


## Education and national identity: The role of history teaching at Colégio Pedro II (1837-1850)

### ARTICLE

1

Patrick da Silva Pastor<sup>i</sup> 

Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil

Felipe Lameu dos Santos<sup>ii</sup> 

Colégio Pedro II, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil

### Abstract

This work investigates how the History discipline at Colégio Pedro II contributed to the construction of a Brazilian national identity between 1837 and 1850. The research analyzes the symbolism surrounding the institution's foundation, the composition of its staff, student profiles, and History teaching programs, using institutional documents from the Documentation and Memory Center (NUDOM), periodicals from the Digital Newspaper Library of the National Library, and official decrees. The analysis is based on a diverse bibliography, including authors such as Vera Andrade (1999), Gondra and Schueler (2008), Beatriz Santos (2011) and Letícia Silva (2023), who address both the historical context and the institution's trajectory. The study aims to understand the political uses of education and to contribute to the historiography of Colégio Pedro II, a traditional and relevant institution in the shaping of national identity.

**Keywords:** Schooling. Curriculum Structure. Curricular Practice. Teaching Plan.

### Educação e identidade nacional: contribuições da disciplina de História do Colégio Pedro II (1837-1850)

### Resumo

Este trabalho investiga como a disciplina de História do Colégio Pedro II contribuiu para a construção de uma identidade nacional brasileira entre 1837 e 1850. A pesquisa analisa os simbolismos da criação da instituição, a composição de funcionários, o perfil dos estudantes e os programas de ensino de História, utilizando documentos institucionais do Núcleo de Documentação e Memória (NUDOM), periódicos da Hemeroteca Digital da Biblioteca Nacional e decretos oficiais. A análise fundamenta-se em uma bibliografia diversa, incluindo autores como Vera Andrade (1999), Gondra e Schueler (2008), Beatriz Santos (2011) e Letícia Silva (2023), que abordam tanto a conjuntura histórica quanto a trajetória da instituição. O estudo busca compreender os usos políticos da Educação e contribuir para a historiografia sobre o Colégio Pedro II, instituição tradicional e relevante na formação da identidade nacional.

**Palavras-chave:** Escolarização. Estrutura Curricular. Prática Curricular. Plano de Ensino.

## 1 Introduction

The study focuses specifically on the discipline of History at Colégio Pedro II (CPII) between 1837 and 1850, seeking to identify some of its main agents and tools that supported the imperial government in its efforts to lay the foundations of what was intended to be the Brazilian national identity through Education, understood as an important instrument for this construction. The chosen time frame is justified by the object itself, since it begins with the year of the institution's creation and ends in 1850, the year in which the school's first curriculum was implemented.

The first half of the nineteenth century was a watershed in the history of the Americas, mainly due to the chain of independence movements that unfolded during the period. The emergence of these new modern nations gave rise to a series of political issues and disputes, stemming from the interests of various sociopolitical groups such as liberals, conservatives, restorationists and republicans<sup>1</sup>, who actively took part in the emancipation processes. Thus, it became necessary to establish elements that could provide cohesion to these peoples, ensuring that the heterogeneity of national projects did not lead to political fragmentation and jeopardize the much-idealized independence. In Brazil in particular, such elements that shaped the idea of nationhood were indispensable, especially for maintaining territorial unity around the government in Rio de Janeiro (Neves, 2011). One of the most crucial of these elements was, without a doubt, the construction of a national identity.

In Benedict Anderson's (2008) terms, national identity is a social, cultural and political construct aimed at integrating a society around a shared sense of belonging. This idea is often articulated through symbols, historical narratives and shared cultural practices that give shape to a national imagination. Within this framework, national identity is neither

---

<sup>1</sup> These groups diverged politically mainly over the degree of concentration of power in the hands of the emperor, or even over the form of government, in the case of the republicans. However, none of the groups within the political elite significantly advocated for major changes at the foundation of society, such as the abolition of slavery.

given nor natural, but rather a dynamic process that involves the selection and valorization of certain cultural and historical elements over others. Institutions such as schools, the press and the State play a central role in this process, reinforcing discourses that legitimize national cohesion and promote a sense of historical continuity. However, this construction may also exclude or silence divergent groups and identities, thereby highlighting the tensions and disputes inherent in nation-building.

This research was carried out through the collection, analysis and comparison of sources, always in dialogue with a selected bibliography that contributed to the enrichment of the reflections. As Silvia Lara (2008) suggests, historical research is conducted through the search, gathering and analysis of sources based on the historian's questions, which guide the investigation. In her words, "every research endeavor involves separating and selecting the documents capable of offering answers to specific questions" (p. 22). Among the sources consulted are institutional documents from Colégio Pedro II, such as curricula and staff records, found at the Núcleo de Documentação e Memória do Colégio Pedro II (NUDOM), located on the school's central campus; imperial laws and decrees, available in official public domains of the Brazilian government; and periodical press materials of the time, such as *Jornal do Commercio*, *Diário do Rio de Janeiro* and *Correio Oficial*, all accessible through the Digital Newspaper Library of the National Library. The selected bibliography includes works dealing with the theme of the national question, the history of education in Brazil and the history of Colégio Pedro II.

The positivist tradition that directs almost all analytical efforts exclusively or predominantly toward official documents, expecting them to speak for themselves and to provide an alleged historical truth, has already been challenged (Barros, 2011). In this research, official documents are examined in relation to other types of sources, each analyzed according to its particularities, with the aim of constructing a broader field of analysis. Without dispensing with documentary sources, the contributions of the French historian Marc Bloch (2001) remind us that "texts, even those that appear clearest and most compliant, speak only when we know how to question them" (p. 79).

The propositions of historian Tania Regina de Luca (2008) are highly relevant to the construction of this research, especially with regard to the use and analysis of sources from the periodical press. The author explains that, for a long time, newspapers and journals were not analyzed as sources because they were judged to be biased by a historiography that claimed neutrality and abstention from subjective values. However, new understandings of historiographical construction have made it possible to break with this paradigm, recognizing that both sources deemed official and those from the press are produced by people and therefore lack the neutrality that was once sought. Furthermore, the analysis of periodical press products allows us to identify information circulating about the object of study, which contributed to shaping the opinions of readers.

The work demonstrates its relevance by establishing a debate on the construction of Brazilian national identity during the nineteenth century through educational pathways. In addition, the case study on the establishment of the discipline of History at Colégio Pedro II, a renowned secondary school since its founding in 1837 during the Second Reign, makes it possible to identify values that the imperial government sought to instill in a select portion of society. This was achieved not only through the discipline of History itself, which is the core of this research, but also through the composition of the school as an institution, including its staff and faculty. By offering a sober perspective on the subject, this research also breaks with a certain nostalgia found in much of the historiography on Colégio Pedro II<sup>2</sup>, clearly indicating some issues of critical importance (Silva, 2023).

The first part of this article, entitled “Brazil: Unity through an Idea”, seeks to understand certain historical moments beginning with Brazil’s Independence in 1822, which challenged the country’s political and territorial unity during its earliest years as an official nation. It also outlines the trajectory of political and military measures taken to prevent or,

---

<sup>2</sup> A significant portion of the works that address the past of Colégio Pedro II take on a nostalgic character, given that it remains a traditional educational institution in Brazil to this day. This becomes evident in both the form and the content of these works, and even more so when examining the authors’ connections to the institution. Among the most recent exponents of this historiography are the works of Santos (2011) and Andrade (1999; 2007). It is important to stress, however, that this does not imply discrediting the valuable contributions these works and authors have made to the construction of knowledge about the institution.

at times, reverse fragmentation. This section highlights the importance of constructing a national identity, focusing particularly on the Brazilian case, its political uses, and some of its instruments, with Education being the principal one addressed here. Introducing Colégio Pedro II as a milestone in the national project, the section concludes with a reflection on the dialogical relationship between historiographical construction and the teaching of History in the classroom.

The second part, entitled “The Institutional Construction of Historical Consciousness”, discusses the symbolism that permeated the creation of Colégio Pedro II in the first half of the nineteenth century, analyzing in a relational manner how these aspects contributed to the forging of what was intended to be the Brazilian national identity. These aspects range from the founding of Colégio Pedro II to the physical structures of the institution and extend to its staff and faculty.

Finally, the last part, entitled “The Disciplinary Constitution”, offers a detailed analysis of the lessons that comprised the Seventh Year chairs, the school’s first year of courses. The analysis is based on the identification of constitutive factors of the discipline of History, through which the goal was to educate a future ruling elite of the country. It begins with the professors who taught History, and also includes a critical examination of the institution’s first curriculum.

## 2 Brazil: unity through an idea

Far from being something innate to societies or to the individuals who live within them, national identity is the result of historical processes shaped by specific agents and actions. It can be instilled in a people in various ways, often combined, ranging from linguistic and cultural identification to the establishment of a shared historical past, along with the creation of symbols (Anderson, 2008). Equally important, Education was an essential tool for the construction and dissemination of what was intended to be the Brazilian national identity in the first half of the nineteenth century (Santos, 2021; Santos, Gondra and Lopes, 2022).

This factor is directly related to the issue of illiteracy and literacy in the Brazilian Empire. According to Sidney Chalhoub (2012), based on the first general census of 1872, about 77 percent of the Brazilian population was illiterate. In Rio de Janeiro, the seat of the Empire, approximately 50 percent of the population was illiterate. These figures reveal the exclusive nature of formal education in nineteenth-century Brazil, which was a privilege accessible to only a few.

Nevertheless, these conditions enabled the Empire not only to create educational policies directed toward the wealthier classes, who would become the future ruling elite of the country, but also to educate them according to the values that were intended to be regarded as Brazilian values. The imperial government was therefore concerned with creating institutions capable of forging a Brazilian history and disseminating it through different channels. Two of these institutions are examined in this research, with particular emphasis on Colégio Pedro II, and in a related manner, the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (IHGB), founded one year later, in 1838.

According to Solange Zotti (2005), “Colégio D. Pedro II was the first educational institution to nominally use the term ‘secondary’ as a legal designation” (p. 29), at a time when there was still no uniformity regarding instruction across the Brazilian provinces, as noted by José Gondra and Alessandra Schueler (2008). Widely recognized by studies dedicated to the history of the institution, in its early years Colégio Pedro II was designed to serve the needs of a small segment of Brazilian society, given the aforementioned context of formal education as an exclusive privilege of the ruling elite. Its subjects carried a civilizing formative ideal, as will be shown later through the example that is at the core of this research: the analysis of the History curriculum of the institution.

In line with the creation of Colégio Pedro II as an educational institution, the imperial government established the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro in order to fulfill an essential task for a nation seeking to forge a national identity: the creation of an official Brazilian History. The IHGB contributed systematically to constructing the imagination of a shared historical past (Andrade, 2007). This detail converges with the reconfiguration that historiography underwent beginning in the nineteenth century, which



made the development of Brazilian historiography particularly timely. Distinguished individuals composed the membership of the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro and, quite often, the same individuals served as professors at Colégio Pedro II, thereby performing the dual activity of writing and teaching History (Andrade, 1999).

It is important to highlight, however, a fundamental conceptual distinction between this research and much of the existing scholarship on the subject. Unlike the prevailing understanding of the relationship between the historiographical construction undertaken by the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro and the teaching of History at Colégio Pedro II in the nineteenth century, represented by the idea that “the institutional locus of historical production is the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (IHGB), and the locus of didactic production is Colégio Pedro II” (Andrade, 2007, p. 219), this study considers more recent contributions to Education, recognizing the dialogical relationship between academia and the classroom as environments for the construction of historical knowledge (Chervel, 1990).

Even though the educational settings of that period are quite different from those of today, the notion of an inert classroom is rejected – that is, one that is static in the teaching-learning process and merely absorbs knowledge. Academic History and the Teaching of History therefore maintain a dialogical relationship, with the classroom also serving as an important space for the active construction of historical knowledge. This perspective shows that, although each typification of History has its own particularities, the construction of historical knowledge is not confined to one of them or to a select group. Kátia Abud, professor at the School of Education of the University of São Paulo (USP), makes this point clear in her studies:

At that time, when Brazil was structuring itself as a nation after Independence in 1822, academic History and History as a school subject converged in their objectives, since nationality was the central issue facing Brazilian society. The ruling classes claimed for themselves the right to choose the past, which was seen as humanity’s path toward progress, illuminated by the concept of nation (Abud, 2023, p. 30).

Thus, it was not as though the competencies and specificities of each form of historical construction actually limited them, especially in the historical moment Brazil was experiencing at the time. As the author makes clear, both converged, since they shared a common purpose already highlighted here: the construction of Brazilian national identity, each within its own environment, with its own agents, resources, and actions.

It is important to clarify, first of all, that the creation, design, and establishment of Colégio Pedro II are surrounded by symbolism. Two cases that form part of the founding myth of the institution's genesis will be presented here. The decree of December 2, 1837, marks the official creation of Colégio Pedro II, which was founded under the name *Collegio de Pedro II*, or even *Imperial Collegio de Pedro II*, as can be seen in the periodical press of the time<sup>3</sup>, such as *Jornal do Commercio*, *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, and *Correio Official*, where it appeared repeatedly. From the very beginning, both the date itself and the physical premises in which the school began operating – bearing the name of the future emperor of Brazil – already reveal some of the main symbolic strategies embedded in the institution's history.

### 3 The institutional construction of historical consciousness<sup>4</sup>

The first of the main symbolic strategies refers directly to the date of the school's foundation, which can hardly be considered coincidental. The decree that established the institution was issued on the twelfth birthday of the future emperor, to whom the Minister of the Empire, Bernardo Pereira de Vasconcelos, dedicated its name at the moment he proposed its creation. Beyond the nominal connection, research (Andrade, 1999; Santos, 2011) suggests that Pedro II maintained a certain closeness to the institution, being

---

<sup>3</sup> In this work, the institution will be referred to simply as Colégio Pedro II. This choice was made in order to avoid the multiplicity of nominal references to the same object within a single study.

<sup>4</sup> The concept of historical consciousness is employed in this work in accordance with Estevão Martins (2019, p. 55), as "the awareness that every rational human agent acquires and constructs when reflecting on his or her concrete life and on his or her position in the temporal process of existence. It includes two constitutive elements: that of personal identity and that of the understanding of the social whole to which one belongs, situated in time."



present, whenever possible, in the daily life of the school. Thus, more than a simple tribute, Colégio Pedro II was born already bearing in its very name the figure of the highest authority of the Brazilian Empire, even though he had not yet assumed the position of emperor in practice.

The second symbolic strategy lies in the very physical structure in which the school began its activities. As the founding decree itself indicates, Colégio Pedro II was established in the building that had previously housed the Seminário de São Joaquim, located in the center of Rio de Janeiro, the capital of the Court (Brazil, 1837). The institution that preceded the school was historically known for its tradition of solidarity and communal values, particularly because its body of seminarians included some orphaned youths. These characteristics are confirmed in the reflections of Joaquim Manuel de Macedo<sup>5</sup>, who expressed a certain pride regarding the institution's qualities in a series of articles published in the feuilletons of *Jornal do Commercio*, entitled *A Stroll through the City of Rio de Janeiro*<sup>6</sup>:

This beautiful institution, of which we are so proud today, is the daughter of humble parents. For a hundred and twenty-some years ago, it was brought into being by charity, which was never arrogant, and by a simple sacristan-major, who was probably not of noble lineage (Macedo, 2005, p. 288).

This set of actions taken by the imperial government is indirectly related to the discipline of History at Colégio Pedro II during the period in question, for even before its activities began, the institution already emanated the values and the historical consciousness it sought to instill in the population. This is evident, for example, in the newspaper *Correio Official*, which on December 7, 1837, published a notable excerpt comparing the newly founded Colégio Pedro II to the schools of France that had inherited the names of their greatest kings. The article also raised the possibility that Colégio Pedro

---

<sup>5</sup> The writer was also a professor of History at Colégio Pedro II, appointed in the late 1840s.

<sup>6</sup> Although these articles were originally published in *Jornal do Commercio*, whose versions were likewise analyzed, this research has used as its primary source a book that compiles all the articles from the series, for organizational reasons.

II might rival them in quality and, finally, affirmed a commitment to emphasize how beneficial the existence and activities of Colégio Pedro II would be.

Another factor indirectly related to the discipline of History, through the construction of historical consciousness fostered by Colégio Pedro II, concerns the composition of the student body, particularly its plurality or lack thereof. As previously noted, the school was designed to educate the sons of Brazil's political and economic elite, in other words, the future ruling class of the country. It is well known that Independence in 1822 did not bring about significant social changes, one of its main characteristics being social inequality. It is therefore important to specify who primarily composed the student body of the institution, given that it was a tuition-based school conceived under strong symbolism, as previously explained.

It would be mistaken, however, to construct a false idea of homogeneity within this group. Colégio Pedro II, adhering to the aforementioned ideal of charity, also admitted orphaned students through formal requests made in letters. Although this was contradictory in a society where much of the population remained illiterate, it did broaden the socioeconomic range of students enrolled in the institution. Moreover, no provision was found in the official statute of Colégio Pedro II, within the period studied, that prohibited Black students from attending (Brazil, 1838). Nevertheless, one must not overlook the intrinsic contradictions of History. Even if Black students did manage to graduate from Colégio Pedro II, which was already highly unlikely given the realities of nineteenth-century Brazil, they would have been educated by an institution disseminating the values of the Brazilian Empire, only to be reintegrated into a slaveholding society that, by default, promoted their social exclusion.

Addressing the racial question is particularly necessary, especially with regard to the construction or preservation of historical consciousness within a Brazilian educational institution of the early nineteenth century. New research indicates that enslaved people, belonging either to the Brazilian state, known as the “slaves of the nation,” or to private individuals, worked at Colégio Pedro II in roles such as cooks, attendants, and servants (Silva, 2023, pp. 119–123). This represents a turning point that challenges much of the

Brazilian historiography on the institution, since the majority of studies have ignored this fact to the extent of not even mentioning it. The scarcity of sources is certainly not the main obstacle, given that Brazil's history bears the deep mark of a slaveholding system that persisted for more than three hundred years.

For this reason, what is presented here is a relational analysis of how the existence and practice of slavery within one of the most important educational institutions of the Brazilian Empire contributed to the naturalization of this reality through historical consciousness. The intention is not to conflate worldviews by attempting to apply the values of present-day Brazilian society to those of early nineteenth-century Brazil, but rather to understand that reality within its own frameworks, acknowledging its particularities, as suggested by Robert Darnton's (1986) case study. Even so, one cannot dismiss the fact that until its abolition, slavery underpinned Brazil's main institutions, whether in the political, social, economic, cultural, or even educational spheres (Gorender, 2016). These socioeconomic factors therefore had a direct impact on the prior construction of historical consciousness, which the History curriculum at Colégio Pedro II did not necessarily seek to challenge.

## 4 The disciplinary constitution

It can be stated that the discipline of History, like the other subjects within the field of Humanities, carried significant social and formative relevance. Interestingly, the Humanities were the primary focus of investment during the formulation and division of subjects and instructional time in the early years of Colégio Pedro II. In addition to History, subjects such as Classical Languages, Rhetoric, and Philosophy also played central roles in the education of students, reflecting the educational model of the period and its concern with shaping an intellectual and political elite (Brazil, 1838). The records of this division are preserved at the Núcleo de Documentação e Memória do Colégio Pedro II (NUDOM), both in good physical condition and in digital archives. This work does not aim to rewrite or reproduce the curriculum that defined this division, but the information regarding the

emphasis placed on this disciplinary axis is important, as it primarily reflects the civilizing ideal that Education carried in nineteenth-century Brazil, largely inspired by European Western models, as will be shown later.

In its early years, the discipline of History at Colégio Pedro II was divided into chairs, each taught by distinguished figures of the time. The objective of this research is not to catalog every professor, but highlighting practical examples proves to be productive. Justiniano José da Rocha (1812–1862) was the first to hold chairs in History, including Ancient History, Roman History, Brazilian History, and, additionally, Geography, since some chairs in History and Geography were integrated<sup>7</sup>. He was also a member of the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (IHGB), serving as a practical example of the relationship between the two institutions examined in this study.

Another notable figure was the novelist Joaquim Manuel de Macedo, who, in addition to teaching at Colégio Pedro II, was also a member of the IHGB. Trained in Medicine, Macedo had already written and published his famous novel *A Moreninha* in 1844, and in 1849 he assumed a professorship, teaching Ancient History and Geography (Santos, 2011). These appointments illustrate that, beyond having a clearly defined target audience, the imperial government also carefully selected and appointed professors at Colégio Pedro II, often through nomination rather than competitive examinations.

From the perspective of the State, the primary task of these professors was to educate the nation. More specifically, professors of History were charged with telling the people their own history, one forged in line with the political interests of the Brazilian imperial government. This became more evident in the 1840s, when the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro launched two contests: one in 1840 on how the History of Brazil should be written, and another on how a curriculum for the teaching of Brazilian History should be developed. The German scholar Von Martius won both contests, and in his

---

<sup>7</sup> This situation changed with Decree No. 598 of March 25, 1849, issued by the Minister of the Empire, Viscount of Monte Alegre, which separated the chairs of History and Geography.

responses he identified the fundamental knowledge required to shape Brazilian national identity through its History (Abud, 2023; Santos, 2011).

Among this body of knowledge was the need to address Brazilian ethnic diversity from a formative premise, that is, the role and contribution of whites, Blacks, and Indigenous peoples in the making of Brazil; the Portuguese protagonism during systematic colonization; and the relationships among settlers, Jesuits, and other European nations, particularly in the commercial sphere, as explained by Beatriz Santos (2011). The author adds that “History would be marked by a civilizing character, so that the task initiated by Portuguese colonization should be continued with a view to the progress of the national state” (p. 86).

Once the mission of constructing and disseminating a Brazilian national identity had been defined, along with the agents responsible for it, the targets, and the environment in which it was to take place, it becomes necessary to analyze the tools employed by the professors in carrying it out. Chief among these tools were the teaching programs, the curriculum, its components, and the textbooks.

Avoiding naturalizations and generalizations, the school curriculum must be understood as a historical construct resulting from constant political disputes (Chervel, 1990). In other words, no item present in the teaching program or curriculum, nor even those absent, is the mere product of chance, despite the notable shifts in the concept of curriculum over time. Within this perspective, an important source for analysis is the work *Programas de ensino da escola secundária brasileira (1850–1951)* by Michael Lorenz and Ariclê Vechia (1998), which compiles various teaching programs of Colégio Pedro II between 1850 and 1951. This source was chosen due to the unavailability of the original copies of the earliest teaching programs. For a more in-depth analysis, the first teaching

program of the Brazilian History chair, designed for the seventh-year<sup>8</sup> classes and dated 1850<sup>9</sup>, will be examined and broken down.

**Table 1 – Lesson Plan of the Seventh Year: History of Brazil<sup>10</sup>**

Nº	Lesson title	Nº	Lesson title
1.	Discovery of Brazil: first explorers.	21.	Vidal de Negreiros and his successors in the government of Pernambuco.
2.	Division of Brazil into captaincies.	22.	The revolt known as the Mascate Revolt.
3.	State of Brazil – Tomé de Sousa and Duarte da Costa. Jesuits – Nóbrega and Anchieta.	23.	Salvador Correia in the government of Rio de Janeiro.
4.	French invasion of Rio. Villegaignon.	24.	Discovery of the mines in Brazil – Their effects.
5.	Expulsion of the French from Rio. Estácio de Sá.	25.	Revolutionary project in Minas – Joaquim José da Silva Xavier.
6.	Establishment of the French in Maranhão. La Ravardière. Expulsion by Alexandre de Moura.	26.	Colony of Sacramento – From its foundation to its reconstruction.
7.	Du Clerc and Duguay-Trouin.	27.	Attack on Salcedo.
8.	King Sebastião – Spanish rule.	28.	Border demarcation: 1750 – first campaign of Gomes Freire.
9.	English incursions – Cavendish and Lancaster.	29.	Second campaign of Gomes Freire – Annulment of the Treaty of 1750.

<sup>8</sup> The graded and sequential organization of classes, then called *Aulas*, did not follow the current model. In fact, it was the opposite: whereas today the progression is counted upward, at Colégio Pedro II at the time the grades were numbered in descending order, with the seventh year therefore being one of the first *Aulas* attended by students, in accordance with Regulation No. 8 of January 31, 1838 (Brazil, 1838).

<sup>9</sup> The result of the reform of the Statutes of Colégio Pedro II, enacted through Decree No. 62 of February 1, 1841 (Brazil, 1841).

<sup>10</sup> Table created based on the work *Programas de ensino da escola secundária brasileira (1850–1951)* (Lorenz, Vechia, 1998, p. 4), reproducing the information with grammatical adaptations.



10.	Dutch invasion of Bahia – Hans Van Dort – Expulsion – D. Fradique de Toledo.	30.	Campaign of Ceballos until the Peace of Paris.
11.	Dutch War – From the invasion to Canefelt's expedition to Itamaracá.	31.	Count Floridablanca. Ceballos until the Peace of Madrid.
12.	From the arrival of Oquendo to the retreat of Mathias de Albuquerque to Alagoas.	32.	Influence of the Jesuits in Brazil, their expulsion.
13.	D. Luiz de Roxas – Bagnuolo until the evacuation of Sergipe.	33.	Arrival of D. João VI – Events until the year 1815.
14.	Count Maurice of Nassau until the invasion of Bahia.	34.	Southern campaigns from 1811 until the incorporation of the Cisplatina Province into the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil, and the Algarves.
15.	The 1640 Revolution in Portugal – Amador Bueno – Truces with the Dutch.	35.	Events of 1820 in Portugal – and in Brazil from that time until the return of the Court.
16.	João Cornelis' expedition: expulsion of the Dutch from Maranhão.	36.	The 1817 uprising.
17.	Beckman's conspiracy.	37.	Regency of D. Pedro – Proclamation of Independence.
18.	Retreat of Maurice of Nassau – Vieira – Defeat of Huss and Blaar.	38.	The Pernambuco movement of 1824.
19.	Schoppe returns to Brazil – First Battle of Guararapes.	39.	Lord Cochrane.
20.	Second Battle of Guararapes – The Portuguese enter Recife – Effects of the conquest.	40.	Foundation of the main cities of Brazil.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

At first glance, from the beginning to the end of a program intended to represent the History of Brazil, one can clearly observe the strong presence of European figures and their deeds. The beginning, regarded as traditional by much of Brazilian historiography at the time, takes as its starting point the arrival of the Portuguese in the territory, referred to as the “discovery,” privileging the European perspective on the event. It is followed by a study of the Hereditary Captaincies, the first major effort at administrative organization by

the Portuguese Crown in the Americas. Finally, the last of the three opening topics on Brazilian History addresses the two first governors-general of Brazil, along with ecclesiastical figures well established in Brazilian historiography. The absence of topics highlighting any protagonism of Indigenous peoples is striking.

From the fourth to the eighteenth topic, nearly all the historical content deals with conflicts between the Portuguese and other European invaders, such as the French, English, and Dutch. These moments of combat and expulsion of foreigners, always framed from the perspective of the already established Portuguese, served to consolidate and reinforce Portuguese power, particularly its military strength, and to emphasize that Brazilian roots stemmed from another equally powerful nation. This also anchored those same roots in the Brazilian historical imagination, functioning as a kind of founding myth, a political genesis derived from colonization.

The fifteenth topic, the seventeenth, and those between the twentieth and twenty-seventh focus on moments in Brazilian history when the Portuguese Crown also asserted its military strength, but in uprisings that took place within the territory itself. These were conflicts between the Crown, settlers, and natives, popularly known as colonial revolts. The clash of interests between the metropolis and the colony produced tensions that left their mark on Brazilian history and historiography. It is worth noting the curious inclusion of Joaquim José da Silva Xavier, or Tiradentes, in the curriculum. He was later celebrated as a national hero by the Brazilian Republic.

Rather than attempting to impose a simplistic dualism on the curriculum, this work seeks to uncover its complexities. The inclusion of Tiradentes clearly contrasts with the presence of other historical leaders listed in the teaching program. As one of the leading figures of the Inconfidência Mineira, an emancipatory movement during Brazil's colonial period, it is unlikely that he would have been exalted for his courage or sociopolitical values. At the same time, one notes the absence of figures associated with other contemporary revolts of similar emancipatory character, yet composed of different social classes and carrying different demands. The most notable example is the Bahian Conspiracy, also known as the Tailors' Revolt.

From the twenty-sixth to the thirty-first topic, the focus shifts to territorial disputes between Portugal and Spain, arising from the so-called boundary treaties, particularly the Treaty of Madrid of 1750, which redefined several borders between the colonial territories of the two metropolises. This element, far from being simply a retelling of what was intended as the History of Brazil, could instill in students' historical consciousness the values of diplomacy and the possible consequences of conflicts of interest, portraying both countries as protagonists from a new and still-emerging Brazilian perspective.

The thirty-second topic emphasizes the moment when, through the so-called Pombaline Reforms, the Jesuits were expelled from Brazilian territory. Although the expulsion was neither total nor immediate, as often portrayed, it was a landmark event for colonial society in several respects. One of its major consequences was the transfer of educational responsibilities, which had previously been largely in the hands of the Church, to the Portuguese Crown and, subsequently, to the Brazilian imperial state. José Gondra and Alessandra Schueler (2008) highlight that the establishment of the *Aulas Régias* was a fundamental part of this process.

In the realm of formal schooling, the Pombaline reform (1759–1772) initiated the expulsion of the Jesuits from Portugal and its entire empire, which led to the reorganization of official public education. It became the duty of the Portuguese Empire to provide free education to the population, though not in an egalitarian or homogeneous manner throughout the metropolitan and colonial territories. To this end, the reform of the *Estudos Menores* created the system of *Aulas Régias*, which were to be financed by the literary subsidy and coordinated by the Director General of Studies (Gondra; Schueler, 2008, p. 21).

Between the thirty-third and thirty-fifth topics, one already observes the need, on the part of the professor, to teach relatively recent events in Brazilian history, such as the arrival of the Portuguese Court in Brazil in 1808, fleeing the French invasion led by Napoleon Bonaparte. Among these events is also the invasion and annexation, by D. João VI, of the Cisplatina Province—today Uruguay—at that time already emancipated from Brazilian territory. This is yet another item that may be associated with the reinforcement of Portuguese power and its roots in Brazilian history. These more recent events, however, also shed light on moments of modernization in Brazil, particularly in the city of Rio de

Janeiro, where Colégio Pedro II operated, replicating much of the Portuguese bureaucratic apparatus. Historian Maria Odila Dias (2005) refers to this phenomenon as the “internalization of the metropolis.”

The thirty-sixth topic, titled “Attempt of 1817,” clearly refers to the Pernambucan Revolution of 1817, a separatist and republican movement that expressed the dissatisfaction of certain regional leaders regarding social inequality, exacerbated by the presence of the Portuguese Court in Brazil. Likewise, the Confederation of the Equator, referred to as the “Movement of Pernambuco in 1824” and occurring after Independence in 1822, was another revolt, though it bore some roots in the previously mentioned uprising. These events are followed in the teaching program by the return of D. João VI to Portugal and the regency of Pedro I, leading up to Brazilian Independence. The program concludes with the fortieth topic, which emphasizes the importance of students learning about the foundation of Brazil’s principal cities. Consistent with the program’s overall design, such instruction would clearly be taught from the colonizer’s perspective, more specifically that of the Portuguese royal family, likely highlighting the strategic or commercial importance of each city.

**Table 2 – Lesson Plan of the Sixth Year: Modern History**

Nº	Lesson title	Nº	Lesson titleda lição
1.	France. Louis XI.	21.	Popular insurrection. Wycliffe, John Huss, Jerome of Prague, and Savonarola.
2.	Same.	22.	Same.
3.	England. War of the Roses.	23.	Luther.
4.	Same.	24.	Same.
5.	Germany. Frederick III.	25.	Reformation in England. Henry VIII.
6.	Spain. Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile.	26.	Edward and Mary.

7.	Discovery of America.	27.	Elizabeth.
8.	Portugal. John II.	28.	Same.
9.	Manuel I.	29.	Philip II.
10.	Same.	30.	Same.
11.	Discovery of Brazil.	31.	Dutch Revolt.
12.	Decline of Italy.	32.	Decline of Portugal. Sebastian of Portugal.
13.	Same.	33.	Conquest of Portugal.
14.	Charles VIII.	34.	Reformation in France. Francis II.
15.	Louis XII.	35.	Charles IX.
16.	Charles V and Francis I.	36.	Henry III.
17.	Same.	37.	Henry IV.
18.	Henry II.	38.	Same.
19.	Religious Reformation, Eastern Schism, Councils of Pisa, Constance, Basel, Ferrara, and Florence.	39.	Louis XIII.
20.	Same.	40.	Same.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Having completed the detailed analysis of the Brazilian History chair for the Seventh-Year *Aulas* and of its curricular components, it is possible to undertake a comparative critical analysis with the Modern History chair for the Sixth-Year *Aulas*. The syllabi are structured around the genesis of the main European powers and the names of major figures of Western European history. Portuguese, Spanish, English, and French monarchs guide the knowledge to be constructed from the content. Some historical

processes important to shifts in Western thought are also present, such as the Religious Reformation. Even so, the content appears limited, since in order to fill all forty lessons proposed for the *Aulas*, certain topics are repeated without any record clarifying the criteria for repetition or the reasons for it. Beatriz Santos (2011) proposes that

In the works of the first historians of the IHGB, which served as the basis for teaching at Colégio Pedro II, there is an evident conception of History grounded in momentous events, in heroes, and in their memorable deeds. From this perspective, biographies became important vehicles for transmitting values and for providing examples in the construction of the new nation (Santos, 2011, p. 86).

With regard to textbooks, referred to as compendia, it was not possible to examine them directly as was done with the teaching programs. This was due to maintenance and restoration processes then underway at the Núcleo de Documentação e Memória do Colégio Pedro II (NUDOM). Previous studies, however, reveal that the first compendia were imported and translated by Justiniano José da Rocha, such as “the French manuals by Cayx and Poisson (Ancient History) and those by Rozoir and Dumont (Roman History)” (Santos, 2011, p. 67). Later, they were produced by the professors of Colégio Pedro II themselves.

The act of importing compendia, even if initially, indicates the importance that Western European socioeducational values held for Brazilian society in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially those of the French tradition. Such values shaped the materiality of educational practice in Brazil and were disseminated according to the civilizational standards intended by the imperial government.

In 1849, through Decree No. 598 of March 25, 1849, the imperial government introduced a significant change in the History and Geography chairs (Brazil, 1849). Among other provisions, the reform redistributed the teaching responsibilities of specific Humanities chairs among the professors, altering the existing dynamics and redefining duties. From that point on, a series of further changes and reforms was implemented with the aim of reorganizing the faculty and the content taught.

## 5 Final considerations



The analysis of Colégio Pedro II and its discipline of History as an instrument for elite formation and for the construction of what was intended to be the Brazilian national identity reveals its importance within the educational and political project of the Empire. Since its founding in 1837, under strong symbolic ties to the figure of Pedro II, the institution was conceived as a key component in consolidating the values desired by the imperial state. This project is expressed in factors ranging from the choice of its founding date and the occupation of a symbolic space to the curriculum, the professors appointed to the Humanities chairs, and the teaching programs of the History chairs.

This study first sought to highlight how the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (IHGB) and Colégio Pedro II interacted in the nineteenth century in a dialogical manner, playing complementary roles in the construction of an official historical narrative. Both, within their specificities and often sharing the same professionals, contributed to the forging of Brazilian history. This relationship demonstrates the strategic role of these institutions in the nation-building project, consolidating ideals such as territorial unity, sovereignty, and civilization.

In the second part, attention was given to how Colégio Pedro II acted directly in shaping a Brazilian identity by using the discipline of History as a tool of moral, political, and social formation. The discussion of the political uses of Education for such purposes illustrates a deliberate effort to exalt values tied to monarchy, Portuguese colonization, and imperial power, while more critical aspects of national history, such as slavery and social inequalities, were relegated or addressed through the lens of the dominant group. The presence of prominent professors such as Joaquim Manuel de Macedo and Justiniano José da Rocha, both distinguished figures of Brazilian society, reinforces the centrality of the institution in Brazil's educational landscape.

In the third part, the analysis delved further into the discipline of History and the mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion that permeated Colégio Pedro II. Although the institution presented itself as a space of charity and openness to orphans and students from different backgrounds, its role in sustaining structural inequalities becomes evident

when one considers that its existence primarily served the interests of the ruling elite. The analysis of curricula and teaching programs highlights a predominantly Eurocentric focus that prioritized Portuguese achievements while relegating the contributions of other social groups to a secondary, marginalized, or even erased role. Moreover, the practice of slavery within the institution itself during this period demonstrates how deeply embedded it was in Brazil's nineteenth-century slaveholding society, contributing to the normalization of that system.

The critical analysis of the curriculum and teaching programs further reveals that the educational content of Colégio Pedro II was aligned with the political and social interests of the imperial state. The curriculum functioned as an instrument for expressing the interests of the Empire and the ruling elites, shaping part of society in alignment with the values and narratives of the Brazilian monarchy and with the civilizational ideals it promoted.

Therefore, Colégio Pedro II was not merely a school but also an important tool of the state, disseminating a vision of the nation that excluded dissenting voices and reinforced the hegemony of national elites alongside Eurocentric civilizational values. This finding invites broader reflection on the role of Education in shaping identities and perpetuating inequalities. The study of Colégio Pedro II in its early years illustrates how educational institutions can be mobilized as mechanisms for consolidating power. In this sense, the history of this institution becomes an emblematic example of the tensions among power, memory, and education in nineteenth-century Brazil, with repercussions that continue to resonate to the present day.

## References

ABUD, Kátia. Currículos de História e políticas públicas: os programas de História do Brasil na escola secundária. *In*: BITTENCOURT, Circe (org.). **O saber histórico na sala de aula**. São Paulo: Contexto, 2023.

ANDERSON, Benedict R. **Comunidades imaginadas**: reflexões sobre a origem e a difusão do nacionalismo. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2008.

ANDRADE, Vera Lucia Cabana. **Colégio Pedro II – Um lugar de memória**. Tese (doutorado). Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Sociais - Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro, 1999.

ANDRADE, Vera Lucia Cabana. **Historiadores do IHGB/Catedráticos do CPIL - Império**. Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, Rio de Janeiro, v. 168, n. 434, jan/fev. 2007.

BARROS, José D'Assunção. **Considerações sobre o paradigma positivista em História**. Revista Historiar - Universidade Estadual Vale do Acaraú – v.4. n. 4 (jan./jun. 2011).

BLOCH, Marc. **Apologia da História ou O ofício do historiador**. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2001.

BRASIL. **Decreto s/n, de 2 de dezembro de 1837**. Convertendo o Seminário de S. Joaquim em collegio de instrução secundaria, com a denominação de Collegio de Pedro II, e outras disposições. Coleção das leis do Império do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, v.1, parte 2, p. 59-61, 1837.

BRASIL. **Regulamento nº 8, de 31 de janeiro de 1838**. Contém os Estatutos para o Collegio de Pedro Segundo. Coleção de Leis do Império do Brasil - 1838, Página 61 Vol. 1 pt. II.

BRASIL. **Decreto nº 62, de 1º de fevereiro de 1841**. Altera algumas das disposições do Regulamento N.º 8 de 31 de janeiro de 1838, que contém os Estatutos do Collegio de Pedro Segundo. Coleção de Leis do Império do Brasil - 1841, Página 13 Vol. pt II.

BRASIL. **Decreto nº 598, de 25 de março de 1849**. Altera os Estatutos do Collegio de Pedro Segundo, na parte relativa ao julgamento dos exames; divide em duas a Cadeira de Historia e Geographia; subdivide em duas a 2.ª de Latim; marca o vencimento dos Professores; e providencia sobre a hora em que devem achar-se no Collegio. Coleção de Leis do Império do Brasil - 1849, Página 69 Vol. pt II.

CHALHOUB, Sidney. População e sociedade. In: CARVALHO, José Murilo de (org.). **A construção nacional (1830-1889)**. Coleção História do Brasil Nação: 1808-2010. Rio de Janeiro: MAPFRE / Objetiva, 2012.

CHERVEL, André. **História das disciplinas escolares**: reflexões sobre um campo de pesquisa. Teoria & Educação, n. 2, 1990. p. 177-229.

CORREIO OFFICIAL: **In Medio Posita Virtus. Parte não oficial**. Rio de Janeiro, Volume 2º, nº 131, 7 de dezembro de 1837.

DARNTON, Robert. **O grande massacre de gatos, e outros episódios da história cultural francesa**. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1986.

DIAS, Maria Odila Leite da Silva. **A interiorização da metrópole e outros estudos**. São Paulo: Alameda, 2005.

GONDRA, José Gonçalves; SCHUELER, Alessandra. **Educação, poder e sociedade no império brasileiro**. São Paulo: Cortez, 2008.

GORENDER, Jacob. **O escravismo colonial**. São Paulo: Expressão Popular: Perseu Abramo, 2016.

LARA, Silvia Hunold. **Os documentos textuais e as fontes do conhecimento histórico**. Anos 90, Porto Alegre, v. 15, n. 28, p.17-39, dez. 2008.

LORENZ, Michael Karl; VECHIA, Ariclê. **Programas de ensino da escola secundária brasileira (1850-1951)**. Curitiba: Ed. do autor, 1998.

LUCA, Tania Regina de. **História dos, nos e por meio dos periódicos**. In: PINSKY, Carla Bassanezi (org.). Fontes históricas. São Paulo: Contexto, 2008.

MACEDO, Joaquim Manuel de. **Um passeio pela cidade do Rio de Janeiro**. Brasília: Senado Federal, Conselho Editorial, 2005.

MARTINS, Estevão de Rezende. **Consciência histórica**. In: FERREIRA, Marieta de Moraes; OLIVEIRA, Margarida Dias de. Dicionário de ensino de história. Rio de Janeiro: FGV Editora, 2019.

NEVES, Lúcia Bastos Pereira das. **A vida política**. In: SCHWARCZ, Lilia Moritz (Dir.). História do Brasil Nação: Crise colonial e independência (1808-1830). Volume 1. Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva/Fundação Mapfre, 2011.

SANTOS, Beatriz Boclin Marques dos. **O currículo da disciplina escolar História no Colégio Pedro II – a década de 1970 – entre a tradição acadêmica e a tradição pedagógica: a história e os estudos sociais**. Rio de Janeiro: Mauad X: Faperj, 2011.

SANTOS, Felipe Lameu dos. **A “natural e primeira educação”**: Educação physica e formação do Brasil (1823-1854). 2021. Tese (Doutorado em Educação) — Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2021.

SANTOS, Felipe Lameu dos; GONDRA, José; LOPES, Katia Geni Cordeiro. Forma(ta)r o povo, plasmar a nação: acordos, desconcertos, atravessamentos (1823-1827). In: LIMEIRA, Aline Moraes; CLEMENTE, Edgleide; GONDRA, José. **Independência & Instrução no Brasil: história, memória e formação (1822-1972)**, p. 39, 2022.

SILVA, Letícia Sousa Campos da. **Tensões na escola do Imperador**: Uma crítica à história única dos trabalhadores do Colégio Pedro II (1837-1889). Tese (doutorado) – Universidade Federal Fluminense, Instituto de História, Niterói, 2023.

ZOTTI, Solange Aparecida. **O ensino secundário no império brasileiro**: considerações sobre a função social e o currículo do Colégio D. Pedro II. Revista HISTEDBR On-line, Campinas, n. 18, p. 29-44, jun. 2005.

<sup>i</sup> **Patrick da Silva Pastos**, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-8072-4134>

Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro

Mestrando em Educação pela Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Licenciado em História pelo Colégio Pedro II.

Authorship contribution: Documentary analysis and writing of the text.

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/7116667849134328>.

E-mail: [patrick.pastor.1@cp2.edu.br](mailto:patrick.pastor.1@cp2.edu.br)

<sup>ii</sup> **Felipe Lameu dos Santos**, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8856-9960>

Colégio Pedro II

Professor do Colégio Pedro II. Líder do Grupo de Estudos e Pesquisas em História da Educação GEPHE-CP2. Doutor em Educação, Mestre em Educação, Licenciado em Educação Física.

Authorship contribution: Supervision and revision of the text.

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/9983111807467730>.

E-mail: [felipelameu@gmail.com](mailto:felipelameu@gmail.com)

**Responsible publisher:** Genifer Andrade

**Ad hoc experts:** Salania Maria Barbosa Melo e Viviane da Silva Batista.

### How to cite this article (ABNT):

PASTOS, Patrick da Silva.; SANTOS, Felipe Lameu dos. Education and national identity: The role of history teaching at Colégio Pedro II (1837-1850). **Rev. Pemo**, Fortaleza, v. 7, e15371, 2025. Disponível em: <https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/revpemo/article/view/15371>



Received on April 1, 2025.

Accepted on September 2, 2025.

Published in October 15, 2025.