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Boletim Vida Escolar: uma fonte e múltiplas leituras sobre a educação no início do século XX

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The book *Boletim Vida Escolar: uma fonte e múltiplas leituras sobre a educação no início do século XX* (*Boletim Vida Escolar: a source and multiple readings about education from the beginning of the 20th Century*), organized by Ana Maria de Oliveira Galvão and Eliane Marta Teixeira Lopes, was recently released and brings together texts from five researchers from the History of Education Study and Research Group of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), written especially for the book. The chapters adopt different approaches to the same subject, the *Boletim Vida Escolar*, which circulated in Lavras (MG) between May 1907 and November 1908.

Studies of educational publications are recurrent in the field of History of Education, since they allow details to emerge of the tensions present in the educational debate. The educational press produced more intensely from the second half of the nineteenth century, especially training material for teachers, considering the limited amount of textbooks available for this function. In the twentieth century the educational press extended its approach and the emergence of publications affiliated with different institutions can be observed.

Boletim Vida Escolar fits into this logic, it was a publication of the Lavras School Group, created on May 13, 1907. Its director, Firmino Coast, was also the editor of the *Boletim*. The publication consisted of four pages, was issued fortnightly, with 34 issues being published in total. The texts presented in the publication were didactic or educational, with some being informative. It should be noted that it circulated in various locations in the municipality and the state, which indicates a wide dissemination of the ideas it published.

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In order to discover who the editor of the *Boletim Vida Escolar* believed his publication would be read by, Ana Maria de Oliveira Galvão and Monica Yumi Jinzenji analyzed the publication from three angles: the materials targeted at specific readers; the content of the subjects covered; and finally, the discursive strategies used by the editor.

As a methodological strategy, the authors categorize the contents of the *Boletim* in accordance with these three approaches, later interpreting this categorization. Inspired by Umberto Eco they attempted to identify the readers present in the publication and concluded that this audience was male and inserted in the world of writing, which appears, respectively, in the identification of forms of address (such as dear, friends, colleagues, and countrymen) and the vocabulary used.

In relation to the themes that received the greatest coverage, it can be seen that the School Group received the greatest prominence, as well as its director. In the discursive construction, or the discursive strategies adopted by the publication, what stands out is the praise of Firmino Costa and the highlighting of the activities undertaken by him on behalf of the Group. Firmino Costa sought to convince readers that he was contributing to the success of educational reform in the state, and that school groups were a modern option in accordance with their time.

Addressing the discursive constructions present in the *Boletim* and trying to identify what constituted good experiences in the Lavras School Group, Eliane Marta Teixeira Lopes and Andrea Moreno indicated that what seems to emerge is the valorization of education in the city. In accordance with the concerns of the time, Firmino Costa emphasized a concern with health and the encouragement of good hygiene habits as positive features of the school. This emphasis could be related to the concern of the school with promoting a modern and up-to-date image, and several articles dealt with this topic in the *Boletim Vida Escolar*. The publicizing of this feature of the School Group followed the 'hygienist' thought of the time.

In addition, the School Group announced in its principles and methods a comparison between old and new education, drawing attention to some of the qualities of this new school: it had to be polite, fair, caring, lively, attractive and practical. From the analysis of statements such as this, it can be inferred that the School Group integrated urban modernity as an educational institution appropriate to the urbanization of the country.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the urban assumed the characteristics of an accentuated civility pronounced in opposition to the rural

which previously prevailed. Cynthia Greive Veiga points to profound changes in the forms of treatment between students and teachers, since punishments and impositions become less accepted in the logic of civility. The need to produce an urban matrix of social behavior is linked to the growth of cities. She states that the school has always been part of the history of cities, and their growth becomes necessary to reorganize social life.

Considering the need to regulate urban life and implement/internalize codes of posture, the “public state school developed as a factor that changed the very routine of cities.” This is the case of the Lavras School Group, one of the first schools in Minas to propose this sort of change, even in relations between students and teachers. In *Boletim Vida Escolar*, Firmino Costa encourages kindness and politeness as forms of relationship in the school environment. There was a demarcation of generational differences, especially between adults and children, with an emphasis of the role of the mother as being responsible for child care. Finally, several movements indicated a new treatment of the individual and attention to the formation of their sensibilities. The *Boletim* advocated the construction of this new sociable individual, in accordance with the times of civility.

It is interesting that the pedagogical repertoire of Costa Firmino was built on the basis of ideas circulating in a space of cultural ambience, but it did not involve a passive appropriation. Rather it was a process of appropriation and reworking, as correctly highlighted by Juliana Cesario Hamdan and Luciano Mendes Faria Filho.

Through the *Boletim*, Firmino managed to provide visibility and circulation to the ideas he espoused, amongst which there stand out the defense of the republican regime, mutual and vocational education, and the valorization of children and the relationships established within the School Group. In short, questions related to their time and which announced his pedagogical repertoire.

In the first report he sent to state authorities as director, Firmino reported that the group was opened on 13 May, publishing shortly afterwards the first issue of the *Boletim*. He emphasized that the publication would deal with questions related to education and the history of the municipality. Among the educational topics, vocational education is the one that most appears in Firmino’s texts in the *Boletim*. The prevailing idea was that education should approximate the subject to work, and through vocational education the government could resolve the problem of educating the country.

The idea that the school should educate for work slowly started to gain ground in the nineteenth century, through the creation of schooling for the manual trades, the Lycées for Arts and Crafts, private schools and philanthropic institutions. Carla Simone Chamon, Irlen Antonio Bernardo Gonçalves and Jefferson de Oliveira analyze the proposals for vocational education present in the *Boletim Vida Escolar*. The work schooling process occurred concomitantly with changes in labor relations underway in Minas Gerais and in several other states. With the industrialization process at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, there occurred a movement to establish vocational schools aimed at free workers.

Vocational education was included in the reform of Brazilian public education in 1906, and a year later there already appear in the pages of the *Boletim Vida Escolar* discursive strategies that seek to convince readers of the importance of work and school. In this case, preparation for work could have been a strategy to convince families to keep their children in school because the dropout rates were considerably high at that time.

In the words of Firmino Costa transcribed for the *Boletim*, vocational education in primary schools is related to the idea of a person's education as being useful to themselves and to society. Although there can be noted a certain prominence of the idea of technical education for the working classes, there are also notes that seek to deconstruct this idea: "it never hurts to know a trade," Firmino Costa said.

The *Boletim Vida Escolar* is a possibility of research into various aspects of the implementation and operation of school groups in Lavras and in Minas Gerais. Reading the new book that analyzes this publication is to visit, through the publication, an important part of the history of education in Brazil, since the creation of school groups at the beginning of the twentieth century marked the expansion and complexification of the structure of Brazilian public schools.