

## A DECADE OF STUDIES ABOUT THE HISTORY OF RURAL EDUCATION IN BRAZIL (2012 – 2022)

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### ABSTRACT

This text is a bibliographical essay about the production of research on the history of rural education in Brazil in the last decade, reflecting on the studies that have addressed the problems of primary schools and teachers' formation and work in rural areas. The text begins by reconstituting the trajectory of the theme in the field of History of Education, highlighting the contribution of dissertations, theses, and research projects. Then, it discusses some relevant issues to the debate on the theme, especially the conceptual controversies, the historical production of the difference between urban and rural schools, the relations and disagreements between Escola Nova followers and advocates of education ruralization, the transnational circulation of ideas, proposals, and models for rural education, the complex situation of lay teachers and the scope and limits of rural Normal schools and regional Normal courses.

**Keywords:** Rural Education, Rural Elementary Schools, Teacher Training for the Rural Environment, History of Rural Education.

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## UMA DÉCADA DE PESQUISAS SOBRE A HISTÓRIA DA EDUCAÇÃO RURAL NO BRASIL (2012 – 2022)

### RESUMO

Este texto constitui um ensaio bibliográfico acerca da produção da pesquisa sobre a história da educação rural no Brasil, na última década, delimitada a reflexão em torno dos estudos que têm abordado a problemática da escola primária e da formação e trabalho de professores para o meio rural. O texto inicia reconstituindo a trajetória da temática no campo da História da Educação destacando a contribuição de dissertações, teses e projetos de pesquisa em rede. Em seguida, discute algumas questões consideradas relevantes para o debate sobre o tema, especialmente, as controvérsias conceituais, a produção histórica da diferença entre escolas urbanas e rurais, as relações e divergências entre escolanovistas e defensores da ruralização do ensino, a circulação transnacional de ideias, propostas e modelos para a educação rural, a complexa situação dos professores leigos e o alcance e limites das escolas normais rurais e cursos normais regionais.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Rural, Escolas Primárias Rurais, Formação de Professores para o Meio Rural, História da Educação Rural.

## UNA DÉCADA DE INVESTIGACIÓN SOBRE LA HISTORIA DE LA EDUCACIÓN RURAL EN BRASIL (2012 – 2022)

### RESUMEN

Este texto constituye un ensayo bibliográfico sobre la producción de investigaciones sobre la historia de la educación rural en Brasil, en la última década, delimitando la reflexión en torno a los estudios que han abordado el problema de la escuela primaria y la formación y el trabajo de los docentes para el medio rural. El texto comienza reconstruyendo la trayectoria del tema en el campo de la Historia de la Educación, destacando la contribución de disertaciones, tesis y proyectos de investigación en red. Luego, se discuten algunas cuestiones consideradas relevantes para el debate sobre el tema, en especial las controversias conceptuales, la producción histórica de la diferencia entre escuela urbana y rural, las relaciones y divergencias entre partidistas de la Escuela Nueva y defensores de la ruralización de la educación, la circulación transnacional de ideas, propuestas y modelos para la educación rural, la compleja situación del profesorado laico y los alcances y límites de las escuelas normales rurales y de los cursos normales regionales.

**Palabras clave:** Educación Rural, Escuelas Primarias Rurales, Formación del Maestro del Medio Rural, Historia de la Educación Rural.

## UNE DÉCENNIE DE RECHERCHES SUR L'HISTOIRE DE L'ÉDUCATION RURALE AU BRÉSIL (2012 – 2022)

### RÉSUMÉ

Ce texte constitue un essai bibliographique sur la production de la recherche sur l'histoire de l'éducation rurale au Brésil, au cours de la dernière décennie, délimité la réflexion autour des études qui ont abordé la problématique de l'école primaire et de la formation et du travail des enseignants en milieu rural. Le texte commence par reconstituer la trajectoire de la thématique dans le domaine de l'histoire de l'éducation en soulignant la contribution des dissertations, des thèses et des projets de recherche en réseau. Ensuite, il aborde certaines questions jugées pertinentes pour le débat sur le sujet, en particulier les controverses conceptuelles, la production historique de la différence entre les écoles urbaines et rurales, les relations et les divergences entre l'éducation nouvelle et les partisans de la ruralisation de l'enseignement, la circulation transnationale d'idées, de propositions et de modèles pour l'éducation rurale, la situation complexe des enseignants laïcs et la portée et les limites des écoles rurales normales et des cours régionaux normaux.

**Mots-clés:** Éducation rurale, Écoles primaires rurales, Formation des enseignants pour le milieu rural, Histoire de l'éducation rurale.

During the last decade in Brazil, the studies about the history of rural education have intensified, bringing new themes and emphasizing formal education, mainly elementary school and teachers' education, memories, and practice. This text discusses some issues that have been emerging in these studies and are relevant to the historical research of the theme. I consider the results I have been following when coordinating and developing specific projects, advising undergraduate and masters' dissertations and doctoral theses, participating in committees, and writing bibliographic reviews in a fruitful dialogue with recent studies about the theme.<sup>1</sup>

Highlighting the education of rural populations means inquiring from another perspective about the challenges to implementing the right to education in Brazil, questioning the inequalities and differences that have marked the country's education history. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, part of the Brazilian population had access to the rudiments of written culture in rural elementary schools. However, this access was limited and excluding, as the education policies carried out by the country's state governments privileged urban areas rather than rural ones.

In 1940, most of the Brazilian population, estimated at 29 million people, that is, 68.7% of the country's population, lived in rural areas. According to the message by President Eurico Gaspar Dutra sent to the National Assembly in 1949, among the enrolled children, 36% belong to rural areas, 52% to urban ones, and 12% to district areas (also considered urban). In the analysis of the first Brazilian School Census held in 1964, Moreira (1965) emphasized the inequalities between rural and urban schooling in the country. According to this author, among the researched population between 7 to 14 years old in school age, 51% lived in rural areas (7 million children). However, only half attended schools, while the urban area was responsible for a bit more than 81%.

The social area of education in the rural areas was crossed by representations forged and consolidated in the country related to the distinctions between field and city/urban and rural, reinforcing the lack of qualification from those living in the countryside. The city was associated with progress, modernity, and development, while the rural one was related to backwardness, misery, and tradition. Therefore, as shown by Lima (2018), rural schools in Brazil took on different senses, becoming a frontier place. Though precarious and lacking adequate infrastructure, material, and human resources, it represented modernity and access to written culture to the rural communities, besides feeding the hope to improve the life conditions of children and families.

Part of the recent and innovative historiography about rural education, produced from different approaches, has been investigating this schooling experience. Many of these studies have been grounded on the New Cultural History and Political History. They are grounded in solid empirical research based on documents from public and personal archives, school archives,

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a revised version of the text presented in the 27.<sup>o</sup> *Encontro da Associação Sul-Rio-Grandense de Pesquisadores em História da Educação*, at the round table entitled *História da Educação, Cultura Política e os Processos de Educação Rural*. The event occurred at the Universidade de Caxias do Sul, between September 26 and 28, 2022.

press, and oral sources. Hence, this text aims to reconstitute a part of this trajectory within the field of History of Education and discuss some issues that can contribute to advance studies.

## RURAL EDUCATION IN THE FIELD OF HISTORY OF EDUCATION

The first reviews about the theme in the 2000s are quite known and cited. They were conducted by Damasceno and Beserra (2004) and Pinho (2008). They highlight the small number of studies about rural education in the field of Education and History of Education.<sup>2</sup> However, according to more recent bibliographic reviews (ÁVILA, 2018; LIMA, 2020; COSTA; SOUZA-CHALоба, 2020; IVASHITA, 2020), this situation has been significantly changed due to the increasing number of studies about the different aspects of rural education.

This recent interest of education historians in the theme results from the renovation of the field, the unfolding of prevailing research tendencies, the changes in the country's educational research, and the configuration of rural education headed by social movements in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Many education historians, including myself, reached the history of rural education through the experience accumulated in the studies about school culture and the history of education institutions, especially the history of elementary schools (mainly school groups) and institutions for teacher education. The initial focus on education modernization at the beginning of the Republican period through the establishment of school groups, considered model schools, highlighted the need for studies about the periods after the First Republic and those that related the school groups with other types of schools, such as isolated, reunited, and rural schools (FARIA FILHO; SOUZA, 2006).

One of the first studies in this direction was Denise Silva's (2004) dissertation that, using previously unknown sources- the reports of the Regional Education Departments of São Paulo State (1933-1943) – analyzed prescriptions and practices for the Isolated Schools, thus, problematizing several aspects of school culture in the São Paulo rural area.

During the next years, following the intense research production about school institutions, the studies about the history of isolated and rural Normal schools multiplied, significantly contributing to enlarging the knowledge about schools and delineating rural education as a relevant investigation theme.<sup>3</sup> The vigor of this production was notable, especially in the studies about teachers' memory and formation for rural elementary schools, emphasizing the studies about Normal rural schools and regional courses.<sup>4</sup>

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2 We must note the critical works produced during the last decades, which became references in the area, such as Vanilda Paiva (1983), Calazans (1979), Demartini (1984, 1989), and Barreiro (1997), among others.

3 Among the academic works that approach the history of isolated and/or rural schools produced in the 2000s and early 2010s, we can highlight Ávila (2008), Paes (2011), Reis (2011), Santana (2011), Silva (2012), Dias (2012), and others.

4 In the bibliographical review conducted by Costa and Souza-Chaloba (2020) about the theme of rural teachers' training and work, the author researched dissertations and theses produced in Brazil from 2001 to 2018, identifying 21 studies produced between 2001 and 2010 and 47 between 2011 and 2018.

However, in the History field, there is a consolidated foundation of research about rural education, mainly the works by Sônia Mendonça about Ruralism and the State policies for agricultural teaching (MENDONÇA, 1997, 2016).

In the trajectory of rural education in the field of History of Education, we should highlight the contribution of some investigation projects whose scope and synergy allow greater visibility to the theme and expand the research interests. In this sense, the editions of the project known as *História da Escola Primária no Brasil* [History of Primary School in Brazil] were particularly relevant, developed in the national scope and comparative perspective. The first edition of the project, entitled *Por uma teoria e uma história da escola primária no Brasil: investigações comparadas sobre a escola graduada (1870 – 1930)* [For a theory and a history of primary school in Brazil: compared investigations about graded school (1870-1930)] developed between 2007 and 2011, investigated the history of school groups in 15 Brazilian states – Acre, Maranhão, Piauí, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Sergipe, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, São Paulo, Mato Grosso, Goiás, Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul.<sup>5</sup> Among the countless research results, the relevance of isolated and rural schools in children's schooling stood out in Brazilian states, given the reduced expansion of school groups in the First Republic. Another data was the diversity of primary schools used in the states and their relationship with the attendance of different social groups.<sup>6</sup>

In the second edition, developed between 2010 and 2014, also funded by CNPq, the project entitled *História da Escola Primária no Brasil: investigação em perspectiva comparada em âmbito nacional (1930-1961)* [History of Primary School in Brazil: investigation in comparative perspective in the national scope (1930-1961)] involved 13 Brazilian states – Acre, Maranhão, Piauí, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Sergipe, Bahia, Minas Gerais, São Paulo, Mato Grosso, Goiás, Paraná, and Santa Catarina – and a team of 43 researchers with a PhD degree from different regions and Graduate Programs in the country. Besides prioritizing the period from 1930 to 1961, the project incorporated the rural elementary school through the analysis of elementary school institutionalization for childhood people, involving the action of Public Powers through programs, educational reforms, and expansion of teaching and different modalities of elementary schools in urban and rural areas.

The studies on the theme were very fruitful and allowed several unfoldings, including academic events, publication of articles and books, and the production of theses and theses

<sup>5</sup> This project was funded by CNPq (Process n.º 480462/2007-0) and coordinated by Rosa Fátima de Souza-Chaloba. The team comprised 27 researchers with a Ph.D., undergraduate researchers, masters', and Ph.D. students from different higher education institutions and Brazilian states. The study encompassed four thematic axes: 1) Study of the meaning, the adoption initiatives, and practices raised by the intuitive method and its unfoldings and inflections from the dissemination of *escola nova*; 2) the analysis of the materiality of graded primary school through the study of school material culture; 3) the analysis of the social representations about school groups; and 4) the study about the institutionalization of graded school in different Brazilian states, considering the educational reforms, the expansion of school institutions, pedagogical organization, and the relationship between the many types of primary schools (isolated, gathered, school groups, municipal, state, and private).

<sup>6</sup> Among the numerous publications resulting from this project, we highlight the books that summed up the final results: Castro (2011); Araújo; Souza; Pinto (2012); Souza; Silva; Sá (2013).

(TEIXEIRA, 2010; ÁVILA, 2013; FURTADO, SCHELBAUER, CORREA, 2019).<sup>7</sup> We should also highlight the Photograph Exhibition entitled *Memórias e Imagens da Escola Primária Rural no Brasil (1930 – 1960)* [Memories and Images of Rural Primary Schools in Brazil (1930-1960)], presented in the *VII Congresso Brasileiro de História da Educação*, held in Cuiabá/MT, in 2013; and the book of school photos encompassing the iconographic sources gathered by the team of researchers connected with the project (SOUZA; BENCOSTTA; SILVA, 2018).

Also under the theme of the history of elementary school and motivated by two editions of the network project previously mentioned, the research project I coordinated between 2012 and 2014, dealing specifically with the history of rural elementary schools in the state of São Paulo, referring to the period between 1931 to 1968.<sup>8</sup> This investigation aimed to articulate three dimensions present in the configuration of rural public elementary schools: State policies, the educational practices that established school culture, and the circulation of foreign references. This last aspect emerged from the research sources that indicated the action of the North American Robert King Hall in the policies of the federal government for rural education and the approximations of Lourenço Filho with the *Centro Regional de Educación Fundamental para la América Latina* (Crefal- Regional Center of Elementary Education for Latin America). It was also a result of the experience with theoretical references around the compared history of education.

This research allowed the identification and gathering of numerous documents from old rural schools kept by the São Paulo state government, which closed at the end of the 1980s (SOUZA, 2014b). Besides this, the most accurate understanding of the policies implemented by the governments in the state of São Paulo toward children's schooling in rural areas during the period delineated for the research, considering the relation of these initiatives with foreign references, the education ruralization movement, and the federal government policies. It portrayed the effective expansion of elementary education in the field through the increase in the number of schools and enrollments, the implementation of typical rural education (school farms, typical rural schools, and rural school groups), and the peculiar debate assumed in this state about the education of rural teachers. Furthermore, it grasped elements of school culture in rural elementary schools from São Paulo, from standardization, guidance, following, and training of rural teachers.

The results of this research were discussed in the *II Seminário Estudos Históricos sobre a Educação Rural: desafios para a pesquisa*, held at the *Universidade Católica de Santos* (Unisantos) in 2014, which gathered researchers from different Brazilian states who had been

<sup>7</sup> The final results can be found in Souza; Pinheiro; Lopes (2015).

<sup>8</sup> The project entitled *História da Escola Primária Rural no Estado de São Paulo (1931 – 1968): circulação de referenciais estrangeiros, iniciativas do poder público e cultura escolar* was funded by Fapesp (Process n.º 2012/08203-5) with the participation of the associated researchers Marcioniro Celeste Filho and Maria Aparecida Franco Pereira. About the results of this research, see Pereira (2011), Celeste Filho (2014), Moraes (2014), Souza and Ávila, (2015); Souza and Leite (2016), and the dossier organized by Souza and Ávila, entitled *Representações, práticas e políticas de escolarização da infância na zona rural*, published at *Revista História da Educação*, Ac. Souza and Ávila (2014a).

studying and advising studies about the history of rural education.<sup>9</sup> At the end of this event, propositions were debated for a network project to be submitted to funding agencies. The general guidelines defined by the researchers delineated the investigation period between the 1930s and 1970s, considering a) the more effective intervention of the federal government in the scope of rural education through policies to build schools and train teachers, b) the significant expansion of primary education in rural areas through the action of municipal and state governments, c) the dissemination of the movement for the ruralization of education and pedagogical proposals mainly toward rural elementary schools.

Researchers highlighted the need for a theoretical discussion about the notions of urban/rural, field/city, and an integrated perspective to understand the specificities of rural elementary schools, considering the pedagogical organization of isolated schools, teachers' work, and the proposals and policies for the countryside. Finally, we point out the methodological challenges for network studies about different Brazilian states and the pertinence of using oral sources.

All these appointments were considered when creating and implementing the project entitled *Formação e Trabalho de Professoras e Professores Rurais no Brasil: RS, PR, SP, MG, RJ, MS, MT, MA, PE, PI, SE, PB, RO (décadas de 40 a 70 do século XX)* [Formation and Work of Rural Teachers in Brazil: RS, PR, SP, MG, RJ, MS, MT, MA, PE, PI, SE, PB, RO (the 1940s to 1970s)], which significantly contributed for the expansion of knowledge and the consolidation of historical studies in the theme.<sup>10</sup> Developed between 2017 and 2021, the project aimed to analyze teachers' professionalization in Brazil to understand the public policies implemented in the national and state contexts to train rural teachers and the forms to recruit them, their careers, and work conditions in rural elementary schools. The study focused on 13 states of the country, as pointed out in the title, and encompassed three investigation axes: a) external references and circulation of models about rural education, b) the training of rural teachers (in regional, Normal, vacation, and improvement courses), and c) the memory and representations about teaching in rural elementary schools. The theme of teachers' training and work was considered an analytical key to re-establishing the history of primary education built from teachers' gaze and voice. Gathering researchers from different regions working in graduate programs fomented the production of theses and dissertations and strengthened research lines on the theme.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Participated in this event: Sandra Cristina Fagundes Lima (UFU), Antônio de Pádua Carvalho Lopes (UFPI), Áurea Esteves Serra (Faculdade Municipal de Birigui/SP), Virgínia Pereira Silva de Ávila (Unesp), Elizabeth Figueiredo de Sá (UFMT), Alessandra Furtado (UFGD), Flávio Anício Andrade (UFRRJ), Analete Regina Schelbauer (UEM), Rosa Fátima de Souza-Chaloba (Unesp), Marcioniuro Celeste Filho (Unesp), Maria Aparecida Franco Pereira (Unisantos).

<sup>10</sup> Project funded by CNPq (Process n.º 405240/2016-3, from June 19, 2017 to January 31, 2021). The team was composed of 17 researchers with Ph. D.s from different higher education institutions and states, as well as undergraduate and graduate students. Among the many publications and results of the project, see Souza-Chaloba, Celeste Filho, and Mesquita (2020). We also highlight the book of photos of rural schools from Schelbauer, Barreto, and Souza-Chaloba (2022).

<sup>11</sup> Among others: Leite (2018); Moraes (2019); Teixeira (2019); Siqueira (2019); Amorim (2019); Silva (2021); and Garcia (2022).

The project allowed the systematization and widening of knowledge about the experiences of Normal schools in the country and the several experiences of teacher education in rural schools. It also deepened the knowledge about the history of rural schools in several Brazilian states and discussed the challenges of studying teachers' work. In the context of model circulation, the research pointed out the internal circulation of the education ruralization ideal, the role of international bodies in the proposition for rural education in Brazil and in Latin America, and the interesting work of Lourenço Filho together with Unesco and Crefal regarding this theme.

From this accumulated experience, I would like to explore the results of some promising studies for the debate and research on the theme.

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEBATE

The conceptual issue continues to be a polemic debate. Why the history of rural education and not the history of education in/of the countryside? Certainly, as the studies on the theme gain more importance, the historians of education will have to establish a consensus on the most adequate terminology, theoretically grounded, and not anachronistic.

The attempt to interpret and define rural/urban and countryside/city cross the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the conceptual conflicts continue in different knowledge areas that consider these terms as study objects, such as Geography, Sociology, Economy, and others (BISPO; MENDES, 2012; SILVA, 2017). In the field of education, the problematization of the term is recent and was boosted by the phenomenon of Countryside Education or Education of the Countryside [in Portuguese: *Educação do Campo*]. In a text that became an unavoidable reference on the issue, Roseli Caldart (2009) explains why the term 'Education of the Countryside' pointing out the social movements' protagonism:

In its oring, the ' of the' of 'Education of the Countryside' relates to this protagonism: it is not 'for' nor 'with,' it is 'of the' workers, education *of the* countryside, of the rural workers, the pedagogy of the oppressed...An 'of the' that is not given but needs to be built through the formation process of collective subjects. These subjects fight to be part of a social dynamic, to construct themselves as political subjects, able to influence societal political agenda. (CALDART, 2009, p. 41, author's highlights).

As Caldart points out, it is not an eminently pedagogical proposal but a phenomenon historically rooted in workers' fights and grounded on the pedagogical radicalness of social movements dialoguing and demanding public policies. Education of the Countryside also means a political position contrary to the meaning of rural education or for the rural area, related to the State initiatives and policies for rural workers.

On the other hand, some researchers debating with the 'Education of the Countryside' propositions, have been defending the use of the expression education in the countryside (BEZERRA NETO, 2012).



In the field of the History of Education, the term rural education has been used with no deeper discussions, considering more how it was broadly used during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, connected to different policies, programs, and educational experiences promoted by the federal, state, and municipal governments and administrative bodies, such as the Ministries of Agriculture and Education, the Education Secretaries, and others. The broad review coordinated by Maria Julieta Calazans (1979) in *Estudo Retrospectivo da Educação Rural no Brasil* [Retrospective Study of Rural Education in Brasil] shows the multiplicity of actions and institutions implied: the *Comissão Brasileiro-Americana de Educação das Populações Rurais* (Cbar), *Serviço de Informação Agrícola do Ministério da Agricultura* (SIA), *Associação Brasileira de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural* (ABCAR), *Serviço Social Rural*<sup>12</sup>, among others. The activities for rural education promoted by governments involved sanitary education, technical assistance, dissemination of modern techniques, Rural Weeks, Agricultural Clubs, and the National Campaign of Rural Education. Besides these initiatives, the study highlighted elementary education, training of teachers and technicians, and agricultural education. The Agricultural Patronage and Apprenticeship and technical-vocational agricultural education in elementary, high school, and higher education were also part of rural education.

From my perspective, the term rural education is pertinent for the research objects that we have been studying in the field of History of Education, which are related to the education policies for the rural area and, therefore, to the disputes, representations, and tensions in the State's scope, as well as the action of educational actors and practices. Besides this, it is justified by the fact that contemplating the senses attributed to it during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, predominantly until the emergence of the term Countryside Education. Another reason is that the term is broadly used in the research sources referring to regular education. Finally, it is comprehensive, encompassing different educational experiences.

We should also highlight here, for example, the important studies dedicated to the Agricultural Clubs, which are associations with different institutional and social domains implied in rural education. These clubs involved civil society associations, such as *Sociedade Amigos de Alberto Torres* (Saat), public bodies, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and the Secretaries of Education, and agreements of technical cooperation, among which the *Comissão Brasileiro-Americana de Educação das Populações Rurais* (CBAR) stand out. Established in the 1930s and working until the early 1970s, they were considered relevant for the formation of rural populations due to the scope of their ends, i.e., to form a rural mindset among students and the relationship established with the public system of rural and urban elementary education (NICOLAU, 2016; BARBOSA, 2017; PEREIRA, 2021; SOUZA-CHALоба; SILVA, 2021).

Another vital debate issue is the production of different, that is, the classification of primary schools between urban and rural, as it refers to understanding the historical

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<sup>12</sup>Translation note: in English, respectively: Brazilian-American Commission of Rural People Education, Agricultural Information Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Brazilian Association of Technical Assistance and Rural Outreach, Rural Social Service.

construction of a distinction with profound repercussions in the education policy in terms of resource distribution, pedagogical projects, teacher training and provision, and schools' material aspects. Studies conducted by Musial (2011) and Barros (2013) about Minas Gerais and Souza and Ávila (2015) about São Paulo show that this classification was produced during the First Republic, answering the need to administratively rationalize public education. There was a need for state governments to share with the municipalities the responsibility for elementary education expansion, facing the challenge of identifying the nuclei of illiterate people in 'rarefied' areas and solving the serious problem of providing teachers to rural schools.

When and why did the state governments establish a distinction between urban and rural schools? How did the configuration of rural elementary schools take place in each state? What were the criteria used for this classification? What were the strategies used by the governments to transform the spatial differences into distinguished pedagogical proposals, such as the decrease of elementary time, simplified programs, and lower salaries for the teachers?

Such questions raise reflections about the 19<sup>th</sup> century. If classifying schools into rural and urban is a republican creation, how can we understand the spatial distribution of 'first-letter' schools during the Empire? We need to be attentive, for example, to the characteristics of urban and rural during this period and the meanings given to the so-called neighborhood schools. We know little about the debates around rural teaching in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup>

We should also consider the relationship between the 'first letter' schools, predominant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the isolated schools, established in the Republican period. The historiography of primary schools, produced in the last two decades in Brazil, has highlighted the different types of schools in different regions. From these political-administrative and organizational arrangements, these differences also correspond to social distinctions. As I have sought to demonstrate in previous studies (SOUZA, 2009, 2016), isolated schools are beneficiaries of the pedagogical organization and institutional transformations of 'first letter' schools, i.e., the singular school model in which a teacher teaches primary education for students of different levels in the same classroom. This type of primary school organization received several names in Brazil during the 20<sup>th</sup> century: unit schools, singular schools, and multi-graded schools.

In the state of São Paulo, creating isolated schools is inseparable from creating school groups. Isolated school was a term used to distinguish non-graded schools from those that predominated in the state. From the perspective of politicians and intellectuals at the time, the school groups should attend the urban nuclei, where there was a high concentration of children (to create a school group, a minimum number of 200 children of school age was required). In their turn, the isolated schools mostly attended the places with a dissipated population, as in rural areas. However, this administrative rationality was associated with representations of value: the school groups known as icons of public education modernization and the expression

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<sup>13</sup>One of the few works published about this is Ávila (2012), which analyzes the three reports presented at the *I Congresso da Instrução* in Rio de Janeiro in 1883.

of the quality of elementary schools, while the isolated schools were considered a less-quality model, provisory, and supposedly doomed to disappear.

The term isolated school was also used in other Brazilian states during the First Republic. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, isolated schools continued to be created and supplied in urban and rural areas; however, they were increasingly being identified as the predominant model in rural areas. Therefore, we need to avoid hasty generalizations. As there were still isolated schools in the rural and urban areas, there were also different types of elementary schools in the countryside, such as rural school groups, typical rural schools, school farms, emergency schools, grouped schools, etc.

The resonances of *Escola Nova* in rural education also need to be further analyzed. Among the many possibilities to problematize this issue, we may ask: To what extent did the *Escola Nova* principles, used in different educational reforms conducted by state governments in the 1930s and 1940s reverberate in the school culture of primary rural schools? In the scope of the history of pedagogical thought and intellectuals, we need to observe the approximations, distances, and disputes between *Escola Nova* and the Movement for Education Ruralization.

The entanglement of these two pedagogical ideals was present in many initiatives, as in the 8.<sup>o</sup> *Congresso Brasileiro de Educação* [8th Brazilian Congress of Education], in Goiânia, in 1942, specifically about rural education (ARAÚJO, 2012) and the proposals for Normal rural schools (ARAÚJO, 2006; ANDRADE, 2006; NOGUEIRA, 2008; NEVES, 2015). Nonetheless, we have also seen conflicts between the *Escola Nova* and Ruralist followers, mainly regarding the issue of common schools versus ruralized schools.

The clashes between common school defenders and ruralized ones have broad consequences. This theme is relevant nowadays because it underlies the conflicts between 'education of the countryside' and 'education in the countryside'. In the state of São Paulo, Souza and Ávila (2014a) identified confrontations between these two tendencies, mainly the defense of common school. While the supporters of education ruralization defended ruralized Normal and elementary schools, i.e., with a curriculum and pedagogical organization specifically focused on the characteristics and demands of the rural area, the *Escola Nova* partisans, a group that guided the São Paulo education between the 1930s and 1950s, advocated for common school, with the same pedagogical guidance in the countryside and the city. These antinomies can even explain the failure of Rural Normal School in São Paulo, though Sud Mennucci fervently defended it. How this movement took place in other Brazilian states and at the federal level remains to be seen.

Therefore, the importance of revisiting the ideas of *Escola Nova* intellectuals, such as Fernando de Azevedo, Lourenço Filho, Carneiro Leão, and others, who reflected on education in rural areas. In the same direction, we need more detailed and critical studies about the federal government policies, INEP's position on the theme, and how educators and legislators involved in the definition of the Organic Law for Primary, Normal, and Agricultural Education positioned themselves regarding the principal of the common school and the ruralist propositions.

A good example of the new questions proposed in the historical studies about rural education is the recent study by Agnes Iara Domingos Moraes (2019), which rebuilt the Movement for the Ruralization of Education, questioning the national and international circulation of this movement and the term Pedagogical Ruralism. Using as sources documents from Sud Mennucci's personal archive, mainly the correspondences received, the researcher evidenced how the ideas of ruralization of education reverberated inside and outside most Brazilian states, mobilizing initiatives, such as congresses, Rural weeks, and publications. They also influenced policies, such as the use of Rural Typical Schools, specific programs of teacher training, and the creation of agricultural clubs.

To guide the national circulation of pedagogical models is a highly relevant analytical operation, considering the differences in organization and development of education in each Brazilian states. Besides this, it goes beyond the prevailing regionalism in the field nowadays and imposes comparisons of regional-state specificities. The review of the term 'pedagogical ruralism' proposed by the researcher is also relevant because if it qualifies in the general scenario the ruralist ideas on education, the ruralization education movement designates how the followers of these ideas recognized themselves and named the movement. Hence, it is a necessary and pertinent historiographical review.

Moreover, the recent historiography about rural education has been concerned with the transnational circulation of ideas, proposals, and educational models. Mexican rural education pointed out in the mid-20th century as a model for Latin America has been analyzed in some studies but needs to be more deeply studied (SOUZA, 2013; AZEVEDO, 2019; SILVA, 2021). The international bodies' actions analysis is relevant, but we need to avoid the linear perspective of the diffusion-reception type or recommendation-implementation. Therefore, from a methodological point of view, it is valuable the indication of authors that have been dealing with the complex transnational dynamic presupposed in the phenomena of transfers, loans, circulation, and appropriation of ideas and models (GRUZINSKI, 2003; FUCHS; VERA, 2019; MATASCI; DROUX, 2019). From a methodological perspective, the categories "cultural mediation" and "mediating intellectuals" have broadened the discussion's scope and the cultural production's intricacies on the theme.

Besides Unesco, OEA, Cepal, Crefal, and other organizations were essential in producing knowledge and political propositions for rural education (CELESTE FILHO, 2020). Similarly, the Agreements of Technical Cooperation should be considered in the studies about the circulation of international references about rural education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. About this, we should point out the agreements signed between Brazil and the United States. In 1945, the *Comissão Brasileiro-Americana de Educação das Populações Rurais* (CBAR- Brazilian-American Commission of Education for Rural Populations) was created, involving a private American entity and the Ministry of Agriculture. Between 1953 and 1963, the *Acordo de Cooperação Técnica entre Brasil e Estados Unidos: o Escritório Técnico de Agricultura Brasileiro-Americana* (ETA- Agreement of Technical Cooperation between Brazil and the United States: Technical Office of Brazilian- American Agriculture) was in action, subordinated

to the Ministry of Agriculture. As Mendonça (2009) points out, this Office received resources from the Point Four Program (an American program of intervention and good neighborhood in Latin America, managed by the Truman Administration aiming to help under-developing countries), which significantly acted in the formation of technicians and teachers.

The transnational study of rural education should consider the sociability network established between Brazilian, North American, and Latin-American intellectuals, for example, Robert King Hall, Lourenço Filho, Carneiro Leão, José Vasconcelos, Jaime Bodet, Sud Mennucci, among others.

In this framework of themes for the debate, we should question some research results and analysis about teachers' formation and work (mainly women) in rural areas. The rural Normal schools flourished in Brazil between the 1930s and 1950s, involving the action of religious congregations and the municipal and state governments, but established themselves as a brief and fragile experience. Therefore, we should discuss the reach and failure of Normal education in Brazil (SOUZA-CHALоба, 2022).

The case of São Paulo is quite particular. Sud Mennucci proposed an auspicious model of rural Normal school for this state, encompassing a high-level specialized formation, that is, a seven-year course – the complementary one lasting three years and the Normal one of four years. The Normal rural school should embody the ideal of teacher formation with an agricultural vocation, an educational agent in the rural context. Besides the general and pedagogical subjects, the technical formation for agricultural and livestock activities would encompass the following subjects: Agricultural Technology, Zootechnics, General Agriculture, Special Agriculture, Rural Economy, Hygiene, Rural Childcare, and Prophylaxis. Despite the robust dissemination of the Movement for the Ruralization of Education in the state of São Paulo, only one Normal rural school was effectively created, i.e., the *Escola Normal Rural de Piracicaba*, established by law in 1932 and only implemented in 1956, indicating the intense political disputes for the rural Normal school (SOUZA-CHALоба, 2017).

Based on the production about the theme, we could say that the process of creation and expansion of rural Normal schools was very diverse in Brazil and that the systematic mapping of this experience in the whole country was yet to be made. In this sense, the studies need to advance in explaining the cooling of the enthusiasm for rural Normal schools and the low effectiveness of regional Normal courses for teacher training for rural elementary schools.

The formulation of the 1946 Organic Law of Normal Education (Decree-law n.º 8.530, from January 02, 1946) and its repercussion/adoption in the states need a more detailed study. Considering the relevance of the studies focused on the history of educational institutions, there was a lack of policies for teacher training in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and the expansion of Normal education systems in the country's different states. We should remember that this system was established by different institutions (regional courses, Normal courses, and education institutions) and in the interface with secondary education. In this line, we should mention Thais Bento Faria's (2017) thesis that highlighted the number of regional Normal schools created in the countryside of the Paraná state, answering different ends in the formation of teachers for

rural elementary schools and the schooling extension beyond the primary, mainly for women. Consequently, we should warn that teacher training policies are related to other educational policies, including primary and secondary. Often, contradictorily, the formation focused on the rural context was a factor in withdrawing teachers from rural areas and the lack of incentive to work in these places. The identification of schooling with the urban area is a cultural issue to be investigated, as well as the relationship between rural education and the market of urban work.

In this reflection path about teacher training during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the high number of lay teachers working in rural schools in most Brazilian states was inevitable. We are thus faced with another fruitful research theme that sends us to other intricacies of teaching in rural areas: the political criteria of recruitment, the formative processes shaped by experience, and the trajectory of institutional programs of compensatory formation. Despite the existence of lay teachers in urban areas, their great concentration in rural areas portrays different problems, such as the governmental problems to designate teachers to the countryside, the lack of policies to improve teachers' work (including transport, accommodation, and compensatory bonuses), and the inefficiency of institutions and teacher education programs. On the other hand, it unveils formation tactics used by teachers and the strategies of continuous education interposed by education management bodies to follow the inspectors and pedagogical meetings (SOUZA; LEITE, 2016).

The production of oral sources has shown to be an important resource for the historical study of teachers' work. Using Oral History techniques and procedures has allowed the reconstitution of teachers' experience and the sensitive dimension of teachers' actions in the classroom routine. This listening process has been highlighting some pieces of evidence of school culture (SCHELBAUER; SOUZA, 2020). Hence, it is possible to reaffirm that, in rural areas, given the characteristics of isolated schools, the history of the school confuses and connects itself with the history of teachers. Therefore, this interpretative matrix has been valuable for the research investment.

Summing up, the history of rural education has delineated a quite promising trajectory. In the last decade, there was a notable growth in the number of studies about the theme and bibliographic productions. It became an emerging and powerful theme from a marginal subject in the History of Education. Nonetheless, there are many challenges to face. The first and most urgent ones are conceptual and theoretical-methodological. The dialogue with History, Sociology, and Geography is essential. We need to turn our attention to the 19th century and the transformations in the countryside in the transition from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, regarding agricultural production, the strengthening of agribusiness, rural workers' culture and way of living, as well as the changes provoked/stimulated by education in the countryside.

Studies about the expansion of rural primary education and Normal one were relevant, as well as the deepening of educational policies for the rural areas. We know little about implementing agreements with the Union with the states in the 1940s and 1950s to build elementary and Normal schools in the countryside. The same is valid for nucleation, grouping, and closing schools at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

We should remind ourselves that the workers' fight for school crossed the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, though it established itself as a fight often silent and ordinary, needs to be investigated. I also call attention to the need to exercise the capacity of "looking both ways." Our research practices highly regionalists should not stop us from dialoguing, questioning, and seeking to learn beyond the local, state/regional, and national frontiers.

The preservation of the education heritage of rural schools is an urgent issue that should mobilize researchers and safekeeping and preservation institutions for education memory. The awareness of educators and education managers can be extremely valuable because part of the documents of the closed schools are on the basements of municipal and state schools and Regional Education Management Departments.

However, all this knowledge produced by the history of rural education only makes sense if it is broadly disseminated among society and educators. Hence, the political and cultural importance of the public dissemination of science and the incorporation of this knowledge in teacher training, particularly, in the subjects of History of Education.

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