

The child in the promotion of public instruction through association in Paraná

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Abstract

Based on empirical research in periodicals, this article analyzes the civilizing discourses and educational practices circulating in the province of Paraná in the 1870s, which linked schoolchildren to the idea of being the bearer of the nation's future. Based on *microhistory*, we examine the creation of a school fund by a elementary school teacher, who presented to the population a student as a model of education. Drawing on Michel de Certeau and Cynthia Greive Veiga, we identify the importance of the social relationships established by teachers in the implementation of educational practices through associations in literary clubs. Furthermore, the formulations attributed to the roles played by a model child constituted a tactic for garnering social support for the material provision of elementary schools. Therefore, this study contributes to measuring civil society's participation in the processes of schooling and childcare.

Keywords: Association. History of childhood. School fund. Childcare.

A criança na promoção da instrução pública através do associativismo paranaense

Resumo

A partir de uma investigação empírica em periódicos, este artigo analisa os discursos civilizatórios e as práticas de instrução em circulação na província do Paraná, na década de 1870, que vinculavam a criança escolarizada à ideia de portadora do futuro nacional. Com base na micro-história, examinamos a criação de uma caixa escolar por um professor primário, que apresentou à população um aluno como modelo de instrução. Fundamentados em Michel de Certeau e Cynthia Greive Veiga, identificamos a importância

das sociabilidades estabelecidas por professores na efetivação de práticas de instrução por meio do associativismo em clubes literários. Além disso, as formulações atribuídas aos papéis desempenhados por uma criança modelo, constituíam uma tática de angariação de apoio social para o provimento material das escolas primárias. Portanto, este estudo contribui para dimensionar a participação da sociedade civil nos processos de escolarização e de assistência à infância.

Palavras-Chave: Associativismo. História da infância. Caixa escolar. Assistência à infância.

El niño en la promoción de la instrucción pública a través del asociacionismo en Paraná

Resumen

A partir de una investigación empírica en periódicos, este artículo analiza los discursos civilizatorios y las prácticas de enseñanza en circulación en la provincia de Paraná, en la década de 1870, que vinculaban al niño escolarizado con la idea de portador del futuro nacional. Con base en la *microhistoria*, examinamos la creación de un fondo escolar por parte de un maestro de primaria, que presentó a la población a un alumno como modelo de instrucción. Basándonos en Michel de Certeau y Cynthia Greive Veiga, identificamos la importancia de las sociabilidades establecidas por los maestros en la implementación de prácticas de instrucción a través del asociacionismo en clubes literarios. Además, las formulaciones atribuidas a los roles desempeñados por un niño modelo constituían una táctica para obtener apoyo social para la provisión material de escuelas primarias. Por lo tanto, este estudio contribuye a evaluar la participación de la sociedad civil en los procesos de escolarización y asistencia a la infancia.

Palabras clave: Asociacionismo. Historia de la infancia. Fondo escolar. Asistencia a la infancia.

The members, incorporated, went to the Principal Church to attend the conventual mass, preceded by the Club's flag, and an armillary sphere, a symbol of science, carried by a boy, representing popular education. Back in the church, a magna session was held, in which speeches alluding to the act were given. In the evening the celebration ended by a dance [...] (Macedo Soares, 1900, p. 337)¹.

The excerpt above was reported by Campo Largo law judge Antônio Joaquim de Macedo Soares, founding partner and first president of *Club Litterario Campo Larguense*, in a monograph that the magistrate wrote about that village. This report, referring to the event that occurred in 1876, has motivated our research experiences, because, even briefly, it reveals multiple phenomena relevant to the fields of History of Education and Childhood. Like so many other associative entities in 19th century Brazil, the Campo Largo club was founded in 1875 with the objective of "[...] creating a library, establishing night classes and schools, and still founding a newspaper; contributing in all ways to the instruction of members and in general to the dissemination of useful knowledge [...]" (Official Letter, 1875, p. 62), as Macedo Soares himself reports in a letter sent to the president of the province Adolfo Lamenha Lins. Two aspects drew our attention in this small introductory excerpt, which describes the club's founding solemnity: an armillary sphere as a symbol of science and a boy as a representative of a popular education.

Brazil of the 1870s experienced the effervescence of a process of valuing scientific knowledge as symbols of civility and understanding of realities. As Schwarcz argues, in that context, science assumed a much more ethical than properly scientific clothing, constituting a "[...] diffuse and indiscriminate scientificity" (Schwarcz, 1993, p. 41). We agree with the author regarding its ethical nature, since, in that period, mentions of science were often accompanied by moral discourses, projections of civilizational progress and expectations of the population's conduct. However, we believe it is possible to broaden this debate. When the author states that scientific practice in Brazil "[...] emerged first as 'fashion' and only much later as practice and production" (Schwarcz, 1993, p. 41), we understand that the history of educational practices has much to add in this sense. Private associative entities, although acting in restricted and private spaces, developed initiatives whose

effects left significant *signs* (Ginzburg, 2014) in the public sphere that deserve to be investigated. The possibility of a literary club acquiring an object such as an armillary sphere – a very expensive and rare instrument at the time – indicates an active posture in the face of scientific practice and the achievement of the club's main objective: instruction.

The event that opens this text instigates us to analyze the role of childhood in national construction, in the processes of schooling and numerous forms of sociability capable of engendering educational practices. In the 19th century imagination, the formation of a civilized adult, able to contribute to national progress, depended directly on the preparation of a child equally guided by the principles of civility. Such a conception demanded both the construction of institutions and practices of instruction under the responsibility of the State and attributions to family nuclei and civil society.

As Veiga explains, “[...] the constitution of civilized childhood was made amid the changes in the social functions of adults, the rationalization of attitudes and the production of expectations about the place of the future adult” (Veiga, 2017a, p. 26-27), in this way, in the 19th century, it awakens the consciousness of childhood “[...] as another stage of life and as a new possibility of control of the future” (Veiga, 2017a, p. 27). That said, the public solemnity of *Club Litterario Campo Larguense* is particularly representative of this cultural horizon. It was a form of popular education illustrated in the child who, while guiding the armillary sphere, carried with them the emblem of instruction – science – and moved forward toward the future. There was an intertwining between instruction, childhood, science and the future in that event, thus constituting fundamental elements of the civilizing constructs of the time.

The details of the event narrated so far are difficult to ascertain, given that this ceremony was not recorded in detail in the newspapers of the period and that the internal documentation of the associative entities remains restricted and dispersed. In any case, it was common for the festivities of literary associations to be announced in periodicals, which demonstrated the clubs' concern to publicize their initiatives to society. These mobilizations fulfilled an important function in seeking to fill some of the gaps left by the imperial state, as in the case of the diffusion of instruction and assistance to impoverished children.

In this context, the imperial State, as an ideal promoter of public education, assumed the task of fostering various initiatives that boosted both instruction and education², even if they were of a private nature, as was the case with associative entities. In this sense, Gondra and Schueler (2008) attribute to the government a more active conduct in this process, expressed in the concession of spaces, material objects and financial incentives. On the other hand, Viscardi (2008) points to the scarcity of government resources, which made support to entities more symbolic and led to the creation of strict regulatory standards that limited their initiatives. Regardless of the interpretations, the mobilization of communities and the constitution of networks of sociality – including through association – were fundamental for the implementation of practices of instruction, which counted on the participation of public agents, such as elementary teachers and other individuals linked to teaching. In addition, as we could see in another social event of the past, it was also possible to observe the participation of children in these spaces.

Motivated by the search for ceremonies similar to the one that occurred in Campo Largo and by the desire to identify a series of analyzable phenomena that articulated instruction, scientific discourse, association and childhood, we arrived at the capital of the province. On December 30, 1877, the newspaper *O Paranaense* published a communication from the *Club Litterario Curitybano* announcing a literary feast that would take place on January 1, with “[...] the conference of the boy Pretextato Pennafort T. Ribas; which will deal with astronomy” (*O Paranaense*, 1877b, p. 4). The search for this name led us to the most widely circulated newspaper in the province, the *December Nineteenth*, which presented a more detailed account of the festival in which the boy participated. The news titled “Pretextato Taborda” reported that this was

[...] the name of the intelligent Curitibano boy who has already sometimes exhibited his intellectual gifts in this capital. On the 6th, the announced conference was held in the association room of the *Club Litterario Curitybano*, where the literary genius of Pretextato Taborda, a 9-year-old child, was still haughty and admiring (December 19, 1878, p. 2).

The way the *December Nineteenth* describes the event leads us to believe that this was not the first time that Pretextato spoke in public, which indicates the possibility that the infant has already spoken other times and had a certain impact on Paraná society. We will return to this point later. Anyway, at that event at *Club Litterario Curitybano*, the child

[...] dealt with the conference on astronomy, and let's say it frankly, no one would certainly exceed Pretextato in brilliance: he is a speaker who prepares for the future, he is a genius who conquers a high place at the banquet of instruction. The intonation of the voice, the elegant triggering, the gesticulation and everything else, give visions to those who do not know him that this intelligent boy had received education in more advanced schools, with more capable resources. But genius, the tendency towards great destinies, by force of will conquer these means that are still lacking among us (December 19, 1878, p. 3).

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This report, once again, brings to light the relationship between childhood and the future, closely linked to the engendering of instruction as an instrument for the development of these possibilities in a civilized nation. The potential genius of Pretextato stood out, distinguishing the nine-year-old boy in the field of instruction and projecting his image as that of someone prepared for the future. The advanced level that he would have reached would be exemplary, as if the boy had obtained formation in a "more advanced" school, which, as the excerpt itself indicates, did not correspond to the reality of Paraná. This perspective was shared by the vice president of the province in office in 1877, Manoel Antônio Guimarães. He welcomed the initiatives of his predecessor in the role, Adolfo Lamenha Lins, but pointed to some shortcomings of the instruction:

If public instruction constitutes today, for nations as for individuals, the lively and permanent aspiration, closely associated with the progress of peoples, as an indispensable condition of all moral and material development: it is to be regretted that it had not received, in this province of all administrations, the effective impulse to convert it into a brilliant reality (Report, 1877, p. 3).

The alleged precariousness of provincial instruction should be contextualized, as it also had a discursive load aimed at encouraging investment

in that area. In any case, with its real and rhetorical deficiencies, the report points out that public education, until then, was not able to provide conditions for the boy Pretextato to reach that high level. However, it should be noted that all these qualities attributed to Pretextato were conferred by third parties, not being so far measurable by the available sources and carrying a strong subjective mark of those who narrated them. Given the difficulty of accessing the child's own understanding of childhood, their characteristic traits are usually understood from the perspective of adults. Even so, a complete absence of children's authorship and autonomy cannot be assumed. As Gouveia argues:

[...] the documentation produced by the adult mirrors the social expectations addressed to the child, more than expressing their forms of insertion in a given historical moment. The discourses and practices of socialization, when addressing the child, build an imaginary about childhood, producing models of gestures, habits, behaviors that are material for socialization in the processes of formation of such actors. The child is also a product of such practices and discourses (Gouveia, 2008, p. 106).

Considering the perspective of *invented traditions* of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Veiga states that: “[...] the relations between childhood and modernity were established in the effort to produce a tradition, that of being a civilized child [...]” (Veiga, 2004, p. 37), which implied the formulation of a different treatment for the child, producing new spaces, forms of sociability and behavioral patterns aimed at the creation of the elements “[...] fundamental for the being a civilized child to be universalized as a childhood in modernity, revealing itself as a tradition” (Veiga, 2004, p. 37). For the author, in the context of the 19th century, the recognition that children had specificities and individualities was an essential condition for “[...] the process of homogenization and universalization of childhood as a condition for the evolution of the course of life [...]” (Veiga, 2004, p. 74), which influenced the development of pedagogical practices that considered these particularities in order to produce a standardization of children's socialization. Thus, “[...] the combination between schooling for all and the universalized socialization of childhood produced a child and an imagined childhood” (Veiga, 2004, p. 78).

Therefore, the author of the report published on *December Nineteen* conferred characteristics on Pretextato, in order to compose the representation

of an imagined child – a universal type expected of a schooled and, therefore, civilized childhood – even if the province, at first, did not have all the means to do so. The case of Pretextato demonstrates that the materialization of these ideals was present in Paraná association idea not only as a discourse, but also as an articulated action through the children themselves.

Returning to our young lecturer, the presentation of Pretextato at *Club Litterario Curitybano* would have been honored by several “ladies and gentlemen”, with the congratulations of the president of the club – who pointed out the boy as a “promising talent of the future Brazilian generation” – and “Mr. Dr. Director of Public Instruction”. After describing the greetings addressed to the child, the news concludes by greeting “[...] this child of superior intelligence as well as the teacher Mr. Nivaldo Braga of whom Pretextato Taborda is a disciple” (December 19, 1878, p. 3).

8 Considering this narrative, there are two elements that we must questioning. The first is the participation of the director of public instruction, who, despite not being named in the news, demonstrates the involvement of those responsible for instruction in the province with Paraná association, understanding these spaces as gears in a broad mechanism of instruction. Considering that instruction was of central interest in most associations, Barbosa (2016) identified the constant presence of inspectors in clubs, and many of them even occupied leadership positions in these entities, which shows that such places were a possibility among the various parts of an integrated network in favor of public instruction in the province of Paraná.

The second point refers to the fact that the trust placed in the future Brazilian generation through Pretextato’s talent was not restricted only to the boy’s merits. The text highlights the importance of the performance of his teacher, Nivaldo Teixeira Braga, then responsible for the first male chair of the public class in Curitiba and also a member of the *Club Litterario Curitybano*. The monitoring of the elementary teacher was essential for the development of that child, even if the material resources for their learning did not offer the ideal conditions. These indications lead us to reflect on what Adolfo Lamenha Lins declared in his 1876 report:

The lack of professional instruction, through teacher-formation schools, where candidates for teaching are qualified. The almost general

lack of knowledge of the disadvantages inherent in instruction, and consequently the apathy of parents, and the absence of students. The little encouragement of teachers, who do not correspond to the priesthood, of which they are invested; and the insufficiency of the means of subsistence, a constant apprehension of all civil servants. The proven uselessness of the competitions to which aspirants to the teaching profession are submitted. Incomplete inspection, or neglected in places where central inspection cannot be felt (Report, 1876, p. 42).

The president presented a discouraging situation regarding public instruction in Paraná, marked by precarious professional formation, family disinterest, absence of students, failures in supervision, ignorance of the benefits of teaching and so on. However, when observing the networks of sociabilities constituted within the scope of association, we infer that, despite the deficiencies of this system and the rhetorical insistence on the lack of resources and engagement, there were individuals committed to elementary instruction who resorted to associations as a means of complementing and providing opportunities for teaching. There was, therefore, a potential for social mobilizations in defense of instruction: sociability in associative entities, children who enjoyed these spaces and the performance of teachers committed to enabling educational practices.

The importance that was given to the formation provided by Nivaldo Braga to the student motivated us to investigate the traces left by this educator in the Paraná press, which allowed us to discover that the boy's conference at *Club Litterario Curitybano* was part of a larger project idealized by that professor. Months before Pretextato Taborda's speech, the press reported Nivaldo Braga's desire to create a library³ and organize a school fund for the 1st male chair in Curitiba:

LIBRARY and SCHOOL FUND – The distinguished teacher of this capital Mr. Nivaldo Braga, founded in the school under his charge, the imitation of what the most cultured peoples of the old and new world have done, a library and school fund. [...] This library is especially intended for the moral and intellectual improvement of boys who attend the same school, and the school fund to incur expenses with the purchase of books, paper and ink for poor students. The library is also franchised to those people who want to consult some

work through a modest remuneration that will constitute the fund of the school fund. [...] (December Nineteenth, 1877a, p. 4)

In the continuity of the matter, Nivaldo Braga was congratulated for his efforts and his determination to promote that initiative that represented “so sublime a thought” in the face of the “disbelief of many”, calling on the population to contribute to such a project. In this excerpt, we were drawn to the concern of the teacher and the supporters of the school fund to ensure the material provision for the students of the male class, especially those who were in a condition of poverty. We noted that there was, as we have already indicated in this text, a relationship between “moral and intellectual improvement”; that is, school education was not restricted to the assimilation of scientific content, but was also inseparable from the homogenization of social behaviors, supporting the configuration of a framework of civility.

In general terms, it is important to consider that the conceptions of the Brazilian elites regarding the population in the last decades of the 19th century often associated it with supposed backwardness and tendencies toward vice and violence, forming the imaginary of a “dangerous people”. According to Schueler (1997, p. 167), a correlation was built between “poor classes,” “ignorant classes” and “dangerous classes”, showing the causality between the parties. The elites tended to blame these individuals for the country’s problems, even if they had not substantially enjoyed the tools and institutions that instructed them or that allowed the continued exercise of their citizenship (Carvalho, 2014).

In the 19th century Paraná, this conception was present, as demonstrated in the report of the president of the province Adolfo Lamenha Lins, one year before the event we analyzed:

The regeneration of customs that turns men who could be useful to the family and society into criminals depends on the education of the people, who must know their rights, to rise in their own eyes, and understand the high destinies of humanity. And it is in youth, when the ground is prepared to receive the precious seed of useful knowledge, that one must provide this bread of the spirit, which must nourish and develop it. The instruction of youth requires the most care (Report, 1876, p. 42).

In such a way, disciplining, moralizing, instructing, educating and, finally, civilizing the Brazilian people became an urgent need that rejected purely welfare matrices, promoting, in its place, the transformation of customs. Poverty was understood as a stain capable of degenerating the entire social body, which is why it would need to be combated through the promotion of education and instruction of youth, creating conditions for the reformulation of popular behaviors and their referral to progress.

Schooling and the obligation of elementary education were proposed as an instrument “[...] to eradicate the conditions of misery and crime [...] that, consequently, led the child to ignorance and illiteracy” (Schueler, 1997, p. 167). Thus, the child was considered as a malleable being, possible to be modeled on a civilized adult or to corrupt such an individual, which made childcare an issue that went beyond private life, mobilizing the State and society in their instruction and education (Rizzini, 2008).

For the materialization of these projects, it was necessary for the State to guarantee the attendance of poor students in schools, which meant that, in addition to legislating on the obligation of instruction, it should develop assistance policies that ensured conditions for the learning of children. In any case, the government did not act in isolation, but invoked various segments of civil society to cooperate in the protection of underprivileged children, “[...] such as requesting donations of school materials and buildings through subscriptions, creation of school funds and municipal funds” (Veiga, 2017b, p. 1247).

With regard to the practice chosen by Nivaldo Braga to offer support to children in need and provide their moral and cognitive improvement, Luz e Anjos (2022) demonstrate that recent studies on school funds have been mostly concentrated in the 20th century, with a predominance of analyzes that focus on the First Republic and, to a lesser extent, on the Vargas Era and the democratic period prior to the 1964 coup. These studies are mainly limited to the region of Minas Gerais, with some research referring to Santa Catarina, Ceará, Mato Grosso and São Paulo⁴. In addition to the authors’ survey, it is pertinent to consider that, in the case of Paraná, the school fund was recently studied by Rodrigues (2019) in a monograph. Despite this, there are few investigations on the origin and diffusion of this practice throughout the Empire of

Brazil, although historiography recognizes this period as an initial milestone of its implementation in the country.

The authors indicate that the school funds worked as a means of ensuring the attendance and continuity of students at school by providing material resources, primarily to vulnerable students, mobilizing for this “[...] membership fees, donations and what is collected at festive events” (Luz; Anjos, 2022, p. 182). In addition to ensuring the permanence of these students in schools, it was common for the State to establish guidelines for the creation of school funds in order to encourage the presence of the population in the financing of schooling and, at the same time, reduce its responsibility for the process, sometimes placing itself as a collaborator of these initiatives. Bernardo indicates that it is possible “[...] to understand the school fund as a strategy to make the school community co-responsible for the maintenance of elementary public instruction, making it actively participate in school processes” (Bernardo, 2020, p. 180).

The responsibility of civil society was shared by the school employees themselves in the republican period, so that “[...] in addition to their professional obligations, teachers and principals began to provide necessary resources both for the school and for the children served by it [...]” (Luz; Anjos, 2022, p. 184), consolidating assistance networks inside and outside educational establishments. What we infer so far is that such a movement was not a republican exclusivity, due to the fact that the agents of instruction were already deeply involved with the maintenance of their workplaces and formation sites, with or without the support of state institutions, as demonstrated in the case of Nivaldo Braga. However, we can attribute to the Republic a more effective management than that of the Empire with regard to the regulation of school funds.

In the early days of Paraná’s political emancipation, legislation determined that families who did not keep their children in schools, except in case of proven poverty, would be penalized. Law No. 17 of September 14, 1854, in its article 14 established that the “[...] product of these fines will be exclusively applied to the aid of poor boys to receive the benefit of elementary instruction” (Miguel, Martin, 2004, p. 35). However, until then, there was no conception of a school fund. The first reference to school funds in legal provisions is found in the Organic Regulation of Public Instruction of the Province

of Paraná of 1876, whose article 170 provided that the “[...] product of fees, emoluments and fines will be collected from the Provincial treasury, and will form a reserve fund to be applied to the expenses of public instruction” (Miguel; Martin, 2004, p. 278). The text, however, did not detail what these expenses would be. A clue appears in article 171, which stipulated that “city councils should provide clothing, books and the most necessary to poor students, as well as promote and supervise the execution of the law of compulsory education”, however, without defining whether it would be under their responsibility to administer the amounts intended for elementary education.

The funds of public instruction only appeared again in Law No. 769 of December 1, 1883, which attributed to the president of the province the duty to apply fines to those who harmed school attendance, capturing a “[...] fund destined to the acquisition of clothing, books and other objects indispensable to indigent children to attend schools” (Miguel; Martin, 2004, p. 374). In the Regulation of Mandatory Education of 1883, the legal basis of Paraná brought greater clarity regarding the obtaining of resources destined to these schools, elaborating an exclusive chapter for its definition. The management was primarily the responsibility of the city councils, which could add to the participation of civil society through associations, collections, donations or even the collection of fines and debts related to the violation of the obligation to attend classes (Miguel, Martin, 2004).

In this regulation, school funds were described only as intended for the clothing of impoverished children, whose situation should be verified by the district inspectors, which demonstrates a restriction of purpose compared to the previous legislation. The insertion of the school fund in the Paraná regulations occurred in the republican period, in 1892, as shown by Rodrigues (2019) when he pointed out that, from Law No. 42 of July 12, 1892, there was a concern to ensure that the school funds operated with sources of fixed income, without relying solely on fines and donations, incorporating a revenue defined by the municipal councils and “[...] a state aid proportional to the school attendance verified in the district [...]” (Rodrigues, 2019, p. 39), thus reducing state competence in the material provision in the assistance to disadvantaged students and in the subsidy of private and nocturnal classes.

What we can conclude from the analysis of this regulation is that the idea of mobilizing – and also penalizing – civil society to sponsor public instruction existed for a long period of the 19th century, but the school fund took shape as one of these alternatives in the final decades of the Empire and was consolidated during the Republic. However, we consider it valid to infer that the implementation of this practice – that is, its dissemination, fundraising and movement of social networks – was promoted separately from the State as an autonomous initiative.

It should be noted that, although school funds fulfilled a care function aimed at underprivileged children, seeking to ensure their presence in school, this reality did not apply to Pretextato Taborda. The boy represented, before, a symbolic model, pointing out what could be achieved in terms of intellectual formation, if the teachers had adequate conditions for this. It was a public demonstration that, if success was possible in that case – even supported by the presumed genius of the student – the material provision could contribute to the school achieve other similar successes, shaping children into future citizens.

14 Under no circumstances, Pretextato was part of the impoverished social segment of the student body. Son of Joaquim Taborda Ribas and Paulina Francisca de Assis Pinto, the boy belonged to a family of landowners, ranchers and merchants, who also held public and political positions in Paraná. At the time of the events described here, his father acted as a justice of the peace in Curitiba, while his uncles, Lourenço Taborda Ribas de Andrade and Mathias Taborda Ribas, were provincial deputies for the Conservative Party, in addition to having held other representative positions throughout their careers (Alves, 2014).

The Pretextato himself had a privileged life as an adult: he married Julia dos Santos Andrade, daughter of the influential politician from Paraná, José Pereira dos Santos Andrade. He was a merchant, industrialist, councilman, state deputy and president of the Bank of the State of Paraná. Such notoriety and prestige reinforce Veiga's concept that "[...] the imagined child is intelligent with the potential to be successful in life, he/she is white and beautiful and his/her gender condition is permeated by the ongoing male reference, whether girl or boy" (Veiga, 2004, p. 78).

Thus, everything leads us to believe that Pretextato, as a descendant of the Paraná elite, endowed with the necessary means for his formation, did not need the assistance of a school fund. His role in this whole process corresponds to what we have already alluded to in his conference at *Club Litterario Curitybano*, to serve as a model student – versed in science and prepared to exercise citizenship in an educated nation – composing the representation of a childhood imagined and conceived as a paradigm of instruction and civility. He was an example of a pattern that was based not only on ideals of progress, but that reproduced the inequalities of that society “[...] creating and recreating hierarchies, differentiating poor children from those belonging to the ‘good society’” (Schueler, 1997, p. 158). In any case, following the traces of the cosmographer boy, the elementary teacher and the school fund open up new interpretative possibilities for us.

Nivaldo Braga’s library and school fund received more details in the Paraná press in the months following its inauguration. In these reports, we were able to identify two significant elements: first, Pretextato Taborda has always played a prominent role due to its cosmographic knowledge; second, the inauguration of the school fund happened simultaneously with the examinations of the students of the elementary school of Nivaldo Braga:

In the school under the responsibility of the intelligent teacher Nivaldo Braga, the final exams of the students who were prepared in several disciplines were carried out. Ten students were presented, who were fully approved and later awarded with distinction for their laudable dedication to the studies they had done. Among these, we must distinguish the name of the intelligent and skillful student Pretextato Pennafort Taborda Ribas, who at only 9 years old lectured at length on the thesis – Cosmography – in an admirable and brilliant way. [...] On this occasion, a library and a school fund was installed, founded under the auspices of the patriotic and indefatigable Mr. Dr. Ermelino de Leão, a Paraná citizen, by the respective professor Nivaldo Braga. The library already has about 300 volumes (December Nineteenth, 1877b, p. 2-3).

[...]

[...] the intelligent and well-educated student Pretextato Pennafort T. Ribas, for whose debut he was warmly applauded by the people and students present, who would see him as a victory like one of the most charming flowers of Curitiba’s youth [...] (O Paranaense, 1877a, p. 4)

The “thesis” on cosmography spoken by Pretextato, both at the inauguration of the school fund and in the subsequent presentation at *Club Litterario Curitybano*, was always remembered for its complexity and for the mastery that the boy demonstrated on the subject. It is evident that the scientific tone was part of the rhetoric adopted in these journalistic communications, demonstrating that child’s interest in the study of the stars. A sign of intelligence and politeness, capable of moving the audience and inviting them to rejoice with the young speaker. However, when we associate this conference with the infant’s elementary exams, we can deduce that it was not only a discourse on astronomy, but also the result of his elementary learning. It denoted, therefore, the exaltation of Pretextato, but also the consecration of Nivaldo Braga before society, which was built as a teacher able to introduce his student in the debates of the “civilized world”.

Pursuing these *indications*, we found other records on the examinations of male elementary school students, under the responsibility of Nivaldo Braga, carried out concomitantly with the creation of the school fund:

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EXAMS – These are the names of the students who took the final exam in the class of the 1st male chair in this capital. 1st Pretext Pennaforte T. Ribas [9 years old]. 2nd Eleuterio Moreira de Freitas [11 years old]. 3rd Liberato Antônio dos Santos [?]. 4th Godofredo Ferreira Bello [12 years old]. 5th Cezar A. de Souza Franco [13 years old]. 6th Antonio de Freitas Saldanha [?]. 7th Benedicto José Coimbra. [?] 8th Angelo de Souza Franco [?]. 9th Benedicto Eleuterio Cabral [15 years old]. 10th Rodolpho Garcia Real [?]. All were fully approved, obtaining the 1st the distinction in cosmography; the 2nd, in grammar, the 3rd, in arithmetic, the 4th, in history, the 5th, in geography, the 7th, in homeland history, the 8th, in metric system and the 10th, in religion. The examining teacher proposed, and a vote of praise was accepted, for the Pretextato boy for the progress he made in his studies, since he only had two years of class (December Nineteenth, 1877c, p. 3)⁵.

We found that the relationship between Nivaldo Braga and Pretextato Taborda was very well established in the eyes of society. The boy - probably the youngest in the class and, it seems, the one with the shortest schooling – gained notoriety in public debate as a talented prodigy for study and oratory.

Gathering the fragments collected so far and adding them to the fact that Nivaldo Braga and the examining board awarded and praised Pretextato's performance, we see the construction of a *tactic* (Certeau, 2012) of the teacher to raise support and resources for his school. The boy was deeply linked to the elementary teacher's campaign aimed at creating and obtaining resources for the school fund. He served as the "poster boy" of the endeavor: a model student, an example of what could be possible achieved through adequate material provisions – a legitimate spokesman prepared to conquer those who were interested in the advancement of public instruction in the province of Paraná. For this, Nivaldo Braga, in addition to mobilizing his model student, was committed to a specific sociability: association.

In one of the previous excerpts, the newspaper *Dezenove de Dezembro* reported that the school library, under the responsibility of Nivaldo Braga, already had 300 volumes, but it was *O Paranaense* who presented detailed reports, naming some of the donors involved in the initiative:

This library of ours, whose regulations will soon be published, already has on its shelves maps, magazines and newspapers, about 300 volumes donated by Counselor Manoel Francisco Corrêa, Dr. Ermelino de Leão, Serafim José Alves, Major Manoel Negrão, Jeronymo Gomes de Medeiros, Virgolino Barbosa and the respective founder. We are informed that Mr. Teacher Nivaldo had requested from the HE. Mr. Baron of Guarapuava a pecuniary aid for the purchase of a manual press, and as well as nurturing the desires of an agricultural school, for the realization of which we also request the help and support of the parents of families, of our municipality, as well as the government of the province (*O Paranaense*, 1877a, p. 4).

When we investigate the benefactors of the creation of the library and, consequently, of the school fund, we highlight the influence of associative networks in the provision of Nivaldo Braga's class⁶. Agostinho Ermelino de Leão, a prominent figure in these reports, was an important politician and magistrate. In addition to founding the *Museu Paranaense* the previous year, he was president of the *Club Litterario Curitybano* for two years and, in 1876, honored as honorary president. Manoel Negrão, in turn, was part of the same club, exercising in 1877 the function of first secretary – a position he also held in the Masonic Lodge *27 de Dezembro*. Virgolino Barbosawas, in reality,

Joaquim Virgolino Gomes Barbosa, partner and speaker of *Club Litterario São Joseano*, founded in 1876, to which also Libero Teixeira Braga – brother of Nivaldo Braga – was an associate and first secretary. Serafim José Alves worked as a salesman and editor of school books at the Court of Rio de Janeiro; he cooperated both with the library of Nivaldo Braga and donated 123 volumes to *Club Litterario Curitybano* that same year. Manoel Francisco Correia was among the most assiduous contributors of Paraná literary societies, recognized as a book donor to *Club Democratico Antoninense*, *Club de Leitura Porto Cimensense* and *Club Litterario Curitybano*, among others. Antônio de Sá Camargo, the Baron of Guarapuava, was also a renowned supporter of Paraná associations, offering donations of books and cash resources to various entities. Even though he did not participate in this specific initiative, his support for instruction was already notorious and, therefore, targeted by Nivaldo Braga.

When studying the organization, implementation and representation of the school fund in Minas Gerais at the beginning of the 20th century, Bernardo states that participating in the constitution of this fund, at that time, gave elements of distinction and social prestige to its taxpayers:

A speech was sent to the members of school fund in which they would be considered not only lovers of instruction, philanthropists and benefactors, but also patriots, since taking care of the education of the people would be equivalent to advocating the future of the nation. In addition to these speeches, I could see that the statutes prepared by the school fund sought to build, through its articles, the image of the partners to an idea of organization, suitability and honesty that would be transmitted to the institution itself and to the State of Minas Gerais (Bernardo, 2014, p. 137).

These discursive constructions, which articulated instruction to the idea of a national future, were also rooted in the provincial Paraná. The donations of the members of these associations to the foundation of the library and the school fund reveal the desire for recognition of these individuals as agents of progress. In this sense, association, as a manifestation of civil society, assumed a primordial role: Nivaldo Braga mobilized people who participated in the same literary circle as him, in addition to other collaborators from different networks of sociabilities.

The project of schooling and child care was intrinsically linked to the boy cosmographer and the social connections made by the elementary teacher. So much so that Nivaldo Braga's campaign had repercussions beyond the borders of Paraná. The journal *A Escola: Revista Brasileira de Educação e Ensino* (The School: Brazilian Journal of Education and Teaching), published in Rio de Janeiro, credits him with having originated the first school fund in Brazil, followed by the creation of eight other similar funds by the Empire – six in Rio de Janeiro, one in Pernambuco and another in Paraná, organized by his brother, Libero Teixeira Braga (A Escola, 1878).

In this way, association appears as a *place* (Certeau, 2012) for the development of the civilized child, acting closely, although parallel to the State – even if it had the collaboration of many of its agents. This understanding implies, as already mentioned, that the duty to ensure the instruction of the *child with the future*, viewed as the guardian of what is to come, goes beyond the provincial scope, involving different social segments in the formative process. In addition, literary and charitable associations placed childhood at the center of their actions and coexistence, reaffirming the discourses of civilization and the appreciation of teaching as a path to a common project.

Final considerations

The *signs left* by the solemnity at the Campo Largo club allowed us to investigate the participation of children in those associative places (Certeau, 2012), leading us to the boy Pretextato Taborda, to teacher Nivaldo Braga and to his school fund in the context of the Curitiba club. When analyzing the exemplarity of this event in the light of micro-history (Ginzburg, 2014), we understand such *traces* and *indications* as expressions of practices that made up the social fabric of the time. It is plausible to suppose that similar initiatives also occurred in other literary societies, considering the involvement and circulation of individuals linked to the clubs in the sponsorship of that elementary teacher.

The parade of the anonymous boy of *Club Litterario Campo Larguense* and the conference of Pretextato at *Club Litterario Curityano* establish a revealing dialogue. If in the first event, he carried an armillary sphere, – presented

as a symbol of science – in the second, he dealt precisely with the theme to which that object was linked: cosmography. In both cases, there was the display of a child representing the instruction and its potential to lead to the future, connecting them to the idea of science beyond a symbolic plane, presenting an instruction practice. This intellectual concern manifested itself through the object, materializing in an action through the civility conference.

In concrete terms, what did it mean to civilize the child? As we noted, Pretextato was able to speak about science to the public – including adults – assuming a representative social role and collaborating, from this exemplary position, in projects of assistance to the disadvantaged childhood.

Club Litterario Campo Larguense, although not deepened in this article, opens an interpretive gap to look at the artifacts that were potentially used as teaching instruments, while *Club Litterario Curityano* presented the image of a boy who may have experienced such methods, given the theme of his conference. Considering Paraná's association as a whole, we realized that childhood education was a subject on the agenda in those spaces. In addition to the representations of civilizing discourses, these events demonstrate the mobilization of civil society in favor of instruction, involving children – even as model students and components of an imagined childhood (Veiga, 2004) – in the intellectual sociabilities of the period and in the promotion of public instruction as a way of collective progress.

In view of the processes examined, we can conclude that Pretextato – a student who, most likely, had the material conditions to develop his referred “genius” – was used by his teacher as an example of the formative potential of public instruction when provided with adequate material resources, raised through practices such as the school fund. Nivaldo Braga, in this sense, acted *tactically* (Certeau, 2012), using the networks of sociabilities built in association to circumvent the shortcomings of provincial public education.

From this, we show that the educator and the individuals of his surroundings produced a narrative that related childhood, future, science and civilization – reinterpreting the social functions of adults and children (Veiga, 2017a) –, mediated by the practices adopted in the elementary public school in Curitiba, revealing that the search for adequate material provision could be achieved through initiatives such as school funds and the participation of civil society.

Notes

1. In this article, we chose to retain the original spelling of the sources in old Portuguese, understanding that this is a fundamental analytical exercise, whose preservation should be shared and discussed within the scientific community.
2. In the period in question, instruction was understood as a formation that guided the individual to school knowledge for the foundations of civic life, while education was associated with social values transmitted mainly by the family. During the last quarter of the 19th century, these concepts began to approach, tending to acquire equivalent meanings.
3. The creation of a library is a particularly relevant phenomenon to better understand the instruction of the period, especially when considering the importance of the practice of reading. However, we will leave the analysis of this initiative for another occasion, choosing to value, at this moment, the school fund.
4. In their historiographic balance, Alana Souza Luz and Juarez José Tuchinski dos Anjos used as methodology the search in databases of dissertations, theses, and scientific articles. Therefore, it is possible that more work on school funds was produced when we look at other academic productions, such as End-of-Course Papers, which are usually underestimated.
5. The ages of the boys were not in the news. Considering the relevance of this information to understand a little more who were the children and adolescents who were part of elementary instruction in that context, we searched for records of baptism, marriage and death in the Family Searchdatabase. We got some answers, while others still remain unknown.
6. The research on this network of sociabilities was carried out in journals of the Paraná press. We also used the documentary collection of the Paranaense Museum and the Department of Public Archives of Paraná. It is also worth mentioning the excellent thesis of Alessandro Cavassin Alves (2014), fundamental to understand the political relatives of Paraná during the provincial period.

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