they followed, others are old things that could do some service at most in adult evening courses.

Moreover, even those designed according to the modern pedagogy, such as the Chandlers, São Paulo and American (for two students) desks, they are in an improper state, since having served in several isolated schools, some in neighborhoods and others in schools in the nearby municipality that rejected them, they were reused without the necessary repair, reason why they have not yet been properly fixed, which disturbs the good discipline and consequently the teaching.

Furthermore, I must say that the material and existing textbooks are insufficient, noting many lacks that should be filled in fraternity (Pereira, 1901, Cx. 7026).

Certain school groups presented even more alarming situations, at risk even of not being inaugurated or being closed after the beginning of their activities. The SG of São José dos Campos itself experienced this situation, since it was a school “[...] marked by innumerable improvisations and interruptions of its activities during the period from 1896 to 1910” (Roque, 2007, p. 95). After almost three years of operation and after receiving information from its principal, the educational inspector Olympio Catão reached the conclusion that

By analyzing this document it is evident that this facility has no life conditions, due to the insignificant frequency and low enrollment. [...] I did not propose to suspend this group because I was informed that the reason for the low enrollment was the lack of teaching staff.

As you will see, this reason no longer exists, because it has too many staff members under the conditions in which it is today.

It seems to me, therefore, that the aforementioned group should be reduced to mere schools grouped in order to take advantage of the building (Catão, 1899, Cx. 5101).

As previously seen, the school group was reopened on March 22, 1901, but in 1908 it was again disbanded due to insufficient enrollment and attendance, together with the SG of Ubatuba, Cananéia and Bananal (Souza, 1998). In relation to SG ‘Dr. Cerqueira Cesar’, in Paraibuna, in a little more than a year of operation, the Superior Council determined that the establishment should function as Grouped Schools, since its administrative and pedagogical organization did not correspond to the norms of the school groups (São Paulo, 1909).

Faced with such similar realities for teaching, teachers of school groups and isolated schools did not differ much in teaching practice, which meant a distancing from the prescriptions that the manuals and the educational legislation presumed for the teaching of the first letters. In the midst of the precariousness and inadequacies, teachers adopted teaching methods according to their possibilities or philosophical convictions.

João Mário de Freitas Brito, during the period in which he was teaching in the IS of the 2nd Chair of Pindamonhangaba, stated in his report that “To achieve a good order in the distribution of

education, I use the mixed method, and, fortunately, with a good result" (Brito, 1890, Cx. 5081).

The follow-up of other reports in the following years demonstrated that his intentionality was to apply the intuitive method integrally when prioritizing "[...] the use of more practical than theoretical teaching" (CO. 5081, Rel. IE. João Mário de Freitas Brito, June/ 01/1892). However, his difficulties lay in "[...] maintaining the order of the Regulation regarding the placement of the students during school works, because there is no furniture and the one that is serving in this chair is on loan and, consequently, with chairs and desks of different sizes" (CO. 5081, Rel. IE. João Mário de Freitas Brito, June/01/1892).

Similarly, teacher Júlio Marcondes do Amaral, owner of the female chair of the IS of Alto Ribeirão, also of Pindamonhangaba, argued that he used the mixed method in his school, "[...] because, besides using the individual with the most delayed female students, I have the others distributed in classrooms, still not being necessary the help of an assistant because the average frequency regulates from 25 to 30, giving time to be under my eyes" (Amaral, 1890, Cx. 5081).

In the same neighborhood, but teaching in the male chair of the IS of Alto Ribeirão, the situation of teacher Julio Pinto Marcondes Pestana was even more difficult because, in his words, he could not achieve good teaching results because of the "[...] distribution of classrooms and the impossibility of applying the mixed mode, but individual with more work and less advantage" (CO.5081, REP teacher Julio Pinto Marcondes Pestana, Nov./01/1892).

As for teacher Júlio César do Nascimento, from Pernambucana IS of São José dos Campos, he was adamant in claiming that "I have not conducted in my school the teaching of civic education and geography by the absolute lack of methods adapted to the teaching of these disciplines" (Nascimento, 1895, Cx. 5101). In a similar situation, Maria Leolinda Villela, a teacher who took the female chair of the IS of Alto Ribeirão in 1895, denounced that she had "[...] little and incomplete amount of furnitures; I need the necessary objects for intuitive teaching, in which is ocuring in a modest room obtained by myself" (Villela, 1895, Cx. 5101).

Some teachers understood that, rather than the teaching method, what differed the learning was the natural ability of the student to learn. Pedro Silva, for instance, when leading the IS of Capela do Socorro, in Pindamonhangaba, claimed that his pupils "[...] progress gradually, with the exception of only a few who are almost completely devoid of

intelligence and unable of satisfactory performance" (Silva, 1890, Cx. 5081).

For teacher Etelvina Marcondes Cabral, registered in the IS of the 4th Chair of Pindamonhangaba, the performance of her forty students "[...] has not been satisfactory, and this is not due to the lack of efforts applied by me, but to the the irregularity with which they attend classes and the permanent coexistence with people who are completely illiterate" (Cabral, 1890, Cx. 5081).

The variety of methods and the very conception about them was so great that even teachers who claimed to use the intuitive method ended up combining other learning strategies or even confusing them. In the conception of Amélia de Godoy Correa, who assumed the school of teacher Etelvina in 1895, "[...] teaching in this school is all intuitive. Lessons are more empirical than theoretical, they are taught almost all in the Socratic way and some in the expositive way, etc." (Correa, 1895, Cx. 5081).

It is not clear, in the reports of the teacher, what she understood by 'Socratic method', but Souza (1998) believes that the mention of teachers to this type of instruction was about a system of joint responses of students from the simultaneous teaching. The fact is that the variety and incomprehension of methods were not exclusive to isolated schools, as school groups also presented similar situations, reported in reports and letters of principals and inspectors, denouncing the lack of uniformity related to the functioning of schools and the teaching applied.

In his report of inspection of the school groups under his jurisdiction, school inspector Virgílio César dos Reis stated that the director of the SG 'Gabriel Prestes', in Lorena, "declared me [...] that he has been fighting against the bad habits contracted by the students, their parents and even the staff of the group, during the period of decadence of this establishment". On the SG of Bananal, the problem was with the "[...] teachers in this Group, in general, [who] do not have the necessary training to teach the disciplines of the program" (Reis, 1901, Cx. 7026).

José Monteiro Boanova, in his visit to the SG of São José dos Campos, verified that, besides the hygiene problems such as the lack of running water, sewage and resistance of parents to subject their children to the smallpox vaccine, in relation to the "Methods and process of teaching [...] I have advised some changes in the teaching of some disciplines" (Boanova, 1901, Cx. 7026).

In one of his reports to the Board of Public Instruction, the principal of the SG of

Pindamonhangaba, Júlio Pinto Marcondes Pestana, was categorical in saying that the school

[...] is still in a lamentable state as with the other parts of its organization – such as furnitures that are bad – inefficient intuitive teaching devices, because they do not exist and also with regard to books and other objects and even it would be true to say that the Group is an incomplete educational establishment (Pestana, 1895, Cx. 5081).

In addition to pointing out irregularities in teaching methods, certain inspectors promoted meetings and conferences among teachers in order to standardize their actions in the daily school life according to what the modern pedagogy established. In this sense, João Mário de Freitas Brito held some meetings in Pindamonhangaba in 1896, such as the described in his report of May of that year:

[...] there was a meeting of all the teachers of this municipality, and discussing matters concerning the progress of the local public instruction were discussed, it was decided and there was complaint about a school library and the uniformity of teaching in the School Groups and in the other preliminary schools, whose norm is already in force (Brito, 1896c, Cx. 5081).

Two months later, the inspector reported in his report to the Board of Public Instruction that “[...] teachers of the female section of the School Group of this city suspended their classes through agreement with this inspectorate, to attend the classes of the other section, in order to standardize the discipline and methods of teaching” (Brito, 1896d, Cx. 5081).

With a similar strategy, inspector Olímpio Catão reported that “[...] teachers of the male section of the School Group of Jacarehy decided to give pedagogical talks in the main hall of the building acquired by the Government in that city” (Catão, 1896b, Cx. 5101). In addition, he invited on his own

[...] teachers Antonio Rodrigues Alves Pereira, Heitor Galvão de Moura Lacerda, José Antonio de Paula Santos and Lindolpho de França Machado to perform two public conferences – each, in the four municipalities that are part of this district, in accordance with the program adopted by the same Government (Catão, 1896b, Cx. 5101).

There were also individual actions by teachers for the standardization of teaching, which only denoted the difficulties of the schools in adapting to the new pedagogical guidances. Taking advantage of his role as a journalist in Taubaté, teacher Antonio José Garcia decided to start a series of reportages in the newspaper *O Taubateano* in 1903 to contribute to

a standardization of the primary education in the city. In his conception,

[...] conferences are the object of real interests and teachers would consider themselves dismissed if among their members there were those who wanted to escape a duty that expands and highlights the energy of the classroom that always acts in the most perfect harmony (O Taubateano, 1903b, p. 1).

A defender of the intuitive education, his journalistic conferences ended up denouncing the plurality of methods that exist in the city. For Garcia, the use of the new method in all Taubatean schools would produce

[...] the most important pedagogical reform in a country born of the ruins of monarchy, because the gigantic reforms could not fit into the narrow cavities of a regime displaced from all the generous ideas (O Taubateano, 1903a, p. 1).

The lack of standardization of teaching methods applied in primary schools of Paraíba Valley, both in school groups and in isolated schools, contrasted with the determinations that the educational legislation provided⁶; these realities also did not approximate strategies for the eradication of illiteracy built up from educational debates made by intellectuals and educational institutions since the second half of the 19th century (Faria Filho, 2000).

Final considerations

It is possible to deduce that the first decades of the Republic for the Paraíba Valley of São Paulo differed little from the imperial period regarding the scenario of primary schools. Even with the emergence of school groups, promise of significant changes in the educational system by the São Paulo state government, especially referred to the adoption of their own buildings, serial rooms, simultaneous and intuitive methods, what they saw was an expansion of isolated schools and a small number of school groups. The precariousness of the buildings, furniture and teaching materials, as well as irregularities in didactic-pedagogical methods, brought to the fore more equivalences than differences between the schools in operation.

It should be noted that, even with the precarious working conditions of school groups, they represented a breakthrough for the region in relation to isolated schools. The relevance given to graduate schools was born of the discourse that politicians, the press and educational authorities stated when

⁶ The State Law No. 88 of 1892 had already stipulated in its article 6 that all preliminary schools should observe “[...] rigorously the principles of the intuitive method” (São Paulo, 1892).

comparing the two school modalities. This comparison was solidified in the social representations due to the visibility that the school groups contained to the detriment of the rural and peripheral schools; this is because these establishments were installed in the most central urban areas, dividing prominence with other representative institutions, such as the church, the tax collection office, the post office, the city council, etc. It was much more about to 'make believe' than effectively to "be".

The predilection in the specialized educational historiography in investigating the formation and the functioning of graduate school reiterated, to some extent, the speeches of the political and educational authorities about burying the old compositions of primary school. However, the treatment of sources showed that, in the Paraíba Valley of São Paulo, the different organizations of this educational segment not only coexisted but also imbricated, which indicates the possibility of approaches that make a verification of the constitution of primary school beyond an Empire/Republic approach. Approaches not considered from the point of view of the formation of school groups and their dichotomy with isolated schools, but which especially focus on the coexistence, similarities, interactions and intersections between 'improvised schools' and 'monument schools'.

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