



“Teaching children is the priesthood that leads to good”: education, teaching and school in the newspaper *O Educador* (1921-1922)

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Abstract

From the theoretical-methodological perspective of the new cultural history, the objective was to analyze the conceptions of education, school and teaching conveyed by the journal *O Educador* (1921-1922), taking as source: a report of the director general of public education, two articles and two informative texts. The research was carried out mainly in the collections of the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico da Paraíba. After source survey and analysis, it emerged that the school of the first decades of the twentieth century was considered the first space of formation of the citizen, becoming a “temple of hope and faith”, with the mission of propagating useful knowledge to social life and shaping the moral personality of the student to the practice of the duties. In this context, there was a transition between the governments of Camilo de Holanda and Sólon de Lucena, with the emblematic struggle being the implementation of the Public Instruction Reform (1917, as a modernizing proposal. Thereby, the primary teacher would be a missionary who, exercising a sacred ministry with affection and dedication, formed, beyond the intellect, the soul and heart of his pupils, enabling them to serve their homeland, family and society. Thus, it is concluded that the focus of education was to prepare the student to move actively and disciplinarily toward the future of a better society.

Keywords

Education. Teaching. School.

“Ensinar as crianças é o sacerdócio que conduz ao bem”: educação, docência e escola no jornal *O Educador* (1921-1922)

Resumo

Sob a perspectiva teórico-metodológica da nova história cultural, objetivou-se analisar as concepções de educação, escola e docência veiculadas pelo jornal *O Educador* (1921-1922), tomando-se como fonte: um relatório do diretor geral da instrução pública, dois artigos e dois textos informativos. A pesquisa foi realizada sobretudo nos acervos do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico da Paraíba. Após levantamento da fonte e análise, depreendeu-se que a escola das primeiras décadas do século XX foi considerada o primeiro espaço de formação do cidadão, ganhando ares de “templo da



esperança e da fé”, cuja missão era propagar conhecimentos úteis à vida social e moldar a personalidade moral do educando à prática dos deveres. Neste contexto, vivia-se de transição entre os governos de Camilo de Holanda e Sólon de Lucena, tendo como luta emblemática a implementação da Reforma da Instrução Pública (1917), como uma proposta modernizante. Assim, o professor primário seria um missionário que, exercendo um ministério sagrado com afeição e dedicação, formava, além do intelecto, a alma e o coração dos seus alunos, tornando-os aptos a servirem à pátria, à família e à sociedade. Sendo assim, conclui-se que o foco da educação era preparar o educando para caminhar ativamente e disciplinadamente rumo ao futuro de uma sociedade melhor.

Palavras-chave

Educação. Docência. Escola.

“La enseñanza de los niños es el sacerdocio que lleva al bueno”: educación, enseñanza y escuela en el periódico *O Educador* (1921-1922)

Resumen

Desde la perspectiva teórico-metodológica de la nueva historia cultural, el objetivo fue analizar las concepciones de educación, escuela y enseñanza transmitidas por el periódico *O Educador* (1921-1922), tomando como fuente: un informe del director general de educación pública, dos artículos y dos textos informativos. La investigación se llevó a cabo principalmente en las colecciones del Instituto Histórico e Geográfico da Paraíba. Después de estudiar la fuente y análisis, se concluyó que la escuela de las primeras décadas del siglo XX era considerada el primer espacio de formación del ciudadano, ganando el aire de “templo de esperanza y fe”, con la misión de propagar conocimiento útil a la vida social y moldear el personalidad moral del alumno ante la práctica de los deberes. En este contexto, hubo una transición entre los gobiernos de Camilo de Holanda y Sólon de Lucena, teniendo como lucha emblemática la Reforma de la Instrucción Pública (1917), como una propuesta modernizadora. Así, el maestro primario sería un misionero que, ejerciendo un ministerio sagrado con afecto y dedicación, formó, más allá del intelecto, el alma y el corazón de sus alumnos, permitiéndoles servir a su patria, familia y sociedad. Por lo tanto, se concluye que el enfoque de la educación era preparar al estudiante para avanzar de manera activa y disciplinaria hacia el futuro de una sociedad mejor.

Palabras clave

Educación. Enseñanza. Escuela.

1 Introducing the sources

O Educador, a weekly newspaper, was created by the Society of Primary Teachers of Parahyba and had a significant publication for a short period of time, between 1921 and 1922, for approximately 10 months. Its objectives were to publicize the

theoretical and practical achievements in the pedagogical field and to demand the increased recognition of teacher's work.

It is worth mentioning that, during the period of circulation of *O Educador*, there was a transition between the governments of Camilo de Holanda¹ e Sólon de Lucena², and the emblematic clash was for the introduction of the Public Education Reform (1917), which was a proposal for a modernizing reform. Thus, in the context of the aforementioned newspaper was self-titled as an “entity of primary teachers” and placed itself as the main vehicle in defense of class interests and the dissemination of pedagogical methods that were considered modern for the time.

The *O Educador* was printed during the 4th and the 5th social year of the Society, which elected a new board of directors, with its term beginning on June 14, 1922, until July 14, 1923, constituted as follows: president - José de Mello, director of the Dr. Thomaz Mindello School Group; vice president - Elvira Beuttmuller, teacher at Grupo Escolar Cel. Antonio Pessoa; 1st secretary - Analice Caldas, teacher at the Night School Dr. Manoel Tavares; 2nd secretary - Izabel E. Ramos; Treasurer - Baptista Leite, director of Grupo Escolar Cel. Antônio Pessoa; vice-treasurer - Joaquim Santiago, teacher at Escola Dr. Venancio Neiva; speaker - Eudésia Vieira, teacher of the 7th mixed chair in the capital; librarian - Izaura Lacerda Lima, teacher at Ilha do Bispo (*O EDUCADOR*, 1922, p. 2).

Bastos (2002, p. 48) highlights the importance of the pedagogical press as an object and as a source of study for the history of education, asserts:

The study of the pedagogical press place in the social discourse, the editorial strategies vis-à-vis the educational and social phenomena, it's a rich source of information to the researcher about the rescue of the pedagogical discourse; educational practices; school routine, and the degree of teachers submission to official programs and instructions; official ideology and faculty, the capacity of innovation persistency it represents as well as the discourse contradictions.

Agreeing with the previously mentioned author, the problematization and analysis of the sources comprised of the pedagogical press, and specifically “newspapers, newsletters, magazines, made by teachers for teachers, made for students by their peers

¹ Francisco Camilo de Holanda era médico e governou a Parahyba de 22 de outubro de 1916 a 22 de outubro de 1920.

² Solón de Lucena era advogado e governou a Parahyba de 22 de outubro de 1920 a 22 de outubro de 1924.

or teachers, made by the State or others institutions such as unions, political parties, class associations, the Church [...] "(BASTOS, 2002, p. 49), it is possible to gain access to the ideas that guided educational practices, as well as evidence of their practices, the people involved in them, nuances, oversights, and particularities that other types of documentation often don't report on.

This statement doesn't mean to deny the intentionality, ephemerality, socio-political context, and ideological content that permeates and constitutes the production, circulation, and consumption of newspapers, magazines, or other press vehicles. On the contrary, the awareness of all those aspects should guide the researcher's perspective in their researches and investigations. At the same time, it is a challenge for the historian of education to find themselves faced with an action field steeped by interests, values, beliefs, and experiences that were chosen and represent conceptions of education, educational practices, valid knowledge, among other aspects, of third parties and individuals (SANTOS; NUNES, 2012). All particular details provided by press sources must be analyzed within its social, cultural, economic, and political context, as well as the discourses that were chosen, which show what was the select and authorized discourse and subjects; that points out to certain interlocutors with selected characteristics and expectations, which refers to their functions, objectives, purposes.

In the words of the general director of public education, Alcides Bezerra, the purpose of the newspaper *O Educador* is explicit:

Our primary teachers, in a movement worthy of praise, this week decided to found this newspaper, not only to defend the rights of their numerous class but also to disseminate pedagogical teachings within it. *O Educador* appears, therefore, under the best auspices and is bound to provide the most valuable services to Parahyba. It will be a repository of what has emerged in terms of teaching methods and processes, a champion of the pedagogical conquests, and also of this new and hopeful branch of knowledge - pedology. (BEZERRA, 11/1/1922, p. 1).

When Nóvoa (2002) established the periodical publications typology in Portugal, he defined six categories that organize them: 1. Educational system and school institutions; 2. Teachers; 3. Specific types of education and teaching; 4. Types of support and socio-educational integration; 5. Non-formal education, and 6. Educational sciences. In this case, the newspaper selected here fits in the Teachers category

because it was made by teachers for teachers, with the overt intention to express their ideas and interests. Nóvoa subdivides this category into 3 subcategories: a) training of teachers / regular schools; b) teaching associations, and c) educational action/teachers. Reading the newspaper *O Educador*, it appears that it has a dual function: representing the primary teachers, being the voice of this group's association, thus linking itself to subcategory b; at the same time that it intends to contribute to the dissemination of new ideas on education, functioning as an instrument for the continuous training of teachers, linking to the subcategory c. Still, in dialogue with the aforementioned author, the ephemerality of the newspaper stands out, which had a life of approximately 10 months, a characteristic also identified in most of the newspapers and magazines listed by Nóvoa in the Portuguese repertoire.

The newspaper *O Educador - Orgam do Professorado Primário* was created in 1921 and had its first publication on November 1, 1921, under number I. Organized by the most illustrious teachers of Parahyba do Norte, its first editorial staff was comprised of intellectuals who held the highest positions in education, namely: Eduardo de Medeiros (director), Manuel Casado (secretary), Sizenando Costa (manager), Manuel Vianna Junior (treasurer), José Baptista de Mello, João Baptista Leite, João Vinagre, João Falcão.

Its publication day varied between Monday and Tuesday in the first numbers, and from the 15th number on, sometimes it was on Thursday, sometimes on Friday. The last known volume is dated Thursday, September 7, 1922, under the number XLI.

Despite its short duration, it was a newspaper with intense editorial activity. Its texts preferably focused on education, as it was created to cater to primary school teachers. It functioned as a vehicle for the dissemination of articles dealing with school hygiene; the importance of school gymnastics; the concern with the quality of education for workers (night school); discussions about fashion, theater, and cinema, and their influence on idealized education to women; educational methods, among others.

Considering the structure and function of the source material for this article, the following classification was adopted: report, article, and informative text, as follows:

The report written by the general director of public education, Alcides Bezerra Cavalcanti³, is addressed to Sólon Barbosa de Lucena, the president of the state at the time, about the period from October 22, 1920, to June 30, 1921, and was published in 10 days, with an interval of seven or fifteen days, between November 1921 and March 1922. On January 1st, 1921, it occupies the 2nd, 3rd and 4th quadrants on page 2; on November 7th, 1921, it occupies the 2nd and 3rd quadrants on page 1; on November 14th, 1921, the 1st and 4th quadrants on page 2; on November 28, 1921 it is centered on page 1; on December 5th, 1921, in the 2nd and 3rd quadrants of page 1; on December 12, 1921, 2nd and 3rd quadrants on page 1; on December 19, 1921, in the 2nd quadrant of page 1; on February 6st, 1922, in the 2nd quadrant of page 1; on February 20, 1922, in the 2nd quadrant of page 2, and finally, on March, 2nd 1922, in the 2nd quadrant on page 1.

The report is divided into the following parts and sections: the first part (unnamed) consists of 1. Introduction (unnamed), 2. Need for the dissemination of teaching; 3. Teaching inspection - the absolute necessity of organization; 4. Kindergartens; 5. School buildings; 6. Moral, civic and religious education; 7. Teaching; Second part - Mention of the main occurrences, composed of 8. Sessions and deliberations of the Superior Council of Education. 9. Placements in public contests; 10. Removals; 11. Leaves of absences; 12. Bureau changes; 13. New schools. 14. Furniture. 15. School health inspection; 16. Teaching staff; 17. Deaths; 18. Public instruction regulation.

There are two articles. One, signed by João Falcão⁴, was published over two days, June 7 and 13, 1922. It should be noted that the publication on the 13th is a

³ Alcides Bezerra Cavalcanti (24/01/1891 [PB] - 29/05/1938 [RJ]) was born in Bananeiras, Paraíba, son of João Perdigão Bezerra Cavalcanti and Phelonilla Clara Bezerra Cavalcanti (belonging to the Carneiro da Cunha family). The parents' surname identifies their origin in traditional families and in the Paraíba oligarchies. He studied Humanities at the Liceu Paraibano between 1903 and 1907, then graduated from the Faculty of Law of Recife, in 1911. He held several prominent public positions: prosecutor of the republic, assistant public prosecutor of the capital, public prosecutor of Catolé do Rocha / PB, general inspector of education - when he wrote the report mentioned in this text -, secretary of the official press, state deputy (1920/1923) and director of the National Archives (1922-1938), position he held when he died. He was a journalist, critic, historian, folklorist, novelist and philosopher. He produced a vast work, which includes criticism, romance and history (BARBOSA, 2009).

⁴ Although the surname Falcão is known in Paraíba, linked to names like that of journalist Américo Falcão, who was director of the newspaper A União, the official press agency of the state of Paraíba, and of professor and historian Marta Falcão, until now it has not been possible find information about João Falcão, in addition to knowing that he was on the board of the newspaper *O Educador*.

continuation of the previous one (June 7), because on the title "The school ideal", as is on the 7th, was add "II". These are two short texts, occupied the center of page 2 of the newspaper *O Educador* on the 7th of June, and on the 13th they occupied the 2nd, 3rd and 4th quadrants of the first page. The text "How to educate", published on November 14, 1921, is signed by Agalma⁵, also classified in this study as an article, it is very short, occupying the 2nd quadrant of the second page.

There are two texts classified as informative. The first is entitled "In favor of instruction" and signed by the director of public instruction, Alcides Bezerra, and occupies the 2nd and 3rd quadrants on page 2, on June 20, 1922; the second is named "The Society of Primary Teachers" is not signed, it was published on June 20, 1922. Both give general information about the Society of Primary Teachers and also the newspaper itself, highlighting lineup, members, actions of the Society, and conceptions about education and teaching.

After the text selection⁶, a process of reading and re-reading was carried out to identify words and ideas that could point out defined categories for analysis, according to the article's objective: to analyze the concepts of education, school, and teaching published by the newspaper *O Educador* (1921-1922). The analysis of the sources sought to dialogue with the mentioned authors, who present and problematize education in the delimited historical outline.

2 About education, teaching, and school – reading the sources

The 1920s were characterized by the escalation of political, economic, and cultural anxieties that manifested themselves in different sectors of society since the beginning of the republican period. Looking for solutions and breakthroughs to the demands that characterized the country in that context, intellectuals made efforts that climaxed in different movements such as the tenentismo movement, modernism, among others. Education represented the main and driving factor for progress and instruction,

⁵ It is believed to be a pseudonym, a practice still common at the time. It was not possible, so far, to find any information about the author.

⁶ The texts are digitized and available in the researchers' personal files as a result of researches already completed, and their originals are in the Archive of the Historical and Geographic Institute of Paraíba (IHGP).

represented by the appropriation of the ability to read and write, which wasn't seen only as an element of socialization but also of individual and national development. In other words, according to such intellectuals, many of whom disillusioned with the Republic, it was in the education that "[...] lay the solution to the country's problems" (CARVALHO, 1997, p. 115).

It was believed that education could solve all major national issues, and the school, as an institution responsible for this activity, was seen as vital. If there were more schools, then the country would have more literate individuals and more labor for a society in the process of industrialization, or rather, for a society divided between a bankrupt commercial and agrarian system and a fledgling industrial urban system. The statistics of the 1920 Census indicated an alarming situation regarding illiteracy, considering the proportion of population / school-age individuals / number of schools. The government and society's great desire was to build as many schools as possible, in the hope that educated people would bring about changes in the country's social and political organization, which was questioned mainly by the middle classes that demanded greater participation and the possibility to take advantage of the political and socio-cultural landscape, what until then was only possible for members of the gentry. According to Nagle (2001, p. 45):

The change in the stratification pattern can be verified by the results in the sphere of school education, mainly in the 1920s; the enthusiasm for education and frequent reforms shows that the democratization of culture is put in second place after education and by the expansion of school staff.

The report presented by the general director of public education in Paraíba do Norte, in 1921, provides an official view of how precarious the education sector was at that time. The author begins highlighting the high rates of illiteracy in the State of Paraíba do Norte, pointing out as one of the reasons the insufficient number of schools for a population of 900 thousand inhabitants. Based on the 1920 Census, whose data are taken up in the report, there were 229 state schools and 150 municipal and private schools, which would be equivalent to a school for 2,374 inhabitants, proportionally, considering the school-aged children (from 6 to 14 years), which would be 180 thousand children, there were "no less than 160.00 individuals" in a state of illiteracy (PARAHYBA DO NORTE, 1921, p. 1). As an alternative to improve these data, the

director / author suggests “the diffusion of primary education in all corners of the Parahyba territory” using the necessary resources, since education is an essential condition for the nation's growth. He uses Ruy Barbosa's words from the "Reform of Primary Education", and ascribe an essential role to popular education⁷ as a means to achieve greatness and wealth for a country. Assim sendo, deve-se lançar mão de estratégias/recursos variados e de fontes diversas para investir na educação. Therefore, one should use different strategies / assets and different sources to invest in education. The general director of education proposes some measures to increase the spread of primary education: “a) special tax destined exclusively to education; b) requesting assistance from the federal government; c) incentive for the private initiative for founding schools; d) prizes for teachers for student literacy”. Each of these suggestions is developed in the report and supported by arguments that point to its validity and applicability. It uses the content of Federal Budget Law No. 2,738 of January 4, 1913, to highlight that the law requires an articulation between the federal, state, municipal governments, and private entities for the creation of primary schools.

According to Pinheiro⁸ (2002, p. 156), referring to the same time frame considered here, instruction became an object of concern:

The 'generalized instruction' as a factor of 'progress' was systematically defended by the Paraíba elite and was conditioned to the spread of positivist ideals, already spread throughout Brazil since the middle of the 19th century [...]. Consequently, the conviction that the increase in the provision of public education would foster order and progress - for many, a question of national survival, as Tavares Cavalcanti vehemently emphasized.

Another aspect highlighted by the director / author Alcides Bezerra is the need for inspection / supervision of teaching. The figure of the inspector is presented as someone who will offer support and intellectual subsidies to the teacher; it's important to pay attention how insufficiently this position has been developed in the municipalities when it is occupied by people who already have other functions and do not receive any payment for the inspection activity, which probably prevents the work from being performed as it should.

⁷ The sense of popular education in the period referred to public instruction for all.

⁸ Pinheiro (2002) used the reports of public education in Parahyba do Norte, along with other sources, to analyze the organization of primary education in Paraíba, highlighting the passage of time from isolated chairs to the period of implementation of school groups, characterizing each of these moments.

The director proposes the division of the state into zones or districts, taking into consideration the geographical conditions, transportation, and teaching needs, which would make the inspection process easier. There would be five zones, whose headquarters would be located in the first place mentioned, as follows: 1st Campina Grande, 2nd Bananeiras, 3rd Cabaceiras 4th Patos, and 5th Cajazeiras. This division by zones remains until the present day, with a change in the name, which became regional, as well as in the number that today totals 14 regionals.

The report is rich in information, but for this article, it was decided to present only elements that highlight the concept of education, teaching, and school that can be read in the lines and between the lines of the aforementioned text.

It is clear throughout the whole report that the director / author attaches remarkable importance to public instruction which represents one of the most important aspects in the make-up of the concept of education at the time. In other words, education is instruction, but not only that. The conception of education that can be identified in the report and that represents not only the author's vision but the aspirations and demands of the Brazilian society of the 1920s, which includes: the instruction that emphasizes the literacy or teaching of the first letters in the primary education; moral education; civic education and religious education. The terms education and instruction aren't always clearly defined, although they are often used as synonyms, some aspects show that there are some different characteristics.

This ambiguity is observed by Gondra and Schneider (2011, p. 12-13, emphasis added), when prefacing a collection of 15 texts that discuss the use of the terms education and instruction in the 19th century:

The first term [education] indicates a set of more diffuse actions, covering different aspects of the behavior of different social subjects. The term instruction seems to be more closely linked to the idea of schooling, coordinating, therefore, with the set of measures aimed at organizing and legitimizing the school as a whole in Brazilian society, such as the question of ages, duration, knowledge, spaces, methods, teachers, management, freedom, free and compulsory teaching, for example. As an illustration, it should be remembered that the term is used to designate those locally responsible for this matter and is also the name given to some periodicals specialized in the debate about the schooling of the population. *Sometimes, the two terms - education and instruction - appear in the pedagogical literature either as synonyms or as separate descriptors.*

This observation is corroborated by texts presented as sources of this article, in which education and instruction are not always clearly delimited. Sometimes education takes on a broader definition and is constructed by instruction and other types of education (moral, religious, etc.), and at other times instruction is more closely related with schooling itself, defining knowledge in a more pragmatic approach, going beyond the transmission of knowledge and reaching moral, civic and religious issues; sometimes it's not even possible to differentiate between one term and another.

The author makes clear what he understands by moral education, civic education, and religious education. Quoting the French social psychologist Gustave Le Bon, who believed that moral education should be based on experiences, and not taught, Alcides Bezerra thus expresses his conception of moral education as follows:

Normal children empirically acquire the notions of good and evil when their actions are praised or disapproved. Praise and disapproval complete an obscure, innate notion that the individual brings from these entities as a legacy of the species. The goal of moral education is reached when the habit of doing good and avoiding evil has become unconscious, that is, they have been deeply etched into the personality in addition to instinctual actions. The beneficial influence of the school environment is often neutralized by the student's home life. Another antagonistic force is the cinematograph where all contemporary amorality is distilled on children's souls that are still in development (PARAHYBA DO NORTE, 12/05/1921).

The primary education or the first letters offered in the State of Paraíba cannot be compared to that of other countries that, according to Alcides Bezerra, "march ahead in the pedagogical evolution"; accompanied by the existing school conditions and the pedagogical capacity of the teachers, and to justify this opinion, he refers to his predecessor's report.

The establishment of kindergartens is another concern of the director of public education, which, in his words, meant the improvement of the "intellectual and volitional development of these tender human flowers" bringing enormous benefits to education.

Women should be responsible for this school level:

[...] skilled and vigilant [female] gardeners help nature, correcting their carelessness and supplying their deficiencies. In the entire range of professions, there is not one that resembles yours, which is like an *extension of motherhood and is naturally placed in the category of the holiest and most august things* (PARAHYBA DO NORTE, 07/11/1921).

For women, teaching is comparable to being a mother, an almost holy occupation, the school is nothing less than an “educational temple” a place to enter with respect and contrition and whose mission is not limited “[...] to the transmission of useful knowledge for life. Its highest goal is precisely to mold the moral personality of the student so they can grow accustomed with their duties” (11/28/1921).

In the section called Deaths, the principal / author pays a brief tribute to a former teacher who had died in the previous year, and in his words, is noticeable desirable elements for teachers:

On June 22, after six long years of suffering, the retired teacher Anna Carolina de Lima Borges died in this city. A model of all virtues, this remarkable lady taught in Parahyba's public and private schools, providing the most relevant services. Hundreds of her former students today occupy prominent positions in teaching, schooling, and retail. As the director of public education, is up to me to record and thank for all the work she did to even the most humble and unattainable of her students; she spread her teachings abundantly in the society in which she lived, setting the magnificent example of existence focused on work until all her energies were exhausted. (THE EDUCATOR, 02/20/1922).

The notion of a lifetime committed to this function until exhaustion, as a mission, a sacrifice, has always been present in the concept of teaching. Especially regarding women, for whom the primary teaching profession was a major element during education and, therefore, was considered inherent of the feminine personality and vocation. In addition, teaching is also as seen as a model of all virtues and teachers are givers whose retribution consists of seeing the success of former students and the recognition for the contribution that they made to their student's formation. The material conditions for this function, concerning financial benefits and wages, are not set.

João Falcão, his article The Ideal of School, also thinks the same, even though there are elements that point out how difficult life was for teachers due to the lack of recognition for the “arduous mission” they undertake, and also the need for technical qualification. Moral qualities also stand out in this characterization, a set of attributes that enable the teacher to assume the great responsibility for the future of the family and humankind.

The class of primary teachers as a whole provides to the community services of the most importance to the society, despite living bitterly and remaining in the ostracism of disillusion, giving themselves with all detachment to the sublime

cause of teaching, bestowing daily, with care and selflessness among their students the seeds of instruction, preparing them for the future of society, thus building the great temple of civilization - the sublime heritage of human greatness. (FALCÃO, 1922, p. 2).

Teaching children is like a priesthood, a vocation that leads to good lights up the trajectory of existence, directing with selflessness and affection those who still do not know evil and only live on love and dreams, which are manifested in the expression of their smiles. The primary school went from being a prison of innocence to becoming the temple of hope and faith; the garden of life where the first flowers of intelligence blossom. The preceptor of childhood has the responsibility in this arduous mission to prepare the future of the new generations that follow. For the accomplishment of those duties, its necessary more than just vocation, technical training, and superior moral qualities are requirements, in order for the educator to perform their duties distinguishably, becoming worthy of social esteem and trust. The primary teacher is one of the greatest benefactors of humanity, they are entrusted with the family's moral heritage, the inexhaustible treasure of feelings that are our children. (FALCÃO, 1922, p. 1).

In the text "How to educate", the author starts by making a brief differentiation between instruction and education. Instruction is associated with the teaching of reading and writing; education, on the other hand, involves a series of elements that are presented below and, although they are not placed objectively, it is possible to understand. Teaching is also upheld as a mission, which requires of the teacher gentleness, patience, and acumen in perceiving the student's vocation and offering access to knowledge of their interest. The author defines how modern school or how modern education should be. In doing this, it brings together aspects "naturally" considered, such as the acquisition of reading and writing, moral and civic notions, obedience and respect for the family and for the country; and aspects that give the "modern" tone to school and education: the child must learn without fatigue and without obligation, they must have freedom of action and their interests must be respected when deciding what knowledge to teach: "If a student has a predilection for math, teach other subjects as well, but above all the subject of their vocation. This is how to teach in a modern way" (AGALMA, 1921, p. 2).

When reflecting on the meaning of teaching, the role of the teaching profession at the beginning of the 20th century, Passos (2011) observes the presence of these same elements, although it's related to another place than the one discussed in the texts read in this article, highlighting the coherence of these ideas with the demands of society in that period:

At the beginning of the 20th century, teaching was conceived as a 'priesthood of democracy'. The reinforcement of formal teaching was an important instrument in the process of implementing the republican regime. The teacher was responsible for the task of training and purifying the wishes of the child and adolescent. Their work was thus incorporated into the idea of teaching as a mission. The discourse on the noble vocation of the teacher was close to 'pedagogical optimism'. In this period, the importance attributed to education was a factor of integration and social transformation that expanded the importance of school education. (PASSOS, 2011, p. 95).

If the teacher is assigned to such great mission, the significance given to the school is no less important, as it is the first space in which the child will have access to principles that will guide their whole life and from where they will receive preparatory teachings to contribute to the growth of their country.

According to Falcão (1922, p. 2):

The citizen's process of formation starts in the primary school, it is in this teaching workshop that children receive the basic principles of education and are prepared to walk resolutely on the road of life; thus disciplined, they continue to conquer their future, taking the compass of their knowledge, illuminated by the precepts of morality, guided by the advice of their parents and teachers.

As you can see, the school has the primary responsibility for children's education. The director/author, as a representative of the State in the education sector, is aware of the importance of the school as a driving force for development, and as such he defends the dissemination of this institution throughout the state: "It is necessary, whatever the cost, that our city must have an educational temple of this nature, without which we cannot achieve progress and enlightenment" (PARAHYBA DO NORTE, 07/11/1921). Although this sentence was attributed particularly to kindergartens, it fully complies with all the speeches made in the report in favor of the establishment of schools, in general. Summoning the support of all segments of Paraíba's society, the director doesn't forget to point out that such a great mission would only be possible in suitable buildings that would guarantee good operating conditions. To do so, he lists 17 criteria that must be observed in the construction of a school building, both by public and private initiative. These criteria range from the size of the area to the installation of the windows and the colors with which the walls should be painted (PARAHYBA DO NORTE, 11/14/1921).

The content of the texts analyzed in this article about education, school, and teaching shows that Paraíba was in tune with the discussions that were taking place

across the country, in the time when there was an urgent need to provide education / instruction to as many people as possible in order to achieve the much desired progress for the nation. For that end, there was an urgent need to build suitable schools and rely on teachers who would take on the roles that were expected of them: the nation's missionaries, models of moral capable of serving as examples to their students, thus helping to form citizens who would contribute to the country's desired development.

3 Final considerations

After analyzing the texts, it is possible to say that, in the first decades of the 20th century, the school institution is seen as the first space for the formation of the citizens, assuming the role of a “temple of hope and faith”, whose mission is the transmission of useful knowledge for life in society, however, much more important than that the school is responsible for shaping the students' moral personality making their duties a common practice. The primary teacher qualified for this mission is like a “priest” who, exercising a sacred ministry and having affection as a guide, forms, in addition to the intellect, the soul, and the heart of their students, preparing them to serve the country, the family and the society. Based on these ideas, education is the compass based on experience and usefulness of knowledge, which prepares the students to walk actively and disciplined towards the future of a better society. The concepts conveyed by the primary teaching board echoed the concepts of school, education, and teaching in existence in the country, imbued with a strong messianic, moral, and ideologic content. With these conceptions, the speeches featured in the texts treat the activity developed by teachers as a noble mission that needs to be recognized by society, giving teachers the place they deserve. However, this recognition was restricted to former students' feelings of gratitude. In a text that introduces the newspaper and highlights its function, Alcides Bezerra says (11/01/1921, p. 1):

O Educator will unfurl his banner to fight for raising the level of the teaching profession, for spreading the theoretical-practical achievements of the pedagogical sciences within the class, and will seek to claim for the teachers the place they rightly deserve in society. Do you want a more beautiful and timely program? [...] To live is to fight. Nothing is achieved in the superorganic

organisms that are human collectivities without persevering during difficult struggles. However, this fight must be fought with worthy weapons. Concerning this point, I have no doubt that the means of action to be employed and the nobility of their principles.

It should be noted that the general director of public education's report was published in the teachers' newspaper. The fact that the director had space to expose his ideas as articles and informative texts about the Teacher's Society and about the newspaper itself are indicators of a very close relationship between the State and the representative body of teachers and their newspaper. This relationship may have been decisive in the content published in the newspaper *O Educador*.

It is also important to highlight that the conceptions about education, school, and teaching perceived in the analyzed texts reflect the representations of the educational ideas of the time frame but added to the local particularities. It is possible to infer the concern with illiteracy that was prevalent in the society of Paraíba, with further problems as the scarcity of school buildings and the urgency to implement measures that would change this situation and put the state in a more comfortable situation within the ultimate goals of modernization and progress, in which education played an important role.

Almost a century separates us from the production of these texts, the reality concerning school attendance and formal school education is totally different, even so, the illiteracy has not been solved - although it is currently manifested in other ways. It appears that the suggestions of the director of public education, author of the report, remain valid and have been put into practice many times in the contemporary context. However, education in our country continues to be inefficient, especially concerning instruction - teaching how to read and write; today, the school that no longer has those infrastructure problems, but undergoes another scarcity: the lack of structure in the technological and information society. How can teachers continue to play an important role when competing with so many other faster and more effective devices in terms of knowledge transmission/socialization, in what has always been one more important teacher's responsibilities? What is there to say about teaching conception? What many attributes that constitute this profession remain not only in the form but also in the practice that involves teaching! An easily noticeable perspective about the lack of appreciation for professionals who deal with education is the fact that they are still

seen as missionaries, vocational and martyrs, who aren't paid what they deserve, since mission implies sacrifice and vocation is a gift that doesn't require work, effort, qualification.

Finally, we hope that the discussions now held will contribute to studies and understanding about the history of education in Paraíba.

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