

DOSSIER*Innovation and tradition in the Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices***Between Tradition and Innovation: Educational Practice in the Public Schools of Piauí (1927-1961) in the Light of the Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices*****Entre a tradição e a inovação: a prática educativa nos grupos escolares do Piauí (1927-1961) à luz da História Transnacional dos Saberes e Práticas Educacionais*****Maria do Socorro Pereira de Sousa Andrade^a**

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the formation of school culture in the public school system of Piauí, Brazil, between 1927 and 1961, from the perspective of the Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices. Drawing on the theoretical contributions of António Nóvoa (2009), Rebecca Rogers (2019), Diana Gonçalves Vidal (2011, 2020), and Rodán Vera (2021), the study argues that pedagogical models circulated internationally and were appropriated and re-signified in local contexts. The analysis focuses on primary education, the training of female teachers in normal schools, and teaching practices, with an emphasis on curricular and methodological guidelines related to the teaching of Geography. Methodologically, it is informed by Escolano Benito (2017), who conceives school praxis as an expression of culture shaped by memory and experience. The research employs documentary analysis and a hermeneutic interpretation of normative texts, memoirs, testimonies, and curricular programs. The findings reveal a pedagogy in transit, marked by the coexistence of tradition and innovation, and point to a hybrid and situated school culture. The role of INEP, the educational programs of 1928, 1949, and 1960, and the mediation of reforming agents indicate processes of local translation of pedagogical knowledge circulating globally. The article concludes that the school culture of Piauí was constructed through negotiations between prescribed models and lived practices, reinforcing the analytical strength of the transnational approach.

Keywords: School culture. History of education. Pedagogical knowledge. Primary education. Transnational history.

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa a constituição da cultura escolar nos grupos escolares do Piauí entre 1927 e 1961, com base na perspectiva da História Transnacional dos Saberes e Práticas Educacionais. Inspirado nos aportes teóricos de autores como Nóvoa (2009), Rogers (2019), Vidal (2011; 2020) e Vera e Fuchs (2021), o estudo considera que modelos pedagógicos circularam internacionalmente, sendo apropriados e ressignificados em contextos locais. A análise tem como foco o ensino primário, a formação de professoras normalistas e a prática docente,

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com ênfase nas prescrições curriculares e metodológicas voltadas para o ensino de Geografia. Do ponto de vista metodológico, apoia-se em Escolano Benito (2017), ao conceber a práxis escolar como expressão de uma cultura que se constrói por meio da memória e da experiência. Utiliza-se análise documental e interpretação hermenêutica de fontes normativas, memoriais, relatos e programas de ensino. Os resultados apontam para uma pedagogia em trânsito, marcada pela coexistência entre tradição e inovação, revelando um campo escolar híbrido e situado. A atuação do INEP, os programas de ensino de 1928, 1949 e 1960 e a mediação de agentes reformadores indicam processos de tradução local de saberes pedagógicos globais. Conclui-se que a cultura escolar piauiense se constituiu a partir de negociações entre o prescrito e o vivido, reforçando a potência da abordagem transnacional.

Palavras-chave: Cultura escolar. História da educação. Saberes pedagógicos. Ensino primário. História transnacional.

Introduction

Throughout the 20th century, Brazilian public education underwent significant transformations, driven by curricular reforms, institutional expansion, and new pedagogical ideals. In the context of Piauí, these changes were expressed in a particular way, in a process marked by the articulation of local traditions and external influences — from other regions of Brazil and from international pedagogical centers. In this context, the Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices emerges as a fruitful theoretical perspective for analyzing the formation of primary education in Piauí between 1927 and 1961, shedding light on the circulation of knowledge and pedagogical practices and their unique modes of appropriation in specific contexts.

This article aims to revisit the analysis of educational practices in Piauí's school systems, focusing on teaching, teacher training, and the methodologies employed, from the perspective of the Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices. It begins with the understanding that teaching models and methods circulated across different contexts, being appropriated and reinterpreted in particular ways in regions such as Piauí. As Nóvoa (2009, p. 76) states, “between 1870 and 1920, there was an unprecedented advance in the development of pedagogical ideas, which mobilized a wide range of knowledge (psychological, sociological, medical, philosophical, etc.) in the study of children and the production of a ‘science of education’.” Thus, this study seeks to understand how the dynamic between innovation and tradition shaped local school culture, revealing an education permeated by foreign influences and internal reworkings.

The reading proposed in this study understands school culture as a space of praxis, where experiences and memories intertwine with the construction of meaning in teaching. Following Benito's (2017) perspective, attention is paid to the symbolic and linguistic dimensions of the sources—autobiographical narratives, reports, and official documents — interpreted from a hermeneutic perspective. In this approach, memory is understood as the home of school culture, and its decoding enables access to shared meanings, naturalized practices, and tacit knowledge that shaped the daily life of educational institutions.

The development of primary education in Piauí during this period can only be fully understood through the articulation of local factors and broader dynamics in the circulation of pedagogical knowledge. The school group model, teacher training in the Normal Schools, and the teaching methods adopted were developed in constant dialogue with transnational ideas that had permeated the West since the late 19th century. A historical analysis of educational practices reveals a pedagogy in flux, permeated by influences such as Pestalozzi's intuitive method, Calkins's "Lessons of Things", Rui Barbosa's pedagogy, and the principles of the New School. In Piauí, agents such as the Paulista educator Luís Galhanone played a central role in mediating these proposals, adapting them to local educational programs and the region's sociocultural conditions.

The appropriation of this educational knowledge illustrates a process typical of transnational history: knowledge considered "innovative" is incorporated, reinterpreted, and combined with traditional practices, in a movement of hybridization. As recent studies (Bontempi Júnior, 2025; Roldán Vera, 2021; Polachini, 2025) point out, different educational agents and artifacts acted as vectors in the circulation of ideas, practices, and pedagogical discourses on a global scale. In the case of Piauí, synthetic methods, memorization practices, and simultaneous instruction coexisted with attempts at innovation, creating a tense educational environment in which tradition and modernity dialogued daily.

The training of teacher instructors, understood as part of a project to modernize the teaching profession, also fits into this movement. The Teresina Teacher Training School functioned as a "nursery for teachers", according to official discourse at the time, with the mission of disseminating the principles of modern pedagogy. However, as the memoirs of former teacher instructors reveal, many of these teachers reappropriated traditional practices in their classes, reinforcing the importance of "pedagogical tact" (Benito, 2017) and practical wisdom as fundamental elements in teaching.

Finally, it is clear that Piauí's school groups, conceived as model institutions, not only replicated programs from other regions but also established themselves as spaces for cultural reinvention. Studying geography teaching, based on curricular and methodological prescriptions, allows us to understand how Piauí's schools inserted themselves into a broader flow of transnational pedagogical ideas and how they contributed to the construction of a distinctive school culture, in which tradition and innovation continually intertwine.

As a theoretical framework, the Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices approach offers a renewed perspective for understanding educational processes by prioritizing the analysis of the circulation of ideas, models, and agents across national borders. Unlike a comparative or strictly national history, the transnational perspective considers the flows, connections, and interactions between distinct contexts, emphasizing how pedagogical knowledge is appropriated and reinterpreted locally.

According to Rebecca Rogers (2019), cited by Eugênia Roldán Vera and Fuchs (2021), the Transnational History of Education does not constitute a single methodology, but rather an investigative stance that shifts the gaze of historiography beyond territorial boundaries, focusing on

networks, movements, and exchanges of knowledge. For the author, it is essential to pay attention to “circuits of knowledge” and the ways in which educational practices acquire new meanings in different contexts.

António Nóvoa (2009, p. 76) reinforces this perspective by highlighting that, between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there was an “unprecedented advance in the development of pedagogical ideas,” with the establishment of a “science of education” anchored in knowledge from psychology, sociology, medicine, and philosophy. This advancement spurred the formation of international networks of experts and the development of educational reforms in several countries, which reached, albeit indirectly or mediated, peripheral regions such as Piauí.

Roldán Vera and Fuchs (2021), when discussing the emergence of educational research with a transnational focus, emphasize that this perspective manifests itself above all in the analysis of the diffusion of pedagogical knowledge, the trajectories of educational agents, and the local uses of international school reforms. For the author, “not all authors explicitly use the term ‘transnational,’ but their analyses reveal a common interest in exchanges, displacements, and reappropriations that challenge an isolated reading of educational experiences” (Vera; Fuchs, 2021, p. 9).

In the Brazilian context, studies such as those by Vidal (2020; 2021), Polachini (2025) and Valdemarin (2022) have contributed to the understanding of how foreign pedagogical models were assimilated and transformed in different regions of the country, often through the work of teachers, principals, trainers and inspectors who acted as cultural mediators.

The history of education in Piauí, in this sense, should be understood as part of a broader process of circulation of ideas, methodologies, and practices, which articulated global and local dynamics. The school group model, for example, was inspired by international experiences but acquired particular characteristics in the Piauí context, in dialogue with traditional teaching practices and the concrete challenges of teacher training in the region.

Methodologically, this is qualitative historical research, supported by documentary analysis and the use of narrative sources. The documentary corpus consists of educational legislation, school programs, government reports, school inspection reports, and official publications produced between 1927 and 1961. These documents were collected from institutional collections in the state of Piauí, particularly the State Public Archives, the Antonino Freire Institute of Education, and municipal school funds.

In addition to official sources, the memoirs of former teachers trained at the Teresina Normal School were consulted, obtained through semi-structured interviews and/or published memoirs. These personal narratives contribute to understanding the teaching experience and the ways in which pedagogical practices are appropriated in everyday school life, allowing us to glimpse subjective, affective, and non-institutionalized aspects of educational practice.

The analysis was anchored in Benito’s (2017) proposal, which suggests reading school praxis as an expression of culture, highlighting memory as it is constructed within the educational sphere, but from a broader perspective. Based on the observation of the existence of three cultures that

influence the educational field — empirical, scientific, and political — and the interactive relationships between them, the author draws on the insights of the New Cultural History to highlight the value of practice and the role of ethnographic and hermeneutic studies in renewing approaches to school culture.

From this perspective, the experiences narrated in official messages and reports, autobiographies, oral sources, and other memory records were interpreted in their linguistic dimension and processed through hermeneutics. Since narrative is the locus of memory, reading and decoding the content and language present within it constitutes the pathway to knowledge of the school culture we sought to understand. The logic of the investigation, therefore, was interpretative in nature, guided by an open hermeneutics that, in a phenomenological manner, sought to produce meaning without starting from preconceived ideas, allowing the shifts in the text and narratives to offer clues, indications, and signs revealing the school culture in which Geography teaching developed in Piauí.

Educational practice in school groups in Piauí: teaching, teacher training and pedagogical practices (1927-1961)

Understanding the development of primary education in Piauí between 1927 and 1961 requires examining the multiple dimensions that shaped school culture in that context: from educational policies to the academic culture that influenced the pedagogical and curricular organization of schools, including the makeup of the teaching staff and the practices actually developed within the classroom. Rather than a linear or normative analysis, this study seeks to interpret the discourses, experiences, and meanings attributed by the subjects involved in this educational process, assuming school culture as a field of historically constructed practices and meanings.

From this perspective, we drew on a variety of sources — official documentation, memorials from intellectuals involved in education, oral narratives, autobiographies, and school records— understood as symbolic manifestations that express worldviews, social representations, and forms of teaching action. These sources were analyzed using a hermeneutic approach, in line with Escolano Benito (2017), who conceives of narrative as a site of memory and memory as an expression of school culture. Thus, the accounts, teaching programs, and regulations are not merely prescriptive documents, but also testimonies of a school ethos, in which tensions, continuities, and transformations are manifest.

The historiography of education supports a contextualized reading of these practices and discourses, allowing us to articulate the local scale with broader movements in the history of education in Brazil. By taking geography teaching as the axis of analysis, we seek to understand how this subject was shaped as part of the curriculum, what methods were valued, how teachers incorporated — or resisted — these methods, and how these elements interacted with the pedagogical models in circulation at the time.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as Queiroz (2008) points out, the teaching profession in Piauí faced precarious conditions, with teachers lacking adequate training, insufficient pay, and a lack of school infrastructure. Although this context predates the time frame of this study, its mention is important for understanding the transition that took place beginning in the 1920s, when efforts to institutionalize public primary education in the state intensified.

The creation of the Escola Normal (Normal School) (1910) and the spread of school groups from the 1920s onward marked the beginning of a project to modernize primary education, with a focus on the growing presence of women in teaching. The incorporation of female teachers into the official education system, both in Teresina and throughout the state, led to a movement toward the feminization of teaching (Sousa, 2009), in which teaching came to be seen as a legitimate professional field for women and a means of social advancement.

In this context, the educational reforms of 1910, 1933, and 1947 outlined new parameters for the pedagogical organization of primary schools in Piauí. These reforms introduced curricular prescriptions, reorganized content by discipline and cycle, and proposed methods aligned with the principles of Modern Pedagogy. The 1928 Teaching Program, for example, remained a reference for almost two decades, guiding pedagogical work even in the face of subsequent changes.

An analysis of these reforms and their prescriptions reveals the coexistence of innovation and permanence. Despite the introduction of intuitive methods and the emphasis on observation and experience, traditional practices such as simultaneous teaching, memorization, and textbook use remained. This demonstrates that the implementation of the reforms was not uniform but rather mediated by a process of appropriation (Chartier, 1990) that depended on teacher training, available resources, and the pedagogical beliefs of the individuals involved.

By interpreting the programs, teaching accounts, and practices implemented in Geography teaching, a pedagogy in flux becomes visible, intertwined with models from national and international pedagogical centers, but filtered by local realities. In this intersection, teachers not only applied methods but also redefined them, combining empirical, scientific, and normative knowledge. This teaching practice, permeated by the so-called “pedagogical tact” (Escolano Benito, 2017), constitutes the key to understanding the “school culture” (Julia, 2001) of Piauí during this period, highlighting how the tension between tradition and innovation shaped the educational experience in the state’s primary schools.

The transformation of public schools: the Normal School, school groups and the teaching program (1927-1931)

The consolidation of the public primary education system in Piauí between 1927 and 1931 must be analyzed from the perspective of pedagogical circulations that crossed national, regional, and local borders and were appropriated, translated, and reinterpreted in unique ways within the Piauí context. The perspective of the Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices

allows us to view this process as part of a broader dynamic of dissemination of school models and pedagogical proposals of European and North American origin, mediated by national and local reformers.

The creation of the Official Normal School in 1910 and the subsequent spread of school groups throughout the state were part of a project to modernize public education, anchored in the belief in science, pedagogy, and the rationalization of teaching. This model, inspired by French school organization and positivist ideals, circulated widely throughout Brazil, being adapted in specific ways in the different states, as Vidal (2020) observes, due to the political, social, and cultural conditions of each location.

In Piauí, the Normal School was conceived as a hub for disseminating modern teaching practices and responsible for training a new profile of teachers, trained to work in primary education according to the principles of Modern Pedagogy. The presence of female teachers trained based on curricula inspired by São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro models, in turn connected to transnational pedagogical discussions — such as the Intuitive Method, the “Lessons of Things,” and the principles of the New School — reveals the incorporation of knowledge in flux.

However, as documentary sources and the memoirs of former students and teachers point out, these innovations were assimilated in dialogue with traditional practices that were already rooted in school life. Elements such as simultaneous learning, the emphasis on memorization, and the intensive use of textbooks coexisted with activities that encouraged observation and experimentation, as proposed by the pedagogical reforms of the time. This coexistence of the new and the traditional constitutes what might be called a hybrid field, in which empirical and academic knowledge intertwine in the formation of the local school culture.

The circulation of agents such as Paulista educator Luís Galhanone, responsible for implementing educational reforms in the city of Parnaíba, highlights the presence of pedagogical mediators in the process of disseminating ideas. Galhanone brought with him a repertoire of didactic proposals based on experiences developed in São Paulo, which, in turn, connected with international trends in primary school renewal. His work demonstrates how pedagogical ideas circulated not abstractly, but through concrete individuals, with trajectories and action strategies adapted to local contexts.

The 1928 Teaching Program, implemented in Piauí as a milestone in this modernization effort, incorporated elements of intuitive pedagogy and proposed a rationalized distribution of disciplines. Geography, for example, was conceived as an instrument of civic and moral development, in line with national projects for building identity and territorial unity, while also reflecting international pedagogical concerns regarding teaching through observation, experimentation, and contact with the immediate environment.

Thus, the transformation of public schools in Piauí in the late 1920s must be understood as part of a process of selective appropriation of transnational models, mediated by regional contexts and the experiences of local individuals. The Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and

Practices allows us to highlight these connections and highlight the role of teachers, educators, and administrators as agents of translation and adaptation of reformist discourses. Far from limiting themselves to the reproduction of external models, these individuals reconfigured, in their daily school lives, their own way of doing school, in which tradition and innovation dynamically intertwine.

Primary Public Education in Piauí after the 1933 Reform: continuities and ruptures for a New School (1933-1947)

In the Piauí context, the 1933 Reform represented a turning point in the process of constructing a new school culture, strongly influenced by the circulation of transnational pedagogical ideas and a modernizing discourse anchored in the principles of the New School. However, this transformation should not be understood as a simple importation of models, but as a process of active and selective appropriation, mediated by local agents, and reconfigured by the political, economic, and cultural conditions of the state.

The perspective of the Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices offers a powerful analytical key to understanding this historical moment, allowing us to visualize the flows of pedagogical knowledge that, originating from European and North American contexts, reached Brazil and disseminated through institutional reforms, networks of intellectuals, and organizations such as the National Institute of Pedagogical Studies (INEP). In Piauí, these ideas were filtered, reinterpreted, and adapted considering local experiences and values, creating an educational field marked by continuities and ruptures.

The maintenance, until 1947, of the 1928 Teaching Program, based on the Intuitive Method, coexisted with the progressive incorporation of the New School's assumptions, especially after the Manifesto of the Pioneers of the New Education of 1932. This coexistence reveals a hybrid pedagogical field, in which teaching by observation, "centers of interest," and the centrality of the student in the educational process coexisted with traditional practices of simultaneous teaching, memorization, and the use of textbooks. As Teive (2008) observes, the pedagogy of observation, inherited from the Intuitive Method, was gradually augmented by the pedagogy of experimentation, typical of the New School, configuring a pedagogy in transit.

The actions of individuals like Felismino de Freitas Weser, director of Public Education between 1932 and 1937, highlight the role of cultural mediators in the local adaptation of reformist projects. Alongside other educators and administrators, Weser worked to translate New School ideas into the reality of Piauí, promoting the expansion of the school network, the diversification of school types, and the adoption of practices aimed at the formation of the "socialized man"—as proposed by the 1933 Regulations. His conception of civic, moral, and productive education also echoed European nationalist ideals, highlighting the complexity of the transnational influences that shaped local educational ideology.

The 1933 regulations, by proposing a free, secular, public school focused on the comprehensive development of citizens, sought to meet the new demands of Brazilian society undergoing urbanization and industrialization. The provisions of State Decree No. 1,438 of 1933, with its strong emphasis on the integration of children into the physical and social environment, the development of practical activities, and student leadership, closely mirror the international language of active pedagogy, even when formulated in local terms.

However, an analysis of school subjects and actual teaching practices reveals that official prescriptions were adopted with varying degrees of adherence in Piauí schools. Geography, for example, occupied a prominent place in the curriculum, linked to the development of patriotic sentiment and the construction of national identity, an objective also present in European and Latin American educational projects of the same period. Its presence in various types of schools (singular, grouped, and adaptive) illustrates how school knowledge circulated, was adapted, and became part of a didactic repertoire that articulated the local and the global.

The school groups, the school buildings constructed in different municipalities, and the expansion of primary enrollment between 1933 and 1937, as recognized by INEP statistics, demonstrate the Piauí government's efforts to integrate into the educational modernization movement that was gaining momentum in the country and worldwide. However, as Benito (2017) warns, the reforms express not only technical innovation but also symbolic disputes. The language of the reforms is laden with values, concepts, and objectives that reveal the tensions between the political culture of the school and the empirical culture of everyday school life.

Thus, the 1933 Reform in Piauí should be understood as part of a broader project of educational modernization anchored in networks of knowledge circulation and pedagogical practices. It was a local experience of appropriating the New School, marked by negotiations between prescribed purposes and those effectively realized in teaching practices, highlighting teachers' creativity and agency in the production of school culture.

Analyzing this process allows us to glimpse the emergence of a Piauí school culture shaped by the tension between the models idealized by reformers and the practices experienced in classrooms, between preserved tradition and reconfigured innovation. From this perspective, the study of Primary Education between 1933 and 1947 reveals how the history of education is constructed at the intersection of local, national, and transnational scales and how the school, more than a space for the application of methods, is a territory of cultural invention.

Primary Public Education in Piauí after the 1947 Reform: the influence of INEP on the guidelines of pedagogical practice (1947-1961)

The 1947 Educational Reform, implemented in Piauí in accordance with the Organic Law of Primary Education (Decree-Law No. 8,529/1946), was part of a broader process of educational reforms that, in Brazil, aimed to update public schools in response to the sociopolitical transformations of

the postwar period and the new demands of a developing urban and industrial society. From the perspective of the Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices, this period can be understood as a stage in the circulation and reconfiguration of pedagogical ideas originating in European and North American contexts, which reached Piauí through federal agencies such as INEP and agents trained in the centers where these proposals were disseminated.

The presence of INEP, created by Anísio Teixeira and directed by Murilo Braga during the period under review, was fundamental to the institutionalization of pedagogical principles linked to the New School. This influence occurred primarily through the training of teachers and technicians from Piauí in courses offered by the Institute, as well as through the dissemination of teaching programs inspired by international experiences, such as those of John Dewey, Decroly, and Montessori. Thus, INEP acted as a transnational mediator, promoting the appropriation, by states, of methodologies and pedagogical concepts aligned with active pedagogy, centered on the student and their experience.

Despite facing profound socioeconomic and political difficulties in the immediate post-war period, Piauí quickly adapted to the new legislation, implementing the reform through State Decree-Law No. 1,306/1946. This movement demonstrates not only the state's ability to adapt to national guidelines but also the actions of individuals committed to modernizing the education system. The organization of the new primary education system involved the creation of elementary, complementary, and supplementary courses, in addition to curricular restructuring, which prioritized the student's comprehensive development, moral and civic formation, and introduction to work.

The introduction of the course "General Knowledge Applied to Social Life, Health Education, and Work" represents a significant innovation in this context. Inspired by the principles of the New School and the Manifesto of the Pioneers of New Education (1932), this course expressed a concrete attempt to articulate school knowledge with social realities and the needs of the environment. However, as is often the case in the circulation of pedagogical ideas, its adoption in the Piauí context was limited by factors such as the fragility of teacher training and the persistence of traditional teaching practices.

Teacher training at INEP, through scholarships and specialization courses, was a strategy for spreading the Escola Nova proposals. Teachers returning to the state brought with them not only new content and methods, but also a new way of thinking about schools, contributing to the development of the 1949 Teaching Program. This program — although not fully located — is cited as a direct product of INEP's influence, focusing on the Analytical Method and valuing student experience. However, the lack of specific guidelines for subjects such as Geography and the concentration of efforts in Reading, Language, and Mathematics reveal a curricular hierarchy that reflected disputes over legitimacy in the field of school knowledge, as Viñao-Frago (2008) observes.

This hierarchy also manifests itself in the unequal reception of courses by local teachers. While some subjects were more directly instrumentalized as literacy and numeracy tools — and therefore considered more "fundamental" — subjects like Geography and History were relegated

to a secondary role. Even so, the programs developed in the 1960s, as a continuation of the work begun in 1949, reveal an attempt to integrate content from these areas into globalized education, with methodological guidelines that dialogued with both the Intuitive Method and the principles of the New School.

Thus, the 1947 educational reform in Piauí cannot be understood as a simple replication of federal guidelines. Rather, it reveals itself as a process of translation and adaptation of transnational pedagogical ideas, operated by local agents and conditioned by the specificities of the Piauí educational field. The work of INEP, the teaching programs developed, the training practices, and the teaching strategies deployed demonstrate how school culture was shaped by the intersection of innovation and tradition, between the prescribed and the lived, and between the global and the local.

This transnational interpretation therefore allows us to understand primary education in Piauí as part of a network of knowledge circulation that transcends geographic, political, and disciplinary boundaries. The history of the school during this period thus reveals itself as a story of selective appropriations, productive resistance, and pedagogical reinventions, shaping a unique school culture (Julia, 2001), marked by tensions, negotiations, and translations.

The development of a new teaching program for the Piauí Primary School (1949): between technical prescriptions and local translations

The development of a new teaching program for Piauí's Primary School in 1949 occurred within a context of consolidation of the 1947 Educational Reform and strengthening of INEP's role as the primary articulator of educational policies in the country. Directly influenced by the Institute's pragmatist and New School-inspired pedagogical guidelines, disseminated nationally through publications, courses, and seminars organized by the Institute, this period represented a fundamental stage in the process of circulation and appropriation of transnational pedagogical knowledge in the state.

The proposal to develop a dedicated program for state primary education should be seen as part of an effort to regionalize national pedagogical guidelines, which, in turn, were aligned with international debates on popular education, the social function of schools, and active pedagogy. Following the training of technical staff at INEP — through intensive courses and specializations— teachers and principals from Piauí began to play the role of mediators between normative prescriptions and local school practices, working to translate modern teaching proposals into the reality of the state's primary schools.

Although the full text of the 1949 Program has not been located, its conception, according to documentary sources, would have prioritized the principles of the Analytical Method for teaching reading, the valorization of student experience, the use of integrated activities, and the adaptation of content to the social and cultural realities of the student. These elements demonstrate alignment

with the New School ideology, founded on the centrality of the student, meaningful learning, and the connection between school and life.

However, analysis of reports, official letters, and supplementary documents reveals that this reformist proposal faced concrete implementation limitations, both materially and symbolically. The lack of school infrastructure, poor teacher training, and the strength of a pedagogical tradition centered on memorization and verbal transmission hindered effective adoption of methodological innovations. Furthermore, the lack of broader curricular detail, especially in subjects such as Geography and History, points to asymmetries in the treatment of different areas of knowledge within the curriculum.

Geography, for example, does not appear as a subject with specific guidelines in the available material on the 1949 Program, suggesting a peripheral status in relation to so-called “instrumental subjects,” such as Reading and Math. This curricular hierarchy reflects a broader trend in educational reforms of the time, strongly influenced by technocratic concepts of academic performance and efficiency, which ultimately prioritized quantifiable and immediately applicable content. Even so, it is possible to infer that, in many schools, geographic content continued to be taught, albeit in a subordinate manner, often integrated into broader areas, such as “General Knowledge” or “Introduction to Social Life.”

The program’s development process also involved listening, albeit limited, to in-service teachers through questionnaires and consultations sent to schools. This attempt to give teachers a voice represents a methodological shift in curriculum formulation, albeit marked by tensions between technical standardization and professional autonomy. Teacher participation, in this sense, should be seen as a form of negotiation between official knowledge and experiential knowledge, in which “pedagogical tact” plays a central role in reconfiguring prescribed guidelines.

The Piauí case therefore shows that the development of the 1949 Program was not an isolated gesture, but rather an episode embedded in a transnational flow of pedagogical ideas, mediated by national policies and reworked locally. The absence of a radical break with the previous program and the persistence of traditional practices reveal that curricular reforms, far from being implemented in a linear fashion, take the form of hybrid processes, marked by multiple layers of temporality and meaning.

From the perspective of the Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices, the development of this program should be interpreted as a moment of pedagogical translation: an operation through which ideas in transit were reinterpreted, selected, and adapted to specific school contexts. This interpretation allows us to understand the curriculum not as an imposition, but as a territory of symbolic dispute (Lopes; Macedo, 2011), where the global meets the local, and teachers play an active role in shaping school culture.

The 1960 Experimental Program: continuities and tensions in the pedagogical field of Piauí

The development of the 1960 Experimental Program by the General Inspectorate of Primary Education of Piauí, with the collaboration of the management of the Antonino Freire Institute of Education, is part of a trajectory of continuity of the curricular reforms initiated with the 1947 Reform and deepened with the Teaching Program of 1949. Under the persistent influence of INEP and the theoretical frameworks of the New School, this new program reinforces the presence of pedagogical knowledge in transit, mediated by networks of training and circulation of ideas that connected Piauí to the rest of the country and, indirectly, to international pedagogical debates.

The 1960 proposal reaffirms the centrality of the student in the teaching-learning process, the appreciation of concrete experience as a starting point for knowledge, and the connection between school content and the student's social environment. These principles, inherited from active pedagogy, reflect the permanence of New School ideals as a formative horizon and indicate the ongoing efforts of Piauí technicians and educators to consolidate a modern public school, even though permeated by historical challenges of infrastructure, teacher training, and social inequality.

Reading this program from the perspective of the Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices allows us to understand that, more than a technical document, it expresses an operation of pedagogical translation: an attempt to rework knowledge originating from hegemonic centers of educational debate, such as the United States and Western European countries, for the specific context of schools in Piauí. This process of appropriation was not passive, but involved choices, adaptations, and reinventions, led by teachers, principals, and inspectors who acted as cultural mediators.

The "experimental" nature attributed to the program reveals its transitory and unfinished nature, recognizing the school as a space for trial and error, for articulating theory and practice. The curricular proposal emphasizes interdisciplinarity, integration between areas of knowledge, and flexibility in content selection, suggesting a break — albeit partial — with the rigidity of previous programs. However, the scarcity of records on its effective implementation in schools, coupled with the absence of systematic evaluations, indicates the limits of the Piauí educational system's capacity to sustainably institutionalize proposals for didactic renewal.

An analysis of Geography's presence in the 1960 Experimental Program reinforces the internal tensions within the curriculum. Although the subject is included in the curriculum and associated with the development of skills related to observation and spatial location, it remains subordinate to areas considered "basic," such as Reading and Mathematics, perpetuating a curricular hierarchy that had already been emerging in previous proposals. This asymmetry reveals not only the preferences of national reforms but also the historical difficulties in valuing the Humanities in primary education.

On the other hand, the fact that the program was developed with the collaboration of in-service teachers and experts from the state school system represents an advance compared to

centralized curriculum development. This participation, albeit limited, points to a movement toward collectively constructing school culture, in which technical knowledge and experiential knowledge interact, often in tension, in defining the direction of public schools.

The 1960 Experimental Program, therefore, can be interpreted as a synthesis of the continuities and tensions that marked the educational field in Piauí after the 1947 Reform. It expresses the persistence of the New School ideology and active pedagogy as a normative reference, while also revealing the structural impediments that limited its full application. Reading considering the Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices, this document shows how primary school in Piauí was permeated by international pedagogical flows but translated them based on its concrete reality, thus producing its own school culture: hybrid, situated, and in constant negotiation between tradition and innovation.

Final considerations

An analysis of educational practices in Piauí's school districts between 1927 and 1961 revealed that the establishment of the local primary school was deeply embedded in a transnational dynamic of knowledge circulation, practices, and pedagogical models. Far from being an isolated or purely local system, Piauí's school culture was shaped by dialogue with large-scale reform projects anchored in European, North American, and Latin American experiences, which reached Brazil through federal policies, institutions like INEP, and reform agents with interregional trajectories.

The historical trajectory analyzed shows that the appropriation of these ideas did not occur linearly or homogeneously. Rather, what we observe is a process of pedagogical translation, in which knowledge considered "innovative" was incorporated, reinterpreted, and blended with traditional practices already consolidated in the daily lives of Piauí schools. This coexistence between the new and the old, between the prescribed and the lived, reveals the hybrid nature of school culture, forged in the tensions between different pedagogical eras and distinct scales of influence.

The educational reforms of 1933 and 1947, the teaching programs developed in 1928, 1949, and 1960, as well as the work of the Escola Normal and the school groups constituted institutional milestones that embodied, to varying degrees, the attempt to modernize primary schools. The presence of methodologies inspired by Modern Pedagogy, such as the Intuitive Method, the Lessons of Things, the Analytical Method, and the principles of the New School, demonstrate Piauí's insertion into broader pedagogical networks, which transcended national boundaries and mobilized concepts such as "student-centeredness," "valuing experience," "interdisciplinarity," and "education for citizenship."

However, analysis of the sources — memorials, official documents, school programs, and teachers' accounts — shows that these proposals were constantly adjusted to the material, cultural, and educational conditions of the local reality. The scarcity of resources, limitations in teacher training, and the weight of a pedagogical tradition centered on orality and memorization produced a

school culture marked by permanence and adaptation, in which “pedagogical tact” and experiential knowledge played decisive roles in organizing teaching practice.

The Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices approach has proven fruitful in understanding the formation of public schools in Piauí because of a process of circulation, appropriation, and reinvention of school models. This perspective allows us to overcome linearly diffusionist or excessively localized explanations, favoring a reading that recognizes teachers and administrators as active agents in the construction of pedagogical meanings and in the mediation between the global and the local.

In short, the study of public primary education in Piauí, considering Transnational History, contributes to repositioning the state on a more complex and relational map of the history of Brazilian education. It also reveals that even in contexts considered peripheral, such as Piauí, school practices were permeated by pedagogical debates of an international dimension, and that public primary schools constituted a space for disputes, adaptations, and the production of their own knowledge, thus revealing a vibrant, plural, and historically situated school culture.

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