

**PRIMARY
TEACHING
IN RIO DE JANEIRO**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649366613

Primary Teaching in Rio de Janeiro by Brazil Silvado

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Cover @ 2017

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BRAZIL SILVADO

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IN

RIO DE JANEIRO

BY

BRAZIL SILVADO

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OF THE SAME CITY, ETC.



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A. J. LAMOUREUX & Co.
79, SETE DE SETEMBRO,

1892.

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INTRODUCTION.

READER.

Desiring to render a modest service to Public Instruction in our country, giving an exact outline of it, and at the same time rendering homage to the glorious people of North America, my wife and I have undertaken the present work, destined to the Chicago Exhibition, to be realised next year.

Having passed a great part of my life in my sister's school, having exercised by taste the office of Inspector of Instruction during nearly three years (1884-1886), at the time in which this office was gratuitous, and exercising it now, remunerated, I am very happy to write a few lines about our public schools, which, although not the first in the world, are, nevertheless, worthy of attention and esteem, not only by the services they render, as also by the efforts of the teachers that direct them.

Our Public Instruction is now in a period of transition. If we compare its present state with that of ten years ago, we shall see that the difference for the better is very great, though many things are wanting to bring it up to the point it should attain.

The modern progressive movement in this respect dates from 1879. The liberty of teaching proclaimed in the decree of the 19th of April of that year, drawn up by the Liberal minister Leoncio de Carvalho, and

the ideas presented and defended by him, awoke public attention to primary, secondary and superior instruction.

In the year 1883, Souza Bandeira, an intelligent and celebrated Inspector General of Public Instruction, gave a great impulse to this movement, that, happily, has always continued to strengthen so that, when on the 15th of November 1889 the sword of Deodoro and the talent of Benjamin Constant implanted the Republic in our native country, it was understood by all that on the instruction and education of the people depended the stability of the same.

Brazilian thinkers, convinced of this truth, turned their eyes towards this great people of North America, who had practically demonstrated it, as Switzerland had done in 1848, moulding its constitution by that of North America, adopting also a great part of its educational principles, and republican France when it was forced to recognise that by *civic instruction* alone, seriously taught in its schools, it could combat the clerical and legitimist influence there directed by active hands against the Republic.

On the 24th of February 1891 we moulded our constitution by the North American, from which it differs in few points.

If, for example, our constitution has laid down the principle of the direct election of the Chief of the Executive Power, and his non re-election for the next period, while the North American determines the principle of the election of two degrees, and consents to re-election, this was due, without doubt, to the study that our constituent legislator made as to public opinion in the United States upon these two points.

And truly a better model could not be met with by our new Republic than that offered by the example of more than a hundred years of peace, order and prosperity!

The difficulties we struggle with in our administrative and political reorganisation, unhappily, have not permitted us to take also as a model of our public teaching reform everything that in these respects has been put in practice in that great nation.

Our individual initiative is as yet weak; the expansion of our local life is very limited; the municipal towns have not as yet vitality of their own; our population was accustomed to expect all from the government: — seventy years of political and administrative centralisation could give no other result!

For these powerful motives the reform of our Public Instruction, of 8th November 1890, resembles more the French type, the legislator having doubtless recognised that the North American type was not suitable for our special position, sustained as it is in that country by the high comprehension of a people that, among many others, has had a Matthew Vassar, a Peabody, and the generous benefactors of Yale College, to give hundreds of millions of dollars for the benefit of the instruction and education of the people!

This educational reform, the first promulgated after the proclamation of the Republic, began to be executed at the beginning of 1891.

By it the city of Rio de Janeiro was divided into seven districts of Instruction, each one with an Inspector representing the Inspector-General; and in relation to the plan of primary teaching the reform divided it into two degrees, creating schools of the second degree, that did not previously exist, and increasing the number of the schools of the first degree.

At the same time primary teaching of the first degree was also divided into three courses: the *elementary*, *medium*, and *superior*, and each one of these courses into two classes, every one of them having a programme, the execution of which, in normal circumstances, should be realised within a lective year.

Six years are, then, the primary course of the first degree, and the reform having begun to be executed in 1891, we have only to judge in relation to the first class of the elementary course, as the pupils that in this year had already made some progress, by the anterior programme, continued their studies by it, and by it they passed their examinations, with the simple addition of what it was possible to teach them of the new programme.

The observations that, in this work, we are about to make, and that constitute the technical part of it, refer, then, principally to the studies of this first class of the elementary course, because this class, by its programme, is the basis of the primary course; but we will also add a few observations relative to the second class.

Our district possesses twenty-one primary schools of the first degree, ten being for boys and eleven for girls; two municipal schools for both sexes, and thirty private establishments of instruction, the whole giving a school population of nearly four thousand children.

Our primary public schools of the first degree for girls receive boys up to eight years of age. We shall only treat of the teaching in the primary schools of the first degree, because there are no schools of the second degree in this district.

Private teaching is completely free, being subject only to official inspection as to morality, hygiene and statistics.

This outline will consist of three parts :

I. Programmes of the first, and of the second class of the elementary course ;

II. Observations upon the execution of these programmes, in relation to each one of the subjects of which they are composed ;

III. *Desiderata* of our primary public teaching.

Such will be our work. If the manner in which we are about to fulfill our task deserves benevolence in the great country, where Longfellow composed his sweet verses, where Washington and Lincoln showed to the world the fellowship of great souls with great hearts, of great intelligences with great characters, we shall be most happy, receiving with this benevolence our greatest recompense.

