

## Rural Education as Reported by School Administrators from São Paulo in the 1930s and 1940s

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**Abstract:** In the 1930s and 1940s, the school system was consolidated in new institutional organization in the State of São Paulo, Brazil. School administrators, the regional teaching delegates organized in a new level the primary education in this period. In urban areas, school groups were the model to be followed. However, how the rural schools were? This paper will present the vision of these teaching delegates about the calamitous situation of the rural education in São Paulo during this period. This text will address the conflict between the everyday reality of the feasible school system and the targeted ideal for rural education in São Paulo. The source material utilized for this study contemplates the reports of the school administrators preserved in the Public Archives of the State of São Paulo.

**Key words:** rural schools, isolated schools, history of education, primary education of the State of São Paulo

### 1. Introduction

In general, our teachers are always looking for students, who are underfed and gaunt mostly, showing severe learning disabilities. Also, the lack and shortcoming of teaching materials, poor facilities of several schools and teachers' substandard housing or allowance contribute to the unsatisfactory outcome of our [rural] schools. In addition to all those above is the inappropriate training of teachers, who are technically and spiritually qualified to cities.

The abovementioned report, dated from 1943, about rural schools in the State of São Paulo was prepared by José Ferreira Eboli, Regional Superintendent of Schools in the city of Guaratinguetá. In the mid-1940s, many of the people in charge for the education administration in São Paulo, just like Eboli, seemed to be weary of the many and repetitive criticisms about the shortcomings of rural education then and the governmental disregard to their concrete proposals to solve the issues reported. Such weariness has been accumulated since the first reports made by the Regional Offices of Education in 1933. This paper will show the view of a group of professionals who are in a privileged position to review the education in the rural area of São Paulo in the 1930s and 1940s, being the Regional Superintendents of Schools. Such school administrators — some of which are former rural schools teachers — often had the help and testimonials of school inspectors, principals and other teachers to evaluate the rural schools under their responsibility. These reports have something in common: pride of improvements to urban education; in contrast to the deep displeasure with the chaotic situation of rural education at that time. These are their stories.

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A little more than three months after creating the Ministry of Education and Public Health, the São Paulo State Department of Education and Public Health was created in March 1931. In that year, and the one after, the Regional Offices of Education in the State of São Paulo were organized. The 21 Regional Offices were mainly incumbent upon administrating the school system in the process of consolidation and expansion during the Vargas Era. Such offices, from time to time, reported their activities to the Brazilian Department of Education, in the Capital city. Therefore, from 1933 to 1945 at least 68 reports were prepared, detailing these activities. These reports are found in the Public Archives of the State of São Paulo. This documentation was fully researched to understand the rural education in São Paulo during that particular period. Due to the high number of documents and details in the reports, this text shall not hold a dialog between these sources and the works of other authors who have already analyzed the Brazilian rural education. This interface with the references regarding the rural education in Brazil will be done in a future moment.

What do those reports contain? In the beginning, they were very informal. According to Circular Letter No. 25, of 1933, from the Brazilian Department of Education, in addition to statistical data referring to schools in that area, where the superintendents of schools were requested to “briefly and clearly [...] show the proposals [suggestions] which seemed to be more timely and feasible so as to bring improvement and effectiveness to the works delivered”. As a reply to this request, the regional superintendents of schools expressed several criticisms about the chaotic situation of rural schools and came up with practical suggestions as to solve the issues faced. Among these suggestions, there is not much theoretical discussion but a strong administrative pragmatism, aiming to correct the education problems in rural schools. Subsequently, these reports were submitted to standardization, ruled by Circular Letter No. 87, of December 16, 1936, and by Circular Letter No. 86, of December 31, 1942, both from the Brazilian Department of Education.

How did the regional superintendent of schools identify the rural schools? Luiz Damasco Penna, in the report of Santos, referring to 1935, page 11, disagreed on the legal definition:

According to the regulation texts, rural schools are the ones located neither in a municipality nor in any urban district. If a municipal real estate tax is charged in a district, so schools located therein are called urban schools. On the other hand, there are populations living under the urban civil regime who are innately rural populations.

This means that, although many isolated schools were legally considered as urban, in fact they were “innately” rural schools. In his report of Santos, referring to 1936, page 101, the same Superintendent clearly summarized that isolated schools were synonyms of rural schools. Referring to isolated schools, he stated that:

The greater difficulty comes from the condition of being isolated. We could deal with the isolated rural [school], because isolated urban [school] is a serious mistake in school administration.

In the reports, Luiz Damasco Penna is the Regional Superintendent of Schools who makes the most explicit, direct and decisive statements. However, could this definition of isolated school and rural school be generally applied to other regions in the State of São Paulo? It probably could. Statements similar to that one may be found in several other reports. They are small sentences, however apparently in consistency therewith, such as the one pertaining to the Regional Superintendent of Schools of Ribeirão Preto, Francisco Alves Mourão, in the report of 1936, page 27: “Almost all isolated schools in the region are located in rural areas.” Therefore, when criticizing the situation of isolated schools, the regional superintendents of schools are mostly referring to the rural schools. Isolated schools — mostly rural ones — had only one teacher. These schools had multigraded classrooms, i.e., the

teachers would teach different information, at the same time, to students of different grades and ages. On the other hand, urban schools were organized in school groups, i.e., graded schools with several teachers teaching different information to students in separate classrooms, grouped by their ages and grades, and, when possible, also divided by gender. In the last mentioned report, page 28, Francisco Mourão summarized the main issues faced by rural schools:

The difficulties common to isolated schools – in a descending order of losses caused to the learning – are as follows:

1st — Lack of enrollment and attendance to the schools, mostly determined by the population's situation of poverty.

2nd — Lack of stability of teachers, for too well-known reasons and that we refuse to comment them here.

3rd — Lack of school material, since some rural inhabitants in the farms are so poor that they are not able to purchase it, and the material provided by State Warehouse, in these particular cases, is not enough to all students.

4th — Diseases that are common to rural areas, such as: trachoma, hookworm, ague, undernourishment, etc., which are not properly fought because of the population's ignorance and misery.

5th — Lack of proper school facilities, since most of them are operating in emergency buildings, as it is known, without any space, any appropriate light, any sanitary facilities and, many times, with problems to receive drinking water.

Following the order of the abovementioned difficulties faced by rural schools, the same points are found to be repeatedly addressed in the reports of the school administrators. Some testimonials were selected as samples in order to map the situation of rural schools in the 1930s and 1940s.

In one of the first reports of this series of documents, João Teixeira de Lara, Regional Superintendent of Schools in the city of Botucatu, in 1933, page 16-18, highlighted:

One cause that contributed to the low percentage of promotion is, undoubtedly, the lack of stability of students enrolled in teaching establishments located in rural areas. Unfortunately, countryside people do not give the moral support the school needs to succeed as they are not able to understand the purpose of schools. [...] We believe this people do this out of ignorance, not out of evil-doing. When they realize they can earn more by keeping their children working in plantations, they give less priority to their instruction.

The Education Code of the State of São Paulo, as of 1933, set forth the mandatory school attendance from children from 8 to 14 years of age. The regional superintendents of schools several times claimed the Brazilian Department of Education to enforce the law. While this would not occur, some Superintendents prepared palliative measures. João Teixeira de Lara, from Botucatu, in 1933, page 23, highlighted the importance of school festivities and the strengthening of parent-teacher associations to keep students in school:

First of all, teachers should make be self-sacrificing, living for the school in order to know perfectly well all conditions of the environment in which they are acting, if they wanted their cause to advance. They would need to promote festivities in the end of the school semester or year, inviting all the locals to participate. They should have these parties whenever possible in holidays, Sundays or religious dates, so everyone would be able to attend. They should found the "Parent-Teachers Association", giving to the heads the command over all sectors in which the neighborhood was divided, whom they could directly handle whenever necessary in order to complain about students' lack of school attendance. These heads of sectors would be the teacher's most loyal assistants since, after receiving this responsibility, they would never endanger the school attendance and would be their most loyal guards. Once every possible advertisement has been done to the benefit of the school, the Law is severely enforced to the unfaithful and transgressors.

However, what deeply annoyed the Superintendents of Schools about attendance to rural schools was when the farmers — and not the parents — kept the children away from school in order to work in the plantations. In these cases, they would rather close the rural school and require any legal punishment. Again, the Brazilian Department of Education was required to enforce the law. The following is an example case of school closing, reported by the same João Teixeira de Lara, now the Regional Superintendent of Schools in the city of Piracicaba, in 1942, pages 51–52:

Some farmers and manufacturers still show indifference and hostility towards rural schools. This year, we were strict with one of these money magnates and we closed the school at his farm, where the teacher was underestimated and badly treated, and children were prevented to attend classes because of the work imposed to them in the plantations. There is a provision in the Constitution of 1934, which remains in force, since it was not abrogated by the Constitution in the Vargas Era, and whose enforcement is pending. It is the article 139, which sets forth: "All agricultural or industrial company located outside school areas, where more than fifty people work and at least 10 of them are illiterate, including adults and their children, shall be required to provide free elementary education." If that provision was enforced, when closing the school in the farm of Monte Mor, we would have required from the hostile and tough farmer to install a school at his expenses, replacing the one just closed. If there are legal provisions in force and with such precious goals, as the ones just mentioned, why they are not being enforced? We request the Head of the Department of Education to benefit the State by enforcing this forgotten law.

It was the former Regional Superintendent of Schools of Piracicaba, Francisco de Faria Netto, in 1933, pages 83–85, who suggested this constitutional provision:

I have sent to Dr. Alcântara Machado, head of the São Paulo Board at the Constitutional Convention, the following letter:

[...]

Would it not be lawful to include in the articles referring to teaching the obligation of all agricultural owners or manufacturers of the rural area, whose property contains more than 40 school-age children, to build classrooms with accommodations to one teacher and to become responsible for class attendance? Would it not be better to prohibit those who are under 15 years old, who have not completed elementary school, from working during school hours, under penalty of holding those who have their paternal rights, guardianship or trusteeship criminally responsible?

It was distressing for school administrators to find out that such constitutional provisions became the “forgotten law”. Besides the Constitution, the Education Code of the State of São Paulo of 1933 set forth that there should be an isolated school wherever more than 40 children were located within 2 km. These legal provisions were supposed to be the basis of children’s mandatory attendance to rural schools. However, this requirement was seen as the “forgotten law” for a very specific reason: there were not enough schools to all children in the cities, even less to those in the rural area. Luiz Damasco Penna reported this regarding the region of Santos, in 1940, page 39:

The situation is critical and invariably exposed by me in all annual reports. We must only consider the following data. The State provides education to less than 50% of the school population in the city. The last school group — Visconde de São Leopoldo — was built twenty-five years ago, in 1915. [...] Some rented [school buildings] are not closed by the Health Organization just because they are occupied by the State itself.

Although the school administrators required the enforcement of all constitutional provisions and the effective implementation of the Education Code of 1933, they ended up finding out that such legislation was a set of good intentions to be pursued as an ideal. Such attitude explains the skepticism of regional superintendent of schools regarding the rural school. If isolated schools could not even be implemented to everyone in the rural area, what about organizing them in the patterns of such indisputable proposal? The Education Code set forth that future rural schools were supposed to have a building with classrooms, housing for the teachers and, to implement it, there should be a donation of a 3-hectare land to the State. Regarding these schools, Luiz Damasco Penna, from Santos reported, referring to 1935, pages 14 and 21:

I cannot see the possibility of implementing one or more [rural] schools in each county nor the possible cooperation of the [City] Council or individuals, and I slightly know one or two teachers that are able to effectively achieve elementary education in a rural area. [...] I will always say that — and I do not mind if my idea of education problem is judged as elementary — schools are made with a teacher, a house, school equipment and children. From all these elements, I have only found the children. [...] A school needs to exist before it can be improved. [...] The places here are neither better nor worse than other places in the State. I know there are nearly uninhabitable places here. I said “nearly” because in these places there are 40 children asking for school. And since the State is not able to provide school to all groups of 40 children existing in its territory, I have been cautiously moving the schools to better places whenever it is possible. I said cautiously because, if the criteria were applied to the furthest, all isolated schools would be moved to the Cathedral Square, in São Paulo.

Other school administrators highlighted the main impediment to the attempt of creating the rural schools: the community’s necessary donation of a 3-hectare land to the State. Some communities even considered creating such schools as long as the lands were given as a free lease while the school was effectively in operation. Collatino Fagundes, Regional Superintendent of Schools of Santa Cruz do Rio Pardo, in 1936, page 18, reported:

Right now, it is impossible to implement rural schools in compliance with the Education Code. This is due to the difficulty of receiving the land donation for such use, as provided for in Article 257, as well as immediately building a housing facility for the teacher. [...] The installation of a rural school might be possible once the necessary land is assigned while the school is actually in operation, instead of donating the land, as the Code requires. Considering this is a new type of school — or an attempt of it, it seems to this Office [of Education] that the acceptance of such modality is beneficial.

Probably the proposal of creating rural schools has been postponed for an indefinite time.

In words previously said by Francisco Mourão, from Ribeirão Preto, the second factor for the failure of rural education would be the “lack of stability of teachers, for too well-known reasons and that we refuse to comment them here”. What were these “too well-known reasons” that made teachers give up teaching in rural schools? Several regional superintendents of schools described the recurrent journey of teachers in these schools. In the last mentioned report, Collatino Fagundes (pp. 51–52), summarized this journey:

Generally, teachers are welcomed [in the rural area]; finding it easy to start their mission. Little time later, except for rare exceptions, they create the issue themselves. What is the reason? It is very simple: they are not adapted, miss their beloved ones; start to request things like weekly transport to go to the city attend in order to attend the Mass, go shopping or to the cinema; they complain about small things, saying something like “this is not a life! God forbid me from this old-fashioned people!” etc.. Soon a response comes. The household owner, who so far is good and hospitable, even making sacrifices to accommodate the teacher, completely loses interest. And we have noticed a political touch behind the scenes, giving the teacher perspectives of a transfer from the rural school to the benefits of the city, when it does not happen soon by

assigning the teacher to the school group.

In that period, teacher of rural schools would usually ask for leaves under several reasons, require to be the transferred to urban schools as soon as they had conditions to do such, or even to resign from their job position. For the purposes of understanding this situation, according to the report from Itapetininga in 1936, page 55, the fact is that out of all 134 rural schools existing in the region, 38 — almost one third of them — stopped operating due to leaves or transfers of their respective teachers. However, not all school administrators blamed only the teachers. Francisco Lopes de Azevedo, Regional Superintendent of Schools of Taubaté, in 1935, page 49, highlighted:

If our school groups are great organizations, our rural schools fall short. The teacher has been the “scapegoat”.  
But we all truly know, they are not the only ones to blame.

In this same sense, Oscar Augusto Guelli, Regional Superintendent of Schools of Botucatu, in 1940, page 68, stated:

As we are used to the sins committed in the elementary education, we will not cast the first stone at the education skills of our teachers. What happens in the realm of elementary education is known by all and needs no comments.

Using the teacher of isolated schools as a “scapegoat” for the failures in rural schools did not seem appropriate to many school administrators at that time. But what lies behind statements such as “for too well-known reasons and that we refuse to comment them here”, “we all truly know” or “it is known by all and needs no comments?” Francisco de Faria Netto, the Regional Superintendent of Schools in Piracicaba conducted a survey with all 100 rural school teachers of his area to understand, in his always hard-hitting words, the expression that entitles this very present paper: “the spirit of horror to educational life in rural areas”, page 25 overleaf. The results were shortly summarized in six pages, from page 25 front to 27 overleaf, of the report of Piracicaba of 1933. This school administrator concluded that the main rural education issues were the critical sanitary conditions of schools and teachers' housing facilities. Consequently, there were a high number of leaves for medical treatment in order to fight constant diseases distressing the teachers, page 25 overleaf:

Drinking water in the rural housing facilities, always poorly decanted, comes from either the closest stream or from the tank [well], most of times in bad conditions. More than half of rural houses do not have latrines. Verminosis prevails endemically in all neighborhoods, in a small part [of houses] is trachoma and in the other part [is] malaria.

From 5,785 houses surveyed by teachers in the rural area of Piracicaba, only 1,280 (22%) had full sanitary system. 4,505 houses (78%) did not have this service. In many other reports, the issues of teachers were pointed out as arising from the contact with endemic diseases in rural areas. For example, José Clozel, Regional Superintendent of Schools in São José do Rio Preto, in 1934, page 2, stated:

In every area, especially the rural area, hookworms and ague [malaria] are disseminated endemically. Trachoma and typhus are also well known and familiar in the surroundings.

School administrators also warned about the precarious housing conditions for the rural teachers. Ottoni Pompeu Piza, Regional Superintendent of Schools of Araraquara, in 1936, page 28, described the difficulties of accommodating teachers in the rural area:

Rural teachers' housing and [food] allowance have been a difficult problem to solve. The farmer believes that teachers are able to live wherever and, not rare, provides them with a settler house, in case their families follow them. However, when a teacher is single, as in most cases, they usually go to the house of the settlers' supervisors, or to the carpenter's, mason's or machinist's house. However, a teacher never goes to the farmer's house and rarely do they go to the farm manager's house. Considering the great difference of education existing between the teacher and the hosting family, none of them agrees with the situation. Then, the school loses with the leave of the teacher, who requires it as the only way to solve the current situation.

With this background of endemic diseases, poor sanitary conditions and serious issues regarding the teachers' housing, it should not be surprising that teachers in rural schools wanted to live in the urban areas closest to their schools. Hence, the then education administrators found out about the importance of transportation for these teachers. Francisco Alves Mourão, Regional Superintendent of Schools of Ribeirão Preto, in 1936, page 35, quoting the School Inspector Santos Amaro da Cruz, poetically stated, "I have the feeling that teachers only feel good in places where they are not." He criticized the daily commute of teachers between the city and their schools in the countryside:

There are teachers who [...] tackle [face fearless] all inconveniences of daily commutes through dusty and shaky roads, in terrible "*jardineiras*" [type of transportation, previous to buses], with no safety, so they only could live in cities.

Quoting another School Inspector, Sylvio de Barros, and Francisco Mourão reported that some teachers would not even think about staying overnight in rural areas:

Teachers who, only by means of need, drive away from urban centers without stability, insecure about their real mission, filled with modernisms, daily commuting, to work with their eyes on the clock, their mind on the city and their ears to the train whistle or the *jardineiras*' horn... It is true that a great number of farms and ranches do not offer the comfort that teachers deserve, neither regarding their housing nor their [food] allowance.

Another frequent complaint of school administrators refers to the lack and low quality of school materials supplied by the State Warehouse, in the Capital. Such complaint is reported in the documents during several years. In 1933, Francisco de Faria Netto, Regional Superintendent of Schools of Piracicaba, page 87, in a logical analysis on the importance of school materials, stated:

School-aged children are required to enroll and attend classes in elementary schools; the State is incumbent upon provide them with the necessary material. However, it does not. Mostly isolated public [rural] schools have no paper, books, notebooks, pencils and even chalk; teachers often use limestone and slate stones to write on the blackboard and students [write on] used wrapping paper, movie advertisements, etc. How can these employees work if the State does not supply them with proper material?

The same Francisco de Faria Netto, being ironic, in 1942 and as Regional Superintendent of Schools of São Carlos, went back to the same point, page 11:

Lack of material to isolated schools [rural] has been, until certain point, one of many causes of poor school performance. One-third of [the necessary] material has been provided. It would be interesting if Companhia Paulista de Estradas de Ferro [the Railroad Company of the State of São Paulo] would provide only one third of the lubricant necessary for the operation of several trainsets that daily run the railways and employees would provide the other two thirds.

With low wages, constant risk of endemic diseases contagion, poor sanitary conditions in schools — often

without sanitary service, poor housing and scarce school supplies, it was unlikely that the teachers in rural schools would bear teaching under these conditions for a long time. Hence, requests of leaves or transfers to urban schools as soon as possible were so constant.

What are the main demands of school administrators to minimize this deeply negative picture of education in rural schools in the state of São Paulo? The most common recommendation is to improve the compensation of teachers in rural schools and wage differentiation from urban teachers. This wage advantage would help to keep teachers in the countryside. The teachers' reference salary in both rural areas and in the cities was 300\$000. For comparison purposes, the salary of a servant was 170\$000. The salary of veterinarian in the public service was 1.500\$000. Luiz Damasco Penna, Regional Superintendent of Schools of Santos, in a report referring to 1935, page 32, proposes a different compensation to rural teachers using as reference the distance of the school and the nearest railway, the main mean of transportation at that time. In concentric circles, teachers who taught more than 12 km away from the nearest railway would have a salary of 500\$000. For schools within over 40 km from the railway, the teacher salary should be 1.000\$000. In his opinion, such action would keep rural teachers in these schools. This experienced school administrator concluded its rationale with a laconic "the way things are". Francisco Alves Mourão, Regional Superintendent of Schools of Ribeirão Preto, in 1936, page 30, claimed the differentiation of the teaching career, dividing it into rural teachers and urban teachers. Therefore, base salary of rural teachers would be 500\$000, and urban teachers would be kept at 300\$000. Other claims in this sense could be mentioned, as the ones made by regional superintendents of schools of Itapetininga in 1936, page 60 — Fernando Rios; of Araraquara in that same year, page 30–31 — Ottoni Pompeu Piza; or Lino Avancini, of Lins, in 1942, page 18, highlighting that, either rural teachers' salary should be raised or they would be counting down on their fingers the days to leave the place that they despised. The Education Code of the State of São Paulo, as of 1933, provided for a supplementary annual bonus of 600\$000, comprised of two reference salaries, to rural teachers. However, this annual bonus was bond to unfeasible criteria of school performance for rural schools to achieve during that period, since teachers would have to prove that they taught 200 school days in the same school, with minimal attendance of 25 students and annual promotion of 75% of them.

In this background, the greatest criticisms of school administrators arise regarding the evaluation process in rural schools. At that time, the school year began on February 1st and ended on November 30th, with a two-week vacation in mid-June, and this recess coincided with the June festivals. November was then dedicated to final exams in all schools, urban or rural. However, November was the most important month for agricultural harvest in rural areas. School administrators said it was inappropriate to evaluate the student performances only through final exams at the end of the school year. They claimed for changes in the evaluation process of all students, either in urban or rural schools. Students should be evaluated continuously, by means of activities throughout the school year. The statement of João Teixeira de Lara, Regional Superintendent of Schools of Botucatu, in 1933, page 24, is an example of such argument:

The promotion should be based on effective and continuous work throughout the year, which could be easily checked by school authorities in their last visit to the school, in November. During this visit, which would be very time-consuming, authorities would verify, besides periodic exams, the notebooks of language, mathematics, drawing, calligraphy, etc. [ ... ] So the teachers could receive their compensation for their work, especially in rural schools, where the instability of the students is a fact, it would be good to adopt such measures as suggested.

In the particular case of rural schools, they claimed at least for the anticipation of final exams to the month of



September. In late September, the annual labor contracts between farmers and settlers usually ended. Settlers could negotiate new annual contracts in other farms before the coffee harvest, which had a summit in November. In October, many settlers moved from one farm to another, taking their children with them. Therefore, teachers of rural schools would usually teach these children in an efficient way, but they could not see their student's promotion to the next year because they did not take the finals exams in November. Valdomiro Guerra Corrêa, Regional Superintendent of Schools of São Carlos in 1933, page 77, proposes a specific agenda to rural schools:

It is of great advantage to education, and of essential need to establish that the final schools exams in the coffee plantation areas are to be held in September, the last month of the agricultural year. Without stopping the school works, the enrollments in these isolates [schools] would start in October 1st and the winter and summer vacations would follow other education establishments. It is accurate and firmly stated by inspectors the fact that these schools have many removals in said month and the enrollment of illiterates in September and October, causing losses to teachers final results and perhaps to all isolated [schools] in these cores in our State.

The Brazilian Department of Education took some palliative measure once this kind of claim disappeared from reports after 1934.

One of the most hard-hitting and repeated criticism to the rural education in São Paulo lies on the poor teacher training to address the specifics of education in rural areas. The Normal Schools were all urban, training predominantly urban professionals to work with students in urban school groups, developing their teaching internships in urban schools. How could such professionals be suitable to teach in isolated rural schools? João Teixeira de Lara, Regional Superintendent of Schools of Piracicaba in 1940, page 45, summarized such criticisms:

The current system of school groups provided in the Elementary Course attached to Normal Schools is abnormal and harmful for the purpose intended in these school units. The Teaching School role is first to provide teachers for isolated schools, once the isolated school is the mother cell of all public education. This is the place where all graduates go. They should be prepared to work in this type and kind of school. Instead of a noble group of ten classrooms, which brings together the city upper-class children, consisting of full-of-money and overfed [rich] children, who lack no resources to purchase materials; who form an environment opposite to the one these graduated teachers will be working in.

What do some superintendents of schools propose to end the problem of bad training of teachers and their inadequacy to teach in rural schools? Something so far unprecedented: the creation of rural Normal Schools. When writing a review of his findings about researches carried out rural teachers of Piracicaba in 1933, Francisco de Faria Netto was very clear in this proposal, page 26 back:

I agree with placing elementary Normal Schools in most populated rural areas for the following reasons:

- a – Countryside teachers should be chosen from the countryside.
- b – The most reasonable process to obtain a dedicated person to elementary teaching, who can adapt to the needs of the countryside, is by implementing a Normal School in said environment; and
- c – Thus placed, the Normal School gradually selects candidates, finding out those that are dedicated to rural teaching, taking these beautiful minds that bloom in the countryside that, once developed and guided, will be in the near future the ones engaged in the solution of rural issues; giving birth to the new fertile phase of solid and desired rural civilization.

The Normal Schools program must be organized in a fundamentally practical approach, aiming at the development of everything that composes the activity and life of rural population. The program should be

organized in a mainly rural spirit, having as primary objective the awakening of minds born in the countryside, so as to create in people the belief that the ideal, noble and happy life, is the one that the countryside offers to those who are conveniently guided to be dedicated thereto. A program to study men in their multiple relationships with rural things and to enable the students to live with intelligence in the countryside. Masters [high school teachers] to these Normal Schools must not be attached to urban life. Rural schools in the country can certainly provide good masters.

Luiz Damasco Penna, Regional Superintendent of Schools of Santos, in the report referring to 1936, page 116, summed up the dilemma on teacher training for rural schools succinctly: either the comfort from cities was taken to the countryside in order to adapt urban teachers to rural areas, or Normal Schools should be created in the countryside in order to train teachers in the countryside itself. He did not believe in the feasibility of rural Normal Schools. He argued that gradually providing appropriate conditions for a respectable life to rural teachers should be less utopian:

The adaptation [of rural teachers] to the site is the *leitmotif* [logical reason] of those who advocate the creation of a special type of Normal School to train rural teachers. I believe it is because of being installed in the place thought as the worst — the countryside. [...] [While this does not happen], there are two possibilities: either they carry the minimum comfort from cities to the countryside [...] or it is proposed to convert an entire generation of young men [rural teachers] in anchorites [hermits], utility of which I do not know. And then, the State either settles the teachers with dignity, doing little by little, building and furnishing houses for rural schools, or provides such teacher with the means to settle, i.e., pays the rural teacher additional bonuses to help him to live a human life; because, undoubtedly, everything costs money. Life in the countryside is expensive.

Even with all criticisms to educational conditions in rural schools, school administrators from São Paulo still held some hope that this type of education would muster some dignity. Sometimes they described the rural school of the future, as in the idealization of Paulo Monte Serrat, Regional Superintendent of Schools of San Carlos, in 1943, page 26:

A large and well done thatched ranch house, circular in shape, without walls, with rough seats, tables also as improvised; in the middle, the teacher's platform, a two-faced blackboards and things like that. All children in the area shall learn in contact with nature, breathing fresh air, away from the hustle and bustle [disturbance] of cities, but relatively close to their home where they shall spend the night, and come back to the typical school in the following morning. [...] With markedly rural faces but also making great combinations with alphabet letters. If once the school was the stronghold of staunch principles, of blind discipline, of unyielding authority regime that had their flocks as it pleased, now the obedience in these schools must be taught by love, docility and the work done due to the interest in seeing these plots [window boxes and balcony hanging baskets] flowering; filled the water fountains; seedbeds full of vegetables and fences populated with chicks and white hens; hares in their nurseries; the corn plantations worked on by the very student. With the progress of school development, poetry in this place shall reign in equality for the common good, in the interest of production as the crowning of rational, organized and constructive work. It seems we have heard the cries of victory of rural education, as a dream come true at the time of its destination.

In the reports herein included, we may observe how the regional superintendents of schools, school inspectors, principals of school groups and teachers fought for the education improvement of rural population. An often frustrating fight, which yet they were absolutely dedicated to.

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