



## Components of the teaching profession history in Montes Claros/MG (1920-1930)<sup>1</sup>

Elementos constitutivos da história da profissão docente em  
Montes Claros (1920-1930)

Elementos constitutivos de la historia de la profesión docente en la ciudad de  
Montes Claros/MG (1920-1930)

Elements constitutifs de l'histoire de la profession enseignant a  
Montes Claros (1920-1930)

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### Abstract

This study aims to discuss the forming elements of the teaching profession history, in the 1920-30s, based on the organization of the first normal school in the city of Montes Claros, located in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. It is placed within the scope of Cultural History, and used the newspaper *Gazeta do Norte* as documentary source and the magazine *Revista do Ensino* to capture the local harmony with the proposed discussions in Minas Gerais. The study highlights the role of normal schools for teacher training, the clash between technical training and general education, and self-denial and guilt as fundamentals of teaching. It emphasizes that Montes Claros adheres to the program proposed in Minas, defends teaching as a priestly function and normal education as a technical activity.

**Keywords:** Teaching profession; History; Normal School; Teacher training.

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## Resumo

O artigo objetiva discutir elementos constitutivos da história da profissão docente, nas décadas de 1920-30, partindo da organização da Escola Normal na cidade de Montes Claros, localizada em Minas Gerais/Brasil. O estudo situa-se no âmbito da História Cultural, tomou o jornal Gazeta do Norte como fonte documental e a Revista do Ensino para captar a sincronia do local com discussões propostas em Minas Gerais. No estudo, destaca-se o papel das escolas normais na formação docente, o embate entre formação técnica e cultura geral, a abnegação e a culpa como fundamentos do trabalho docente. Ressalta-se que Montes Claros faz adesão ao programa proposto em Minas, defende o magistério como sacerdócio e o ensino normal como atividade técnica.

**Palavras-chave:** Profissão docente; História; Escola Normal; Formação docente.

## Resumen

El artículo objetiva discutir elementos constitutivos de la historia de la profesión docente en las décadas de 1920-30, partiendo de la organización de la Escola Normal de Montes Claros, ubicada en la provincia de Minas Gerais/Brasil. El estudio se sitúa en el ámbito de la historia cultural adoptó el periódico Gazeta do Norte como fuente documental y la Revista do Ensino para captar la sincronía local con las discusiones propuestas en Minas Gerais. En el estudio se destaca el papel de las escuelas normales hacia la formación docente, el embate entre la formación técnica y la cultura general, la abnegación y la culpa como fundamentos del trabajo docente. Es importante resaltar que Montes Claros se adhiere al programa propuesto en Minas Gerais, defiende el magisterio (educación formal) como sacerdocio y la formación docente como actividad técnica.

**Palabras clave:** Profesión docente, Historia, Escola Normal; Formación docente

## Résumé

L'article a pour objectif de discuter des éléments constitutifs de l'histoire de la profession d'enseignant dans les décennies de 1920-1930 à partir de l'organisation de l'École Normale de la ville de Montes Claros, située à Minas Gerais/Brésil. L'étude se place dans le contexte de l'histoire culturelle, comme source documentaire elle utilise le journal Gazeta du Nord ainsi que le Magazine de l'Enseignement afin de capturer la synchronisation de l'endroit avec des discussions proposées à Minas Gerais. Dans cette étude, se distingue le rôle des écoles normales dans la formation des enseignants, l'affrontement entre la formation technique et la culture générale, le renoncement et la culpabilité comme des principes fondamentaux de l'enseignement. Il est à noter que la ville de Montes Claros adhère au programme proposé à Minas Gerais, il défend l'enseignement comme sacerdoce et l'enseignement normal comme activité technique.

**Mots-clés:** Profession d'enseignant; Histoire; École normale; La formation des enseignants.

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## Introduction

The history of the teaching profession in Brazil brings us to reflecting on the years 1800s, a period in which the process of organizing and normalizing the exercise of this profession in the country intensifies, and where the first normal schools emerge - spaces destined for the training of professional teachers. Thus, during the nineteenth century, the direction of the teaching profession in Brazil was outlined "by the conservative project that instituted it. In this project were inserted the normal schools, which would be in charge of defining the *knowledges* and the ways of *doing* of the future teachers". (VILLELA, 2003, p.131, author's emphases).

Historiography records the emergence of the first normal schools in the country in the early nineteenth century. Among the first schools created are those of the provinces of Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais in 1835, Bahia in 1836, and São Paulo in 1846. A significant historical production can already be found about these schools, however, in the specific case of the city of Montes Claros, there are still incipient studies on this institution, which dates back to 1879<sup>4</sup>. The analysis promoted in this article aims to establish an approximation between the process of organization of the first normal school in Montes Claros and the Minas Gerais' and Brazilian scenes. It is understood that the analysis of the organization of normal schools throws light upon constitutive elements of the history of the teaching profession in a particular reality and brings important reflections to comprehend teacher professionalization - seen here, as Veiga (2001) points out, as a process involving teacher training and professional practice.

The discussion proposed here is a result of research within the context of Cultural History, in the perspective defended by Chartier (1990, 2002), who understands historiography as a possibility to reconstitute the way a certain social reality is constructed, thought, set to be read, in different spaces and times. From this perspective, cultural history is seen as the history of representations - representations that constitute as generating matrices of discourses and practices; representations that are not the truth, but what the subject thinks is the real or what he would like it to be.

In this way, we conducted a historical research guided not by the belief in real events, but by the search of representations that would allow to map meanings and appropriations produced on the organization of the Montes Claros Normal School and the elements that, in this process, present themselves as constitutive of the teacher profession. As documentary sources, we used the newspaper *Gazeta do Norte*, a periodical of the city of Montes Claros, which circulated between the years of 1918 and 1962 and allowed mapping of occurrences in progress in the northern region of Minas Gerais and discussing knowledges put in circulation. In order to capture the synchrony between the regional movement with the broader occurrences, we used the *Revista do Ensino / MG* - an official publication by the government of Minas Gerais created in 1925 to disseminate renewal ideals and to produce transformations within the scope of Minas Gerais schools.

The option of taking the 1920s and 1930s as a temporal cut was guided by local issues, but it was referenced by the profound reforms and changes that took place in Brazil, aimed at the national reconstruction through education, in which the state of Minas Gerais made important changes in the education policy. According to De Lorenzo and Costa (1997), the 1920s are considered as the origins of modern Brazil, a period in which a number of transformations were conceived to be put in motion in the subsequent decade. Studies by Maciel and Frade (2006) point to the 1920s as a period characterized by great social, economic and intellectual agitation, in which Brazil experiences different political and cultural manifestations, led by left and right sympathizers, such as the Week of Modern Art (1922), the creation of the Communist Party (1922), the Tenentista

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<sup>4</sup> See NETO (2013). Available at: <http://www.revistas.uniube.br/index.php/anais/article/viewFile/752/104>.

Movement (1922). Still according to the authors, in this socio-historical context, the democratization of the school constitutes a motto of the struggle, and educational reforms were undertaken in different Brazilian states: São Paulo (1920), conducted by Sampaio Dória; in Minas Gerais (1927-1928), by Francisco Campos and Mário Casasanta; Rio de Janeiro, federal district (1928), by Fernando Azevedo; and Bahia (1928), conducted by Anísio Teixeira.

In Minas Gerais, the Francisco Campos Reform, implemented by the Regulation of Primary Education (1927), complemented by the Regulation of Normal Teaching (1928) and Primary Education Programs (1928), was guided by principles of the New School. According to Maciel and Frade (2006), the Minas Gerais Educational Reform was comprehensive and had as its guiding principle methodological innovations, and the Minas Gerais government made efforts to carry out the proposal, sparing no effort to spread its ideas and materialize it in the space of classrooms.

In this movement, transformations occur in teacher training, and in Montes Claros / MG, investigated context, this takes on a functional and pragmatic character, although based on the knowledge produced by the sciences, especially Psychology. On the one hand, the normal course aims to train teachers for the application of principles and methodologies defended by the New School movement; on the other, it is expected that the teaching profession will be assumed as mission and priesthood, for which self-denial and love of children and school are necessary.

Based on the data collected, this article aims to discuss constitutive elements of the history of the teaching profession in Montes Claros / MG in the 1920s and 1930s, starting with the analysis of the process of organizing the first Normal School in this city and establishing a parallel with the reality of Minas Gerais and Brazil. The text is structured in three parts: initially the context of organization of the Normal Schools in Republican Brazil and, in particular, in the city of Montes Claros; the discussion between general and vocational training within normal schools is then discussed, comparing the location and the broader context; the question of self-denial and guilt as a basis for the formation and exercise of the teaching profession is later dealt with, also establishing a parallel between the Montes Claros reality and the broader scene. Finally, as a conclusion, we explore the elements that present themselves as constitutive of the teaching profession in the body of the organization of the Normal School of Montes Claros.

## 1. Situating the Context: Normal Schools and the Republic

In Republican Brazil, the discussions about normal schools take center stage given to the understanding that education would boost modernity and progress. In discussing education in the First Republic, Jorge Nagle affirms that there is a concern with the normal school, since teacher training was the cornerstone for the success of the new primary school, capable of democratizing culture and contributing to overcoming the semi-colonial<sup>5</sup> characteristics of Brazilian society. (NAGLE, 2001)

Vilela (2000) analyzes the importance of teacher training in this period, highlighting the role of training institutions in the renewal of practices:

Normal schools were the "authorized" sites for the diffusion of a kind of standardized knowledge that should characterize the "new" primary teacher, distinguishing them from their predecessors, the "old" schoolteachers, and some contents were transformed into a body of knowledges specific to this formation (2000, p.109 – author's emphases)

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<sup>5</sup> To Reis (2007), the Brazilian society in the early twentieth century was considered as semi-colonial and semi-feudal because it would be under the rule of latifundio and imperialism, and resistant to the progress of the nation and productive forces desired by the people and the bourgeoisie. REIS, José Carlos. *As Identidades do Brasil: De Varnhagen a FHC*. 9th edition. Rio de Janeiro: Editora FGV, 2007.

However, according to Tanuri (2000), the social, political and economic frameworks of the First Republic did not favor the diffusion of teaching and the production of new ideas in the educational field, it only continued the educational movements and projects already in practice in the last decades of the imperial period. As Vilela (2000) affirms, in the transition from Monarchy to the Republic, the definition of a teacher training project only found resonance in the Normal School of São Paulo, under the management of Caetano de Campos, who initiated the reform of education in 1890. Still according to the author, the striking feature of the reform was not the encyclopedic curriculum and of strong scientific connotation. The main highlight is the conception of what is a teacher training institution:

Nothing that reminds us of the previous "ratholes", borrowed buildings, adapted furniture, weak didactic material. For Caetano de Campos it was necessary to think big and to project that which would be a true normal school into the space of the future (2000, p. 118 – author's emphases)

Moreover, in São Paulo, in addition to a bold architectural project, pedagogical practice became the cornerstone of the reform, in which the educator-students were put in contact with the most up-to-date ideas. Vilela also recalls that in Rio de Janeiro, the first public school was created in 1880, opening its doors the following year, with an ambitious curriculum, guided by the positivist logic of Augusto Comte and the search for greater clarity on teacher training. With the republic, the reforms of Benjamin Constant (1890 and 1892) aimed at the establishment of a bold model of formation within the scope of the Normal School of the Capital. However, "the premature death of Benjamin Constant, the new directions of the Republic, and criticisms to the pretentious (and difficult-to-execute) curriculum of the Normal School, eventually disfigured the objectives of that experience (2000, p. 117). Thus, despite the intent, the capital of the Republic was unable to renew its project of teacher training, only doing so in the 20s and 30s of the twentieth century.

In the State of Minas Gerais there were also no significant educational changes with the Republic. Teacher training had already been undergoing reforms in the imperial government - a period in which the progressive legitimation of the Ouro Preto Normal School and the decentralization of teacher training through the implementation of new normal schools in the province of Minas Gerais (GOUVÊA, 2002) were seen.

Except for São Paulo, which produced a broad reform of normal education and primary education in the late nineteenth century, the advent of the Republic did not mean disruption, but continuity of processes already underway in the imperial period. In republican Brazil, the great educational reform movements only took place in the 1920s and 1930s, aiming at national reconstruction by education and the conformation of men and society to the new ideals of progress and civilization. In Nagle's conception, in the 1920s, normal schools underwent deeper transformations than primary schools. "The 'old' normal school no longer served, with its lack of special content, to the new requirements proposed by schooling; the existing normal schools constituted a course of second-class 'humanities' (NAGLE, 2001, pp. 281-282 - author's emphases).

The end of the 1920s inaugurated a period of intense discussion about teaching, which defines the normal school as a teacher-training institution necessary for the intended educational project. In the 1930s, this project was consolidated by the influence of the ideas of renewal, adopted by Fernando de Azevedo, Anísio Teixeira and Lourenço Filho in the reform of education in Rio de Janeiro, then capital of the republic, and spread to other states, influencing their educational projects.

As explained in the previous section, Minas Gerais is part of this context of changes, putting in place the Francisco Campos Reform (1927-1928), which proposed changes in the structuring of normal and primary education. In Montes Claros, the history of the teaching profession does not distance itself from these matters, challenges and changes. Although marked by discontinuity, between closures and reopenings, difficulties and glories, its Normal<sup>6</sup> School was inserted in the educational reform movement, especially in the late 1920s and early 1930s, during which there was a period of intense debate and renewal of practices which was important for its definition as a teacher training institution for the Northern Minas Gerais region. As part of the renovation proposed by the Francisco Campos Reform, the Montes Claros Normal School disseminated principles defended by the New School, becoming part of the city's tradition and of the imagination of its population.

## 2. Teacher Training: between General Culture and Technical Training

In the period between the wars the proposal of reforming society through the reform of man spread worldwide, originating from the International League of New Education, founded in 1921, on the occasion of the First International Congress of New Education, held in Calais, by educators who believed in the possibility to reform the demoralized world through schooling. According to Carvalho, the League was composed of different groups of educators and, with the strengthening of the French Group of New Education (FGNE), there were at least two major trends guiding pedagogical action. The first, dominant in the debates, since the foundation of the League (1921) until the Congress of Elsenor (1929), is represented by Beatriz Ensor and Ferrière. This tendency was guided by the "[...]mystical emphasis on the innate potentialities and the spiritual energy of the child, setting the progressive-educational program of renewal of the school". The second tendency, initially represented by Fauconnet's positions, followed by the ideas of Pierón, Lanvengin and Wallon, was characterized by the debate about the "single school" and the international impact produced by the Russian revolutionary experience in education (CARVALHO 2004, 153).

The single school, common and accessible to all, equal in all its degrees, constituted as an important discussion within the scope of the New School. The proposition is based on the principle of the right of each individual to an integral education, capable of promoting the development of all, according to their vital aptitudes, seeking to promote a rupture in social inequality.

Carvalho (2004) recalls that at the Congress of Nice (1932), in which the central theme was the relationship between education and society, the divergences of orientation within the New School movement were evident. "The opposition between mystical and rationalist tendencies was, in the perception of the participants of the Congress of Nice, one of the dividing lines that demarcated the diversity of positions that were manifested in the event" (2004, p. 174). In this congress, the principles and foundations that governed the League were criticized, calling in question the effectiveness of a campaign supported by psychology, centered only in the respect to the nature of the children. It was necessary to

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<sup>6</sup> According to Veloso (2009), the historical trajectory of the Escola Normal Oficial de Montes Claros can be understood in 3 phases. The first comprises the interval between 1878 and 1905, a period between the year of its creation as an official school, still in the imperial period, and that of its extinction by decree of the Minas Gerais government, in the process of containing expenses. The second phase is defined by the period between 1915 and 1938, the period of the establishment of the Escola Normal Norte Mineira, as a free school and its extinction as the Escola Normal Oficial, again, by determination of the Minas Gerais government due to cost cutting. This second phase included the deactivation of the free school in 1918, its reopening in 1923, its assimilation to the official schools of Minas in 1925, and finally its encampment by the state public power in 1928, when it resumed the status of official normal school. The third phase of the school begins in 1953, when the institution was reopened as an official school and continues to the present day, where it functions as a regular school of basic education. In all these phases, the struggle of educators from Montes Claros has been intense because it overcomes the difficulties to guarantee the functioning of this formative institution.

advance, in the sense of redefining the concept of aptitude, not being possible to talk about pure aptitude. When discussing the formation of children, one could not just let them grow up, but ensure that their spontaneous development was favored by an adequate environment (CARVALHO, 2004).

In other words, the discussion about the single school brings up the relationship between school and society. For Carvalho (2004), by worrying about the single school and the matters related to that theme, that is, the redefinition of general culture and professional culture, the French Group of New Education (FGNE) focuses on the intimate relationship between the problem of education and the problem of social justice.

Carvalho points out that, in the book *Introducing the Study of the New School*, Lourenço Filho brings up the question of the single school in a way that was criticized by Fauconnet, since he reduced the campaign for the single school in France. The criticism is also related to the fact that the single school had been placed as a problem restricted to "the old nations of Europe" in which there were "two parallel official teaching organizations", fact that imposed the need of the single school. "In Brazil, on the contrary, schools did not distinguish children 'by their birth, race, color, profession of parents, nationality or religion' and therefore, as in all countries in the Americas, the single school issue was non-existent" (LOURENÇO FILHO, undated, p.23, quoted by CARVALHO, 2004, p 177).

According to Carvalho (2004), in the French context, the use of "initiation" appears articulated to the concept of "general culture". It advocates an initiation into the different forms of human activity, into the different manners of expression and action, not only to determine individual abilities, but also to allow a connection with other men. Being conceived that way, general culture was constituted as that which unites men and bring them closer, while the profession represents that what separates them. In this context, Russia had implemented an education project that consisted of making a person's trade, their profession, as a starting point of culture, and the option for the school of work considered as a turnaround in the educational field. "The magnitude of Soviet educational investment exerted this kind of attraction: it put the power of education in processes of social transformation to the test" (2004, p. 176)

The author believes that the exceptional contributions of Soviet pedagogy were captured by Fernando de Azevedo, a "very informed intellectual" who, impacted by the cultural transformations of his time, incorporated such contributions in the implementation of the reform he implemented in Rio de Janeiro. The Reform in the Federal District, proposed by Azevedo, aimed to implant the "single school" as a "school of work", redefining primary school programs and taking measures to reformulate and integrate technical and vocational education (CARVALHO, 2004). According to Vidal (2001), in the last years of the 1920s and early years in the following decade, the influences of the proposals disseminated by the League are perceptible and, in the midst of educational reforms and the consolidation of normal schools, propaedeutic and professional education were theme of debate and disagreement. This tension between general culture and professional technical education was present in the discussions that guided the reform of the Normal School of Rio de Janeiro. Set in motion in 1928, by Fernando de Azevedo, the reform saw continuity with Anísio Teixeira, and later with Lourenço Filho. According to Diana Vidal, in this and other issues, the conceptions of the reformists conflicted. But, between conflicting debates and ideas, the consensus was on the need to innovate teaching. Azevedo understood general culture as an important element in the training of teachers, while Teixeira gave primacy to professional practice. The work of Fernando Azevedo made possible the initial start for the renewal of ideas and practices; while Anísio Teixeira made possible the formation of a new teaching training practice; with Lourenço Filho consolidating this practice (VIDAL, 2001).

Fernando Azevedo, Anísio Teixeira and Lourenço Filho played an important role in the constitution of new educational practices in Rio de Janeiro, and also contributed to the dissemination of principles of the New School, exerting influence in the definition of educational projects in different states of the federation. Minas Gerais does not escape this influence, which can be seen in its reform project.

In the analysis of the post-1930 educational policy of Minas Gerais, Peixoto (2003) affirms that the adoption of the principles of the New School presented exits that met the expectations of the emerging classes of Minas Gerais, without jeopardizing the power structure. This allowed for an appearance of renewal and change, without actually modifying the school's organizational bases or democratizing its access to the popular classes. Although justified by economic difficulties, the restraining measures adopted by the government had deeper roots than those alleged, indicating changes in political thinking and action. Thus, the educational policy of Minas Gerais reveals the tensions between State and Church and the solutions of compromise found. That is, there was no real interest in democratizing access to school. The Minas oligarchy opposed the expansion of official schools, fearing the loss of political power by losing control over the enlightened masses. On the other hand, with the proposed expansion of the public school system - which the reformers wanted to be a secular, mandatory and gratuitous - the Church fears the loss of influence over society, because of the risk of dechristianization of the population (PEIXOTO, 2003 ).

In Minas Gerais, in the first decades of the twentieth century, official speeches and publications affirm the importance of the teacher in the reforms, highlight the quality of teaching, point out the advances of state legislation, cite data regarding the efficiency of the actions developed. However, for Peixoto:

in the terms in which it is put, this emphasis on efficiency only served to conceal and justify the poverty to which education was reduced during this period and the important role it plays in maintaining and legitimizing existing discriminatory mechanisms in society. (2003, p. 242).

For the author, the post-1930 status of the Minas Gerais school indicates that it was "differentiated, moralistic, scientific, authoritarian in its forms of action and extremely hierarchical in its functioning" (2003, p.188).

Montes Claros fits in this context and reflects the measures adopted by the Minas Gerais government, regarding the adoption of active methods, the control of the work done by teachers, valorization of technical activity and defense of Christian values and ethics in the education of the new generations. Similar to the processes that took place in Rio de Janeiro, in Montes Claros, the debate between propaedeutic (general training) and professional education (technical training, for work) was also present. Revealing the content of discussions proposed in the scope of the Official School of Montes Claros, published in May 1934, a student of the Application Course argues that the normal course should have a technical and professional basis, pointing that subjects of propaedeutic nature, at that educational level, should be the basis for technical activity. In addressing the deficiencies of teaching, it indicates that the normal course was not being well understood or properly executed by some teachers of the Official Normal School of Montes Claros and other similar institutes in the State, for focusing their attention in the preparatory teaching. In his words:



Ordinarily, it is the propaedeutic teaching, while having many gaps, that is the object of the concern of these schools.

Do not its members see the long-lasting change in normal education that has led to deep research into primary education? The fact is that, although many do not admit it, there must exist, between primary education and the normal one, absolute correlation.

Normal education is, above all, vocational education; it is aimed at the acquisition of techniques and the same objective should aim at propaedeutic subjects, subjects which serve to give general notions necessary to life. Normal School, therefore, should be, first and foremost, technical school. Thus, it is not only the methodology that must be related to professional education, but all others that constitute the normal curriculum (SANTOS, May 26, 1934, p. 01).

By discussing the necessary relationships between normal and primary education, the student's argument is directed toward professionalization and practical experience. After all, the training course of teachers should be technical and be constituted by the immediate application of teaching methods in the primary classes. Besides criticizing the organization of teaching, of which propaedeutic materials did not serve as a foundation for professional technical activity, the student also criticizes the teaching methods used by the teacher trainers, who did not modernize their practices by adopting concepts of the Active School and were still inspired in the outdated methodologies of the verbalist school.

In normal education, despite the clamours of modern pedagogy that guides it, the system, the regrettable system of lectures, monologue classes, are still to be found and not rarely. Lessons should not be constituted of monologues or simple lectures: - the teacher should appeal to the collaboration of the students, for comments and useful readings and mainly to take into account the experiences to be realized. The exposition classes, monologated and dictated, are, therefore, not considered as given (SANTOS, May 26, 1934, p.01).

In the student's speech one can see the adoption of Anísio Teixeira's ideas, who understood the training of teachers as a technical activity, focused on the professional disciplines, the teaching profession and the practical experience. It can also be noticed an adherence to the educational principles that guided the educational policy of Minas Gerais, which translated the reform of education in the reform of methods.

Normal education is not a simple course of propaedeutic culture, but, above all, a technical and professional culture of immediate application in the primary classes. To proceed contrary to this, not only rule, but necessity, which implies our future practical life, is to take away all the brilliance of our enthusiasm with respect to possible achievements in the professional field; is to get us students used to mental vagabondage, to boredom and to dislike of the School, to an aversion to the subject and, consequently, for the person responsible to it; is to restrain our activity and transform us into passive beings, on the fringes of the struggle for life, incapable of initiative and action of our own, is the perfect disintegration of our mental life and our personality into the realities of life and efficient action, out from which nothing can be done for the benefit of civilization! (SANTOS, May 26, 1934, p.01).

By affirming the links between normal education and primary school and the need for a technical and professional culture in the training of teachers, the student of the Escola Normal Oficial de Montes Claros not only opposes the propaedeutic emphasis, but above all, goes for the renewal of teaching methods. This is because, in her conception, the contents and the training processes used in normal schools would have dual influence on the teachers in formation. On the one hand, the experience of modern methodologies would enable the acquisition of techniques applicable to primary education; and on the other, it would favor the formation of a set of dispositions capable of producing love for the school, for discipline, for work, enthusiasm and taste for teaching.

These statements and concerns of the student, aimed at learning in order to do, at the acquisition of a technical and pragmatic knowledge, reflect the changes that occurred in the training of the teachers of Minas Gerais, and meets the analysis by Ana Maria Casasanta Peixoto, who signals the ambiguity of discourses on and for teachers. Initially, in the Antônio Carlos Ribeiro de Andrada government (1926-1930), there was an expansion and improvement of schools and the discourse revolved around the adoption of active methods. However, in the post-1930 government, educational policy is defined by containment, maintaining the new school ideology, which takes over the direction of educational reform. However, in the speeches addressed to teachers, there is no concern to explain the guiding principles of renewal - it was to ensure its application (PEIXOTO, 2003).

Peixoto reminds us that this utilitarian approach to educational policy in Minas Gerais can be seen in the publications of the *Revista do Ensino / MG*, which, as a government mouthpiece to the faculty, gradually takes on this new orientation. As a result, controversial issues have become smaller, as the number of subjects aimed at demonstrating the effectiveness of methods in addressing educational problems grows.

In 1934 the Journal requested the sending of reports of experiences and activities developed by teachers, and began to publish them as a kind of model of teaching practice to be disseminated by all schools in Minas Gerais. Insofar as they follow the description of activities, omitting important aspects, such as the definition of criteria that guided their choice, and by not making a deeper evaluation of their development and meaning as learning methods, the *Revista's* publications assume a mechanistic character.

Underlying this form of presentation is a bias of epistemological order, which is translated by the belief in the efficiency of an action distanced from reflection. This, in practice, confers on the reports the character of "recipes", which the teacher can and should apply (PEIXOTO, 2003, p.174).

Still according to the author, not only the publications of the *Revista do Ensino*, but also those of the newspaper *Minas Gerais*, constitute as an important resource for publicizing the project of school to be propagated in the State; reflect the changes made in teacher training; indicate the teaching role in the organization of pedagogical work; and serve to break the resistance of conservative teachers, leading them to join the new methods (PEIXOTO, 2003).

Finally, the reform of methods, which emphasizes the technical formation of the teacher and distances itself from theoretical reflection, does not limit its influence on the processes of teaching. This approach produces changes in the way the teaching profession is understood - shifts the role of the teacher, demands self-denial and sacrifice, and blames them for the student's failure.

### 3. Teaching Profession: the Teacher between Self-denial and Guilt

As a result of the educational conceptions in circulation in the 1930s, there is a shift in the discussions about the role of the teacher in the classroom - they no longer occupy a central place in the educational task and their qualification starts to be discussed and questioned. From the key figure, the teacher becomes understood as a guide of learning; from knowledge holder, they become disqualified and pointed as an obstacle to the implementation of the necessary changes. The belief in self-education produces the idea that the individual would educate himself. And from this bias, many come to understand that the teacher's performance could be detrimental to the development of children. In the words of the technical assistant, Professor José Raymundo Netto<sup>7</sup>, in a publication of the *Revista do Ensino / MG*, "the new pedagogy has even promulgated that in the educational work, the teacher is a necessary evil" (January 1930, p. 71).

However, this displacement did not mean the undermining of the teaching function. Even considering that the new conceptions place the student at the center of the learning process, José Raymundo Netto himself does not disqualify the teaching work.

Only deep in the background does the personality of the teacher appear, displaced by the new pedagogical currents to a secondary plan: - from absolute master who one was, the only brain to think and say, went to, at school, being the friend in whom one trusts, the advisor whom one consults, the guide, whose help is always safe and valuable (January 1930, p. 71).

In its representations, in school activity, the place of the teacher ceases to be the center, but their function is important, and it is necessary to invest in their formation. In the exercise of his role as technical assistant in teaching, "in his pilgrimages" to the furthest "corners of the State", Jose Raymundo Netto could verify that, "... the most serious and relevant problem of the Teaching Reform is the formation of the teachers of Minas Gerais, its orientation in the ways indicated by the wise dispositions of our regulations". After all, if:

there cannot be, in fact, good methods without good teachers; we are forced to concentrate our most serious preoccupations on the educator, since the solution of their problems depends on the complete success of the great innovative campaign to which we have dedicated ourselves (January 1930, p. 72).

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<sup>7</sup> The illustrious educator José Raymundo Netto (1897-19??) was born in Carangola / MG, was professor of Psychology, Methodology and Professional Practice and director of the Escola Normal Oficial de Montes Claros between 1935 and 22 January 1938, date on which the school was suppressed by the Decree Law no. 63, of the Minas Gerais government. After the closing of the Normal School, Raymundo Neto was Professor of Psychology at Colégio Imaculada Conceição of Montes Claros. At the time he published articles in *Revista do Ensino*, the teacher was Technical Assistant of Teaching in the government of Minas Gerais. According to Nelson Viana (2011), Raymundo Netto did the primary course in Januária and the secondary course in Paracatu. In addition to the activities in Montes Claros, he practiced civil and criminal law in Januária, where he was professor of the Night School. He founded, directed and was professor of Portuguese, Geography, History and Sciences in Ginásio of Três Corações, South of Minas Gerais, from 1931 to 1933. He was also Director of the Grupo Escolar de Espinosa (Available at: <http://montesclaros.com/n/mural.asp?pg=578> Accessed on July 11, 2016. Publication No. 5 69258, at 11/10/2011, 07:26:39).

From this point of view, it is possible to understand the shifts that have occurred in teacher training, which indicate technical competence and the application of new teaching methods. Although not the center of school activity, the teacher was the axis of change. They did not play a central role in the classroom, but their role was key to the success of the reform program. They were responsible for innovation, for the adoption of modern teaching methods and the orientation of student activity. In this sense, the investment in their formation takes on different aspects - teachers should be prepared for the implementation of the reform, assuming the work as a mission, to which they would dedicate and for which they would make sacrifices.

Research carried out by Ana Maria Casasanta Peixoto indicates that, in the 1930s, the teacher occupies a central role in the reform project, being assigned a great responsibility on academic failure. According to the author, the discourse about the teacher was loaded with ambiguities and divided around two approaches. On the one hand, love and respect for the child, adherence to new school principles and the application of new methodologies, put theoretical training in the background. On the other hand, the diffusion of a spiritualist humanism, by which the exercise of the magisterium as mission and priesthood was expected. It was also hoped that the magisterium would be able to form citizens through nationalism and love of the country (PEIXOTO, 2003).

According to Peixoto (2003), during the period of the government of Benedito Valadares (1933-1937), the disseminated representations indicate that the importance of the teacher should not be measured by their salary, since retribution to the importance of their work was not assessed by material goods. The teacher's reward was the social recognition of their work and the satisfaction of duty fulfilled. The discourse on and for the teacher no longer worried about stimulating the desire to learn, but about exploring the missionary aspect of their performance. Thus, although the government affirmed its concern for an efficient faculty and reiterated its intention to provide resources for their continuous improvement, in practice, the program designed for this purpose was not intended to provide the teacher with autonomy in the intellectual field. In practice, this emptying of the intellectual plane prevented the teacher from thinking about their doing, because they did not have the knowledge that would allow them to theoretically analyze their action: "That explains that the discourse on / for the teacher exalts their virtues of character and does not require science (thought) from them, but self-denial and sacrifice in the development of tasks (execution)" (PEIXOTO, 2003, p. 212).

In fact, this defense of self-denial and sacrifice was not a new discourse, but it was updated in the post-1930s, aiming at conformation of the teachers to the working conditions of that moment. In a speech delivered by the 1926 student of the Escola Normal Oficial de Montes Claros, the student Geraldina Alves talks about the importance of the diploma, which is fruit of personal investment, but above all, it highlights the efforts of her teachers, who sacrificed themselves and overcame difficulties to convey their knowledge to them. This spirit of selflessness and altruism led to the perception of magisterium as mission and priesthood, and for this reason the enthusiasm that propelled the teacher's action was sacred:

To love the child, to study them, to understand their psychology, to guide the formation of their personality affectionately and clairvoyantly - these are inherent duties to our altruistic post of vast purposes. When we find a child emancipated from small ideas, liberal in all matters, tolerant and good, what should we do as educators?

We must, incessantly in the sacred enthusiasm of our luminous priesthood, dwell upon the unfolding being, placing upon our solicitude, as real artificers, to mold their physical and intellectual growth and to give them moral nobility (ALVES, February 12, 1927, p. 04).

In the performance of this sacred priesthood, love of education and self-denial were fundamental qualities, and the teacher would be filled with joy in contemplating the results of his work imprinted on the children, who would become useful, emancipated, and strong, and on the youthful spirits who would be perfected through culture. Thus, in the work of instruction and social regeneration, the teacher would feel compensated for all the sacrifice and fatigue.

How many sorrows, what incalculable store of disappointment and what cravings come when there is throbbing and true love for the cause of early childhood education. But when the aspirations of good and wisdom unfold and flourish in the tender little hearts which all vigilance surrounds; when youthful spirits are perfected by sound and indispensable culture, and from the illiterate child emerges the learned, useful, emancipated, strong individual - joy, supreme reward, will support the soul of the self-sacrificing teacher and will compensate excessively, the fatigue, perhaps the discouragement that had assailed him at times in the course of the work of instruction, of regeneration! ... And why should we not one day feel the invasion of that same pride in our hearts? ... (ALVES, February 12, 1927, p 04).

It is interesting to highlight the ambivalence of the discourse on and for the teacher - sometimes praised and valued, sometimes blamed for the failure of the students. In Montes Claros, if in 1927 the speech was to extol the altruism and self-denial of teachers, in 1934, according to the ideas of the time, the tone of accusation is present in the words of another student of the Escola Normal Oficial de Montes Claros. When discussing the problems of teaching the student blames the teachers, pointing out the lack of professionalism and lack of interest in teaching.

Few, if not rare, to it [teaching work] are dedicated with true taste and enthusiasm, and by intrinsic reasons related to the high ideal of Education. Lacking vocation, didactic aptitude, an eagerness for money, an equal gain is what at first sight is observed (SANTOS, May 26, 1934, p.01)

Moreover, in their conception, the difficulties of implanting the modifications and renewing the educational practices were located in the faults of the teachers. In her words:

Francisco Campos, aiming to modify primary education, recognized the primary need to modify normal education by attending to the fact that the defects of those reside in the teacher. The development or the halting of student's progress is in their hands, although some of them develop with the teacher, without the teacher and despite the teacher (SANTOS, May 26, 1934, p.01).

This attribution of blame to teachers is taken up by Professor José Raymundo Netto, then director of the Escola Normal Oficial de Montes Claros. In discussing education reform in Minas Gerais, he praises government initiatives and indicates that the results were not yet observable, because "the rut of the routine was thick" (RAYMUNDO NETTO, May 19, 1934, p. 01) and, in order to make changes, perseverance, patience and encouragement to the

pathfinders were necessary. In his conceptions, one of the most arduous tasks of this renovating movement was assigned to the Technical Assistants, who should break with the apathy of the teachers. According to the then director of the Escola Normal Oficial de Montes Claros:

Changing the mentality of the great majority of teachers, to awaken them from the semi-lethargy to which they had been dragged by the long-time stagnation, leading him to realize that teaching is life, it is *development*, and that the Education scenario is very vast for us to keep marking steps, prey of the habit, or victims of anachronist educational systems (italics in the original) (RAYMUNDO NETTO, May 19, 1934, p.01)

In this same sense, in the year before (1933), when speaking to the graduates of the Normal School of Juiz de Fora, Noraldino Lima<sup>8</sup> had already emphasized the routine as one of the problems to be treated by the Minas Gerais schools. In his words, "the sedimentation of the routine needs to be, must be, it has to be, among us, undone, pulverized, destroyed until its most remote foundations" (LIMA, January 1, 1933, p.10). And that shattering of routine belonged to the teachers, but the awakening of lethargy rested with the technicians.

From these discourses, it is possible to realize that the innovation of educational practices depended on the teaching agency. However, teachers were disqualified and considered unfit to undertake the necessary reform, given laziness, the routinization of their work, lack of study, accommodation.

In this direction, which signals the importance of teachers, as well as the problems arising from their work, José Raymundo Netto (May 19, 1934, p.01) publishes a story in the newspaper *Gazeta do Norte*, in which he presents a synthesis of 200 works, written by teachers of several educational establishments inspected by him, while he still served as Technical Assistant of Teaching. In these works the teachers had listed a series of problems in response to the following questions: "a) What are in this locality the biggest obstacles to the efficiency of Teaching ?; b) What resources can the school use to combat these evils? "

Among the twenty problems listed, only one refers to the performance of the Technical Assistants; five relate to the working conditions of the School Establishments; six others are associated with the precariousness of the students' condition. However, eight of these difficult elements concern teachers, and are related to various aspects of their professional performance, such as lack of coordination and cooperation, of fellowship and solidarity; intellectual and cultural incapacity; the lack of pedagogical preparation and the use of inadequate teaching methodologies; while pointing out their misery and low wages, which generate health problems, constant sick days and difficulties for them to be replaced.

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<sup>8</sup> Noraldino Lima was born in São Sebastião do Paraíso (MG) on January 12, 1885. He did his basic studies at Colégio Espírito Santo, in the city of Monte Santo. In the city of Juiz de Fora / MG, in December 1908, he finished secondary school and, in April 1910, he graduated in pharmacy. In Belo Horizonte, in December of 1914, he obtained a bachelor's degree from the Faculty of Law. He began his professional life in 1910 in Belo Horizonte, where he was appointed clerk of the municipal government, and later occupied different occupations in the state government. In 1919, he assumed the substitution of state deputy for the legislature that would extend until 1922, period in which he assumed new term as a state deputy, in substitution to Francisco Campos. At the invitation of the president of Minas Gerais, Raul Soares (1922-1924), Noraldino Lima became director of the Official Press and editor-in-chief of Minas Gerais, the state's official journal, later assuming other duties in the Minas Gerais government, amongst which, directing the Public Training [Ministry of Education] of the state (1927), and directing the state's Secretary of Education and Public Health (between September 1930 and February 1935). Later on, Noraldino Lima took on different posts and public positions (CALICCHIO, no date)

From these answers, it is possible to perceive that it was not only the Minas Gerais Government and the Technical Assistance service that saw on teachers the greatest share of responsibility for success or failure in the implementation of the reform. The teachers themselves took on this responsibility and indicated the need for a change in their performance and training, aiming at professional updating and greater integration between themselves and with the students' parents. Problems identified by teachers were complex.

It is possible to see, too, that the difficulties and obstacles pointed out by the teachers would not be solved only with the reform of the teaching methods and processes, as proposed by the Minas Gerais government. Even this change inside the school demanded financial investments, in order to be able to provide services to poor students and the adequacy of textbooks; review the training and preparation of teachers and improve their working conditions.

### **Final considerations**

The organization of the first Normal School in Montes Claros reflects a characteristic present in these institutions at the national level, that is, the discontinuity in the offer of teacher training by the state, - discontinuity perceived by a frequent process of closing and reopening these schools.

In this context, when analyzing the organization of the first Normal School in Montes Claros, in addition to this discontinuity, other issues stand out when looking to identify elements that are part of the teaching profession in the municipality. It should be noted that the role assigned to normal schools has an impact on the formation and exercise of the teaching profession, in a context that the teaching profession is marked, both locally, as well as in the context of Minas Gerais and that of Brazil, by the conflict between technical training and general culture, and by the new school ideas of change and renewal of the methods of teaching

It should be emphasized that in the 1930s, Minas Gerais education policy differs from the options and guidelines adopted by other Brazilian states - by adopting strategies to contain the offer of normal education, the State of Minas Gerais seeks to justify its position from the adoption of a policy of reform of teaching methodologies, accusing teachers of disinterest and apathy, blaming them for school failure.

The reality check indicates that Montes Claros does not escape the general state of Minas Gerais, which was reflected by its adherence to the proposed educational reform program for normal schools and primary education. In this sense, it defends the teaching as mission and priesthood and of normal teaching as a technical activity. However, within the scope of the New School, the renewal of methodologies assumes great centrality, but the need for a broad general culture, which would allow teachers to transform their practices, is not disregarded, as well as the assumption of a reflexive positioning in the face of problems and difficulties encountered in the teaching exercise.

In the investigated context, transformations occurred in teacher training. It is observed that the Montes Claros Normal School assumes a prominent place in the production of representations on and for teachers, disseminating positions that aimed to guide actions. On the one hand, the normal course aimed to qualify teachers for the application of principles and methodologies of the New School movement; on the other, it was expected that the teaching profession would be assumed as mission and priesthood, for which attitudes of sacrifice, self-denial and love of children and school would be necessary.

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