

THE RURAL EDUCATION IN THE REPORTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AND COORDINATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION OF THE FEDERAL DISTRICT (1960-1971)

A educação rural nos relatórios do departamento de ensino elementar
e coordenação de educação primária do distrito federal (1960-1971)

La educación rural en los informes del Departamento de Educación Primaria y
Coordinación de Educación Primaria del Distrito Federal (1960-1971)

JUAREZ JOSÉ TUCHINSKI DOS ANJOS

Universidade de Brasília, Brasília, DF, Brasil. E-mail: juarezdosanjos@unb.br

Abstract: The objective of this article is to outline the rural education offered in the Federal District as represented in the reports of the Elementary Education Department/Primary Education Coordination of the Educational Foundation, between 1960 and 1971. The conclusions indicate that the rural guidance service to have put into practice, with some success, the principles of Helena Antipoff's ruralist pedagogy. The rural schools had architectural guidelines proposed by the rural guidance service. Numerically, they represented a small portion of the public school network, but even so, they received special attention for their operation. Population fluctuations seem to have interfered in the daily life of these schools, defining conditions for their opening or closing.

Keywords: rural schools; pedagogical ruralism; rural guidance.

Resumo: O objetivo do artigo é delinear a educação rural ofertada no Distrito Federal conforme representada nos relatórios do Departamento de Ensino Elementar/Coordenação de Educação Primária da Fundação Educacional, entre os anos de 1960 e 1971. As conclusões apontam que o serviço de orientação rural colocou em prática, com algum êxito, os princípios da pedagogia ruralista de Helena Antipoff. As escolas rurais tiveram diretrizes arquitetônicas propostas pelo serviço de orientação rural. Numericamente, representavam uma pequena parcela da rede de escolas públicas, mas, ainda assim, recebiam atenção especial para seu funcionamento. As flutuações populacionais parecem ter interferido no cotidiano dessas escolas, demarcando condições para sua abertura ou fechamento.

Palavras-chave: escolas rurais; ruralismo pedagógico; orientação rural.

Resumen: El objetivo de este artículo es describir la educación rural ofrecida en el Distrito Federal según se representa en los informes de la Departamento de Educación Elemental/Coordinación de Educación Primaria de la Fundación Educativa, entre 1960 y 1971. Las conclusiones indican que el servicio de orientación rural ha puesto en práctica, con cierto éxito, los principios de la pedagogía ruralista de Helena Antipoff. Las escuelas rurales contaban con directrices arquitectónicas propuestas por el servicio de orientación rural. Numéricamente representaban una pequeña porción de la red de escuelas públicas, pero aún así recibían atención especial por su funcionamiento. Las fluctuaciones demográficas parecen haber interferido en la vida cotidiana de estas escuelas, definiendo las condiciones para su apertura o cierre.

Palabras clave: escuelas rurales; ruralismo pedagógico; orientación rural.

INTRODUCTION

According to the 1964 School Census, 51% of school-age children in Brazil lived in rural areas (Souza-Chaloba, 2023). Schools serving this population therefore played a crucial formative role. Only in recent years, however, has this reality been more systematically examined by historians of education, as evidenced by the steady publication of collective volumes on rural education (Werle, 2007; Werle, 2010; Lima & Musial, 2016; Werle et al., 2018; Souza-Chaloba et al., 2020a, among others) and by thematic dossiers in journals devoted to the history of education (Werle, 2011; Souza & Ávila, 2014; Souza-Chaloba & Lima, 2023). The rural school revealed by historical research, however, carried with it some distinctive marks from the urban areas, as observed by Elizabeth Sá and Marineide Silva (2014, p. 63):

In rural areas, the situation contrasted sharply with that of urban centers. Owing to their geographic isolation and limited accessibility, rural schools were frequently neglected by public authorities, a condition that affected both their pedagogical organization and the basic structural requirements necessary for teaching. Problems such as low salaries, unsanitary housing, and job instability plagued the teaching staff, and in many cases, teachers depended solely on community support to remain in rural areas.

For schools in rural areas, often operating precariously, a "specific pedagogy for rural people was proposed, one that would lead them to settle in the countryside" (Bezerra Neto, 2016, p. 9), which would become known as pedagogical ruralism¹. Although educators linked to the movement for the renewal of Brazilian public schools – the so-called *Pioneiros da Escola Nova* (or *Pioneers of the New School*) – advocated for a common school for both rural and urban areas (Souza-Chaloba, 2023), it was the ruralist model that was most widely used in the education of rural populations. According to Elizabeth Sá, Carlos Henrique de Carvalho, and Luciana Assis e Silva (2018, pp. 958-959):

[...] the proposal defended by the rural movement revolved around three fundamental elements for a differentiated education: the teacher, the teaching method, and the curriculum. For this movement, teachers should enhance teaching in order to provide opportunities for people to remain in the countryside, take pride in their way of life, and have an education that meets the needs of each region.

¹ Agnes Moraes (2021) proposes a revision of the term "pedagogical ruralism," coined in the 1980s by critics of the model, and advocates the use of the expression "ruralization of education," which is more consistent with the vocabulary of the time when these schools operated. However, I believe that "pedagogical ruralism" is still a valid concept for expressing the historical educational phenomenon of rural schools and, moreover, is shared by most historical-educational studies on the subject.

International pedagogical models circulating in Brazil, such as those disseminated by the International Bureau of Education and UNESCO (Celeste Filho, 2020), also contributed to the education of children in rural areas. Since its creation in the late 1940s, UNESCO had recommended that the education of rural populations incorporate improved cultivation methods, soil conservation and fertility restoration, erosion control, the replacement of rudimentary tools with machinery, as well as irrigation and drainage—thus reiterating the view that basic education should serve as a driver of rural development (Werle, 2007, p. 10). The education of rural populations in Brazil, on the other hand, also drew on broader social representations of the countryside and the city, such as those examined by Raymond Williams (1989) for the British context, which are also valid for 20th-century Brazil:

Powerful emotional attitudes crystallized and became widespread around existing communities, which were historically quite varied. The countryside became associated with a natural way of life – of peace, innocence, and simple virtues. The city was associated with the idea of a center of achievements – of knowledge, communication, and light. Powerful negative associations also arose: the city as a place of noise, worldliness, and ambition; the countryside as a place of backwardness, ignorance, and limitation (Williams, 1989, p. 11).

This was the pedagogical and social context of Brazilian rural schools when Brasília was inaugurated on April 21, 1960. While Anísio Teixeira advanced an innovative and comprehensive educational system for the city—more specifically, for the Pilot Plan—encompassing all levels from kindergarten to university (Anjos, 2022), the proposal for rural areas emerged in a more diluted form within the supply plans for the new capital, which sought to establish a surrounding green belt to secure the subsistence of the urban population. As Maria Fernanda Derntl writes (2020, pp. 13-14, emphasis added):

In 1958, while serving on the Supply Council and still in Rio de Janeiro, Lucídio Albuquerque wrote the monograph *Introduction to Regional Urban Planning: Brasília's Supply System*, published in 1960 by Novacap. [...]

Albuquerque described a model for the occupation of the rural territory of the Federal District based on agro-villages or, in the term he more commonly used, Rural Socioeconomic Units (USERS). The purpose of the USERS was to support the development of rural communities in their area of influence and to articulate a cooperative production system. Each of them would have rural administration offices, a post office, medical and hospital assistance establishments, a police station, a *primary school*, parks,

cultural, leisure and recreation centers, and churches, in addition to a residential core.

As can be seen, Lucídio Albuquerque's plan shared the ideal of creating agro-villages that would allow peasants to work the land, guaranteeing them all the conditions to settle and produce there. Just as the Pilot Plan would be equipped with public facilities, the Rural Socioeconomic Units would include, among other institutions, a primary school, so that the children of farmers could have access to education without having to travel to the urban center. In practice, this plan served only as inspiration for the supply model that was effectively established in the Federal District (Derntl, 2020), structured around Farms and Rural Nuclei with facilities similar to the Rural Socioeconomic Units. In the absence of other documents, the circulation of these models for the organization of rural areas partially explains the existence and implementation of rural schools in this federative unit. Despite all the agricultural planning surrounding the establishment of rural schools in the Federal District, they have not yet been the subject of historiographical studies, a gap that an ongoing research project²– of which this article presents initial results – aims to fill.

Given the above, my objective in this article is to outline the rural education offered in the Federal District as represented in the reports of the Department of Elementary Education/Coordination of Primary Education of the Educational Foundation³, between the years 1960 and 1971.

Apparently, every year, the elementary education department – from 1965 onwards, the primary education coordination – produced a report on the sector's activities, to be presented to the Federal District Prefecture. During frequent visits to local archives, both physical and virtual – which I have been undertaking since 2017 as part of an umbrella project I coordinate⁴– I managed to locate only three of these reports: two annual reports and one that summarizes the first decade of Brasília's education system. In the absence of other reports, they constitute an arrow made of little wood, to paraphrase Dominique Julia's metaphor (2001), with which it is possible, albeit in a fragmented way, to grasp representations of rural education as practiced in the Federal District during the period covered by the located reports.

The first report located, from 1963, was produced by Professor Helena Reis, director of the Department of Elementary Education of the Federal District between 1961 and 1965. This report was found in the Historical Archive of the National Institute of Pedagogical Studies Anísio Teixeira (INEP), located in Brasília. Helena Reis is a figure in the history of education in Brasília who still awaits further study. What I know about

² This refers to the research project "A history of rural schools in the Federal District (1960-1971)".

³ Until 1965, the sector responsible for primary schools was called the Department of Elementary Education. From that year onwards, it was renamed the Coordination of Primary Education. As it is the same body with just different names, I have chosen to use both names, separated by a slash throughout the text.

⁴ I am referring to the research project "History of school cultures in Brasília (1960-1971)" within which I have been supervising master's and undergraduate research students in the Professional Education Graduate Program at the University of Brasília.

her so far, thanks to information obtained from other documents in the same historical archive, is that she was from Minas Gerais, a graduate of the PABAE (Brazilian-American Assistance Program for Elementary Education), and completed part of her studies in the United States. It was certainly this cultural capital that qualified her to assume the coordination of elementary education in Brasília in 1961, a position she held until her death in 1965. It is significant that the only known copy of her report is part of the INEP Historical Archive, which attests that this educator sought not only to account to the mayor for the work of her sector, but also to the Institute that had provided her with part of her training, as a kind of testament that she was fulfilling what was expected of a former PABAE-INEP scholarship recipient.

The second report, dated of 1968, was written during the tenure of Professor Anna Bernardes da Silveira Rocha, an employee of the Educational Foundation of the Federal District. It is not possible to say whether she was the sole author or shared authorship with the team she presided over. This report was located in the collection of the Central Library of the University of Brasília (BCE), which may indicate that it was a common practice to send copies to public bodies in the Federal District, aiming to disseminate the results obtained from the work of the then Primary Education Coordination of the Federal District Prefecture. However, this is a difficult hypothesis to confirm, since only the 1968 report still exists in the BCE collection today. Could other volumes have been sent and lost/discarded over the years? A plausible question, but one that cannot be verified at this time.

The third report, from 1971, unlike the previous ones, covers the history of the work of the Department of Elementary Education/Coordination of Primary Education, from the years of Brasília's construction – when this department did not even exist – until 1971, the year before the reform of primary and secondary education via Law No. 5,692. The report is part of the virtual collection of the Museum of Education of the Federal District, which has been locating and preserving documents related to the history of local education for over a decade. Possibly, this report was provided to the museum by one of its authors, Professors Santa Alves Soyer and Edna Batista Spínola Leal. I only obtained information about Santa Soyer, who, according to Adirson Vasconcelos (1992, p. 919), in his book *Os pioneiros da Construção de Brasília* (or *The Pioneers of Brasília's Construction*), was:

Professor. First Director of the First School of Novacap and General Coordinator of the schools maintained by the Urban Development Company of the New Capital during the epic construction of Brasília [...]

His greatest achievement, however, was in his role as General Coordinator of the Novacap Schools, both during the construction of Brasília and after its inauguration, when modern primary schools were established in the Plano Piloto and the satellite cities of the new capital.

The report in question, which was typewritten, was constructed, in part, from the memory of one of the early teachers in the Brasília education system with experience in management, but also, as mentioned several times in the text, from consulting annual reports from the Department of Elementary Education/Coordination of Primary Education which, not having been located until now, have their information, in part, recorded in this decennial report on primary education in Brasília.

These three reports are taken as a representation of the educational past of the Federal District; representation understood as “incorporated intellectual schemes that create figures thanks to which the present can acquire meaning, the other become intelligible, and space is deciphered” (Chartier, 2002, p. 17). In their writing, they served a dual purpose: to record/represent the recent educational past of the period they covered – whether a year or a decade – and to justify/represent, in the present in which they were produced, the successes and limitations of educational practice in the new capital, making them political-educational instruments, used to give meaning to the state of affairs as well as to advocate for the improvements that the coordinators of elementary/primary education considered necessary for the sector under their responsibility. Among the aspects they covered, ranging from curricula to teacher profiles, I am interested in the data relating to rural education in the Federal District.

In methodological terms, I carefully read each of these reports, cataloging the information related to rural education. Secondly, after reviewing the cataloged data, I assigned keywords or descriptors to summarize the content of each individual piece of information. In a third reading, I grouped the descriptors by thematic approximation, resulting in two categories for analysis: data on the rural guidance service of the Department of Elementary Education/Coordination of Primary Education and data on the operating conditions of rural schools. In this process, the time frame was also defined: from 1960, the date of the first information on rural education present in the documents, until 1971, when the last of the reports concludes.

The historiographical narrative, produced from these theoretical and methodological procedures, has two parts, each dedicated to one of the categories of analysis mentioned above. Finally, in a third and final section, some considerations are offered, bringing the text together.

ASPECTS OF RURAL GUIDANCE SERVICES

According to the ten-year report by Santa Soyer and Edna Leal, the first step towards creating the rural guidance service of the Department of Elementary Education of the Federal District was taken in 1961, when “in order to give special

attention to rural education⁵, a group of six teachers interested in the problem was sent to HIRE, MG" (Soyer & Leal, 1971, p. 13).

Throughout the 1960s, it was common practice to send teachers from Brasília to other states in the federation for further training, particularly to the cities of Porto Alegre, São Paulo, and Belo Horizonte, where the INEP's Regional Centers for Educational Research operated (Melo, 2016; Anjos, 2024). It is within this context that we should understand the initiative to send a group of teachers to specialize at the Higher Institute of Rural Education in Ibirité (MG), an institution run by the Russian educator Helena Antipoff. According to Valeska Pincer (2008, p. 48):

The Higher Institute of Rural Education – HIRE, was inaugurated by the Russian teacher and educator Helena Antipoff on August 14, 1955, and established on the Rosário Farm, in the municipality of Ibirité/Minas Gerais. Its creation was justified as an indispensable body for rural research and specialization, and it operated on the Rosário Farm between 1955 and 1970. It offered: seminars, workshops, community projects, internships, courses for supervisors, inspectors and teaching advisors, training and professional development courses for teachers who would work in rural education.

Among the range of courses that educators from Brasília could take, the one for school inspectors and advisors stands out, in which they may have learned about the rural initiatives that were being implemented at HIRE, such as school festivities, civic practices, music, singing, excursions, among others, as encouraged by the Institute (Pincer, 2008). They must also have undergone the rigorous selection process that required candidates for a position at HIRE to have "good physical and mental health, good social behavior, no disabilities that could jeopardize the teaching function, good oral health, and good results during the entrance exams" (Pincer, 2008, p. 61). This was undoubtedly a privileged place for those who wanted to enter the field of pedagogy for rural schools, which had in Helena Antipoff one of its most respected representatives.

The rural guidance sector of the Department of Elementary Education of the Federal District, however, only began operating the following year, 1962 – probably upon the return of the HIRE scholarship recipients,

and it began housing the schools Guariroba, Camargo Correia (Nações Avenue), Papuda, ETA 44, Palmeiras, Vargem Bonita, Barragem do Paranoá, Construtora Coenge, Fercal, Torto, Brazlândia, Riacho Fundo, Tamanduá, Limpeza Pública, Construtora Rabelo, Metropolitana, Kanegae, Primavera and Horto Florestal.

⁵ Higher Institute of Rural Education.

Some schools in the urban area were incorporated into the rural supervision area, given that the structure of these schools was much closer to that of rural schools than to that of urban schools. These were: Camargo Correia, Primavera, Limpeza Pública, Metropolitana and Coenge (Soyer & Leal, 1971, p. 17).

As can be seen from the excerpt above, there were already a significant number of rural schools in the Federal District (24 in total), which certainly justified the existence of a specific sector to monitor them. It is also interesting to note the inclusion of some urban schools, as they had a similar organization to the rural schools, which were mostly single-teacher schools and therefore multi-grade.

According to Santa Soyer and Edna Leal (1971, p. 17),

The objectives of the DEE (Department of Education) in establishing schools in the rural area of the Federal District were:
- the gathering of the community, so that adults could also receive the educational influence of small rural communities; planning activities with the necessary specificities for the education of rural people, ensuring them social, economic and hygienic living conditions, in order to keep them in the countryside and prevent their exodus to urban centers.

We can clearly see, in the objectives assigned to rural schools – encounter with the community; service to adults; specificities of the education of rural people; preventing rural exodus – that pedagogical current that historiography has consecrated under the title of pedagogical ruralism. In this conception, José Carlos Abrão (1986, p. 80) reminds us:

The intentions understand education and school as instruments for keeping people tied to the land; the critical content refers to teachers, methods, materials, and the content of teaching, considered to be based on verbalism (urbanism); as for solutions, it suggests that the school be reorganized to value what the rural environment offers and to be didactically and professionally beneficial for the realization of the political project.

Furthermore, this assumption of rural pedagogy—that the rural population was not “integrated” or “adjusted” to a social and economic system in which the land constituted the essential source of subsistence and wealth for both the individual and the nation (Abrão, 1986, p. 23)—is implicit in the writings of teachers in Brasília, particularly when they attributed to the school the role of ensuring for rural

inhabitants adequate “social, economic, and hygienic living conditions.” In this context, the school should transform the agricultural population, leading it to adopt habits and behaviors desired by the prevailing economic order, which depended on the countryside to produce its wealth. In the case of Brasília, this occurred with even more specific nuances, since the new capital needed rural labor to guarantee its supply and thus form its much-desired green belt.⁶

What was the work of the rural guidance service like? The teachers explain in their ten-year report:

A large part of the Federal District's territory was covered by rural advisors so that the Department of Education (DEE) would have objective data to suggest the construction of new rural schools. They surveyed the school-age population, the physical and socioeconomic environment, access routes, location, distance from the Plano Piloto (the central area of Brasília), and resources for establishing schools.

Typically, each school was visited by the advisors once a week, bringing teachers suggestions for teaching materials, a curriculum adapted to the rural school (adjusted by them), and encouragement for the teachers (Soyer & Leal, 1971, p. 18).

The work of the rural guidance sector was carried out through visits, during which the advisors learned about the reality in order to plan their intervention strategies. Among the aspects observed were the survey of the school-age population (in order to know if the community would require a rural school); the physical environment (possibly to ascertain the effective conditions for the functioning of a school), the population profile (anticipating the economic needs that the school would have to meet), access routes (at a time when, in a large part of the Federal District, there were still no roads connecting the rural area to the urban area) and other aspects, with a view to creating the most favorable conditions for the establishment of a school. The work method consisted of weekly visits to each rural school, with a view to intervening in three aspects of teaching: the teaching materials; the curriculum – “adjusted” to the rural environment – and the encouragement of teachers, motivating them in their work which, compared to that of urban schools, was more arduous and demanding, due to the distances and the specific environment in which they had to work⁷.

⁶ Regarding the problem of Brasília's water supply, see Derntl (2020).

⁷ Regarding the Brazilian reality experienced by rural teachers – which was not very different from that of the Federal District – historiography records that “...the practice of teaching in rural areas was intermittent, for brief periods and, in some states of the federation, carried out by lay teachers without specific qualifications, who became teachers in a continuous process of self-training” (Souza-Chaloba *et al.*, 2020b, p. 18). A unique

Considering that the first rural schools were established primarily as part of the supply projects for the new capital—rather than as an integral component of Anísio Teixeira’s educational plan discussed earlier—it becomes evident that the creation of the rural guidance service marked a shift toward incorporating these schools into the elementary education department. This movement provided them with a more clearly defined pedagogical orientation tailored to the rural context, in contrast to the schools of the *Plano Piloto* and the satellite cities, which were predominantly urban in character. And this was done using as a reference the model learned by the first group of advisors at HIRE, with the educator Helena Antipoff.

The results of the initial initiatives of the rural guidance service were described as follows:

The mentors achieved significant growth in their field of work, such as: readjusting the curriculum for rural schools, and organizing and ensuring the regular operation of agricultural clubs;

- Festive gatherings at schools on Saturday evenings or Sundays, to facilitate community attendance, which gradually brought people together around the school. These small celebrations featured puppet shows with an educational theme, especially for rural areas;
- Exhibition of material made by teachers and students at the end of the first semester; regular and efficient operation of school funds in all schools;
- Periodic meetings of parents in preparation for the establishment of a Parent-Teacher Association as another resource for the re-education of the family.
- The beginning of small libraries for farmers who lived near the school.

It was a serious, continuous and very well-planned work (Soyer & Leal, 1971, p. 18).

It can be stated that the pedagogical work developed by the rural guidance service had two particular targets: the students and their families. For the students, they "readjusted" the curriculum, encouraged the creation of agricultural clubs, and the production of teaching materials. For the families, they promoted festive gatherings, puppet shows, parent-teacher meetings, and the opening of small libraries for farmers. These practices were very similar to those encouraged by Helena Antipoff (1992) in her various writings on rural education, which confirms, once again, that the model learned at HIRE was appropriated and implemented by the counselors in the Federal District. Overall, Santa Soyer and Edna Leal consider that "it was a serious, continuous, and very well-planned work."

feature of the Federal District, however, to be explored in future studies, was the absence of lay teachers. All were trained in normal schools, even those who taught in rural schools (Codeplan, 1970).

Regarding the performance of the rural education guidance service in 1963, Helena Reis (1963) states that 40 meetings were held between the Directorate of Elementary Education and the rural advisors, who, in turn, undertook 356 visits to schools that year. It is opportune to reflect on the type of pedagogical relationship established among the rural guidance service, the Directorate of Elementary Education, and the rural schools. In the case of the Directorate, the relationship was established through meetings –encounters between equals, but hierarchically different– in which the problems of rural education in the Federal District were discussed and accounts of the work carried out were given to superiors. In the case of the schools, the method adopted was visits – going to the schools *in person* – in which the advisors, like a kind of missionary of the countryside, brought the “good news” of rural practices and the adaptation of the school and curriculum to the rural environment. Quantitatively, the number of visits far exceeded the number of meetings, which reveals the commitment of the rural advisors to learn about, supervise, but above all, guide how the pedagogical work should be carried out in rural schools.

Despite the significant number of visits, Helena Reis (1963, p. 75) notes:

Assistance to rural schools and schools in satellite cities was seriously hampered by a lack of transportation. The vehicles, insufficient in number, were taken out of service weekly for more than a day for repairs.

For the counselors to reach the schools –particularly those in rural areas– vehicles were needed to ensure their transportation over distances that could reach 60 km from Brasília. Modern transportation was necessary to reach the rustic environment where the rural schools were located. And there, problems arose due to a lack of transportation, either because the vehicles were insufficient for the demand, or because the vehicles required constant repairs, which took them out of circulation and prevented the rural counselors from working. Given this situation, Helena Reis states that it is necessary “The acquisition of at least two more robust vehicles for work in rural areas, since the number of units will increase both in this area and in the satellite cities.” (Reis, 1963, p. 75). By anticipating an expansion of rural schools, he foresaw the need to increase the fleet serving the Department of Elementary Education. Another peculiarity of the rural guidance service was that it operated even on weekends, thus requiring “the authorization for nighttime operation and on Saturdays and Sundays for two DEE vehicles, in order to serve rural communities” (Reis, 1963, p. 77).

This transportation problem seems to have been a constant, as revealed in the 1968 Report: “For the rural area, the lack of vehicles has resulted in poor service and, more seriously, the availability of advisors at headquarters” (Brasília, 1968, p. 65). The vehicle drivers, in particular, played an important role in this service:

We consider it appropriate to mention the good work of the drivers, always efficient and striving to serve well. Especially those who go to rural areas, who are forced to remain away from their headquarters all day, often without food (Brasília, 1968, p. 66).

Despite these obstacles, rural guidance work appears to have been carried out regularly over the years. In 1971, on the eve of the reform of primary and secondary education – which certainly impacted the organization of rural schools – Santa Soyer and Edna Leal state that, among the initiatives of the Primary Education Coordination, was the

Special attention to rural areas, including the implementation of technical-administrative supervision. Adaptation of elementary education curricula for rural education, development of tests for student readjustment (Soyer & Leal, 1971, p. 47).

A little over a decade after the inauguration of Brasília and the establishment of its first rural schools, the rural guidance service appeared to be firmly consolidated, routinely carrying out activities that, ten years earlier, had been regarded as innovative within the Department of Elementary (Primary) Education of the Federal District.

OPERATING CONDITIONS OF RURAL SCHOOLS

Another aspect represented in the reports from the Department of Elementary Education/Coordination of Primary Education of the Federal District is the operating conditions of rural schools. These are specific pieces of information, it is true, but no less important for understanding some facets of the daily life and organization of these schools. After all, as Carlo Ginzburg (1989, p. 177) reminds us, “if reality is opaque, there are privileged zones – signs, clues – that allow us to decipher it.”

A first indication drawn from the reports is the existence of rural schools even before the inauguration of Brasília. According to Santa Soyer and Edna Leal (1971), three rural schools were established in 1959: at Granja Modelo 1, in Tamanduá; at Granja Modelo 3, in Torto; and at the Kanegae Japanese colony. These were probably schools made of wood. This information confirms the interpretation that the creation of rural schools aimed to meet more immediate needs related to supplying Brasília, and not to a proper educational plan. Note that the three schools mentioned were established in areas responsible for materializing portions of the green belt of the new

capital: the farms⁸ and the Kanegae colony, the latter formed by Japanese immigrants who received the thankless task of making fruitful a land that was, in principle, unsuitable for cultivation⁹.

Alongside other public facilities, such as markets, health centers, churches, and post offices, these schools aimed to ensure the socialization of farmers and their adherence to a "modern" agricultural model designed for the Federal District. At least, this is what a 1960 publication from the Ministry of Agriculture – *Agriculture in Brasília* – states: "The modern farmer, like all human beings, is by excellence sociable, hence the need for the existence of socioeconomic institutions as polarizing elements of all activities in rural communities" (AIS¹⁰, 1960, p. 50). By contributing to the socialization of farmers, the rural school in the Federal District would later incorporate principles of pedagogical ruralism, spreading among this segment of the population – especially the younger generations – an attachment to the land and working with it, as a sign of a necessary agricultural modernity desired for that new unit of the federation.

It is now 1962, when the rural guidance service began to be organized. In that year, rural schools – which until then had been improvised – began to be built following certain architectural guidelines: "to achieve the proposed objectives, schools with two classrooms were built, separated by removable walls, a residence for the teacher, and an extensive area for agricultural activities and experiments" (Soyer & Leal, 1971, p. 17).

School architecture is not a minor detail in education. Rather, as Agustín Escolano (2001, p. 26) argues, it is,

[...] a program, a kind of discourse that establishes in its materiality a system of values, such as order, discipline, surveillance, frameworks for sensory and motor learning, and a whole semiology that covers different aesthetic, cultural, and also ideological symbols.

⁸ According to Joaquim Tavares, the Tamanduá Farm "was intended for work related to the production of seeds for pasture formation" (Tavares, 1995, p. 21), while the Torto Farm "was equipped to produce milk, eggs and chicken" (Tavares, 1995, p. 20).

⁹ According to Joaquim Tavares's history of agriculture in Brasília (1995, p. 44), "The first Japanese arrived in Brasília in 1956. That is, before the inauguration of the capital. They came on behalf of the Cotia Agricultural Cooperative. It was a group of approximately 30 people of Asian descents. They received (leased) land and settled on the banks of the Riacho Fundo (near the entrance to the Sucupira Farm) and in Vargem Bonita, forming the first rural nucleus of the Federal District. After a short time, they approached Israel Pinheiro to complain about the quality of the land. They said it was poor. It was difficult to produce there. Israel smiled and replied – Well, if it were good land I wouldn't need Japanese people. They started producing."

¹⁰ Agricultural Information System.

The implicit program in this architectural model designed for rural schools in the Federal District is that of a school adapted to the environment, with classrooms that could be expanded or reduced depending on the school flow – which, in turn, varied according to the fluctuations of the rural population. A school that, being far from urban centers, would need to provide shelter for the rural teacher who, thus, would have the opportunity to integrate into the territory she would have to educate. Finally, the extensive area for agricultural and livestock activities was the ultimate expression of pedagogical ruralism, in which the school would teach future farmers the best and most advanced agricultural techniques. This program, of course, is nothing original if we consider the rural school models circulating in the country, such as school farms, rural school groups, and typical rural schools, found in São Paulo by Agnes Moraes (2014) or in the state of Rio de Janeiro by Amália Dias (2014)¹¹. The lack of originality, however, attests to the effectiveness attributed to the rural architectural model, so much so that the Federal District adopted and adapted it to its reality, as the type of building that would best suit the objectives of rural education that was then beginning to be outlined in that region.

Since these schools had a rather limited staff – often just the teacher – an alternative was found for the cleaning and maintenance services of rural school buildings:

Considering that the price per student in rural areas was high that year, the DEE (Department of Education) devised a way to reduce this cost by using the labor of older children, on a rotating basis, for cleaning services, to whom a small gratuity was given. In this way, almost all the janitors (earning a minimum wage) in rural schools were eliminated (Soyer & Leal, 1971, p. 18).

In 1962, as the excerpt suggests, educating rural children in the Federal District became expensive, and the elementary education administration needed to save money. The solution was to forgo the use of servants, who received a minimum wage, and adopt child labor – that of older children, it should be emphasized – in exchange for a small gratuity. This solution, in our view, seems like a blatant exploitation of child labor, but in the educational circles of the mid-20th century, it could even be seen as pedagogical. At least, it was an idea disseminated by the International Bureau of Education and UNESCO at the Conferences on Public Instruction, which recommended, for example, in 1957, that children contribute to the upkeep and beautification of their school in the interest of their own education (Anjos, 2021). Thus, through the cleaning service, the young schoolchildren were educated in the

¹¹ The architectural model proposed for rural schools in the Federal District corresponds, more specifically, to that of the school farms implemented in the State of São Paulo in the 1930s, which consisted of a classroom, a residence for the teacher couple, and a cultivable area of at least 3 hectares (Moraes, 2014).

care and respect for the institution that provided them with the bread of instruction, which is why it did not seem inappropriate to report the fact in an official report on elementary education in the Federal District. Whether the measure remained in effect for longer is unknown to the sources. However, in 1963, according to Helena Reis (1963), there were 10 janitors in rural schools, a number certainly insufficient to serve all those that existed at that time, which suggests that the involvement of students in cleaning the school building may have been employed for a longer period than we know of.

Regarding quantitative aspects of rural schools in the first years after the inauguration of Brasília, Helena Reis (1963) provides some figures with which we can construct some interpretations. Between 1960-1963, she records the following evolution in the number of students in rural schools:

Table 1 – Enrollment evolution in rural schools in the Federal District (1960-1963)

Year	Total
1960	700 students
1961	1000 students
1962	1101 students
1963	1475 students

Note. From *Relatório dos trabalhos desenvolvidos pelo Departamento de Ensino Elementar do Distrito Federal no ano de 1963* (Reis, 1963).

In the first four years of Brasília's education system, rural schools showed a constant increase in the number of students, although representing a small contingent compared to the number of students in urban schools. In 1960, for example, while urban primary schools accounted for 4,300 enrollments, rural schools housed 700 (Reis, 1963). By 1964, when urban schools had 18,294 students, rural schools had 1,475 students enrolled (Reis, 1963). This reveals that the rural school would be – if this trend continued in subsequent years – always a restricted model, serving a small portion of the child population. But, no less important for that, given the existence of a sector of the Elementary Education/Primary Education Coordination dedicated to serving this type of school.

Also, for the period 1960-1963, Helena Reis (1963) inventories the evolution of the number of rural schools created in the Federal District:

Table 2 – Quantitative evolution of rural schools in the Federal District (1960-1963)

Year	Total
1960	10 schools
1961	11 schools
1962	16 schools
1963	22 schools

Note. From *Relatório dos trabalhos desenvolvidos pelo Departamento de Ensino Elementar do Distrito Federal no ano de 1963* (Reis, 1963).

In four years, the number of rural schools in the Federal District more than doubled, going from 10 schools in 1960 to 22 schools in 1963. Based on the data seen previously, this increase should not be attributed to the growing number of students, but rather to the expansion of the rural area of the Federal District, which, according to supply plans, ultimately required the creation of rural schools to serve the population arriving to dedicate themselves to agricultural activities. These schools, for the most part, had a single teacher and served a limited number of students in multi-grade classes.

Leaving aside the quantitative data – to which the other reports have nothing to add – let us return to the qualitative data. The 1968 report discusses a reality experienced by the rural populations of the Federal District, which ended up interfering with the functioning of schools:

It is common in rural areas and in squatter settlements (temporary housing constructions) for the population to move to other areas, which leads to empty schools and difficulties in improvising schooling in the new communities that are established. For the immigrant population, enrollment is always open, regardless of the time of year and not at the beginning of the school year (Brasília, 1968, p. 6).

The rural population of the Federal District – like construction workers – lived in a situation of uncertain land ownership, which frequently led them to move from one rural area to another. This was reflected in the daily life of rural schools: where one day there was a minimal school population, the next there might be none, challenging the Primary Education Coordination to build schools according to this population fluctuation. Or rather, to improvise schools "in the new communities that are established." Even so, the 1968 report emphasizes that enrollment in existing schools was always open to this population, at any time of the school year, which certainly also brought challenges to the teaching and learning process of these children, who ended up wandering from school to school to accompany their parents. This population mobility ultimately defined the fate of rural schools. For example, "due to reduced attendance, the activities of the Mocambo Rural School were terminated on 05/27/1968" (Brasília, 1968, p. 32).

One final clue regarding the operating conditions of rural schools, obtained from reports by the Department of Elementary Education/Primary Education Coordination, concerns the school meals offered in them. According to the 1968 report,

The storage of food supplies in CEP schools continues to be difficult, and few establishments offer the conditions for quarterly storage, as recommended by the CNAE. In many cases, the supply of certain goods exceeds consumption, especially in rural areas, and principals frequently request that the CNAE collect surpluses to prevent spoilage due to lack of proper storage [...] (Brasília, 1968, p. 54).

In 1968, the school lunch service in the Federal District was already organized. But it wasn't always that way. In Alana Luz's master's thesis (2022), it was demonstrated that, at the beginning of the decade, two years after the inauguration of Brasília, this sector was still not functioning and, on numerous occasions, it was thanks to the assistance of the School Fund that food could be offered to students. Based on this study, we can imagine that there were times when rural schools also suffered impacts from an irregular supply of school lunches, unlike what occurred in 1968, when the consumption of certain food items was less than what was sent to schools, causing them to return some of the food to prevent spoilage. The problem now was that few schools had sufficient facilities for quarterly storage – as recommended by the National School Feeding Campaign. This obstacle was certainly felt even more acutely in rural schools, which, as we saw earlier, were built with few classrooms and without provisions for canteens or storage facilities for school lunches. This constitutes yet another dimension of the daily functioning of such schools in the Federal District that the reports of the Department of Elementary Education/Coordination of Primary Education deemed necessary to document—perhaps in the expectation that those responsible would take measures to address it.

FINAL REMARKS

This article aimed to outline the rural education offered in the Federal District as represented in the reports of the Department of Elementary Education/Coordination of Primary Education of the Educational Foundation, between the years 1960 and 1971. Two aspects present in these reports emerged and could be analyzed: the rural guidance service and the operating conditions of rural schools.

Regarding the first aspect, it was possible to ascertain that, although rural schools in the Federal District emerged outside the official educational plan (which was predominantly urban in nature), they were quickly incorporated into the Department of Elementary Education/Coordination of Primary Education, even having a sector dedicated to them: the rural guidance service. This sector, organized by rural counselors trained at HIRE, seems to have successfully implemented the principles of Helena Antipoff's rural pedagogy, which thus became the model of rural education circulating in the Federal District throughout the 1960s.

Regarding the second aspect, the reports revealed the existence of rural schools predating the inauguration of Brasília itself, suggesting, once again, that they arose in the wake of agricultural rather than educational plans. These schools, generally with a single teacher, had architectural guidelines proposed by the rural guidance service, reproducing models already existing in other Brazilian states, but adapting them to the context of the brand-new Federal District. Numerically, rural schools represented a small portion of the public school network, but they still received

specialized attention for their operation. Population fluctuations seem to have constantly interfered with the daily life of these schools, determining the conditions for their opening or closing.

Beyond what was observed in this study, future research deserves to be carried out to analyze other aspects of the functioning of rural education in the Federal District that could not be analyzed, since the sources consulted say nothing about them. One topic to be investigated, for example, is how the appropriation of the anti-Poffan ruralist pedagogical model occurred in the rural schools of the Federal District, which will certainly require recourse to other historical sources, such as school documents, periodical press, and oral sources. These are questions that this research, in its continued development, may be able to answer. The results achieved so far already indicate the relevance of investing in this topic and are an invitation to further explore the past of rural schools in the Federal District.

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JUAREZ JOSÉ TUCHINSKI DOS ANJOS: Ph.D. in Education, in the field of History and Historiography of Education, from the Federal University of Paraná, where he also completed a postdoctoral fellowship, as well as at the Federal University of Uberlândia. He is Associate Professor of History of Education and History of Brazilian Education in the Department of Theory and Foundations and in the Academic and Professional Graduate Programs in Education at the Faculty of Education, University of Brasília. He is the leader of GRPUHE-UnB/CNPq.

E-mail: juarezdosanhos@unb.br

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4677-5816>

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RESPONSIBLE ASSOCIATE EDITOR:

Carlos Eduardo Vieira (UFPR)

E-mail: cevieira9@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6168-271X>

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