

ARTICLE

METHOD OF GLOBAL LITERACY THROUGH SHORT STORIES AND
THE ROLE OF READING AS A RENEWAL OF PRACTICE AND
PEDAGOGICAL MODERNITY (1918-1938)

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to identify representations about the global method of literacy through short stories, analyzing the role of reading in the process of renewal of teaching practices and the establishment of pedagogical modernity. Taking the newspaper ‘Gazeta do Norte’ as a document source, we found that the city of Montes Claros, Minas Gerais, joined the Francisco Campos Reform (1927-1928) which imposed the global method of short stories to teach how to read and write based on the understanding of texts not only in the memorization of linguistic units. The disseminated speeches also indicate that reading teaching should enable research, reflection and language use in different communicative situations.

Keywords: Global method of short stories; Comprehensive Reading; Modern teaching; Literacy practices.

MÉTODO DE ALFABETIZAÇÃO GLOBAL DE CONTOS E O PAPEL DA LEITURA COMO RENOVAÇÃO
DAS PRÁTICAS E MODERNIDADE PEDAGÓGICA (1918-1938)

RESUMO: O artigo tem por objetivo identificar representações sobre o método de alfabetização global de contos, analisando o papel da leitura no processo de renovação das práticas de ensino e na instauração da modernidade. Tomando o jornal Gazeta do Norte como fonte documental,

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constatou-se que a cidade de Montes Claros-MG fez adesão à Reforma Francisco Campos (1927-1928), que impôs o método global de contos para alfabetizar com base na compreensão dos textos e não apenas na memorização de unidades linguísticas. Os discursos disseminados ainda indicam que o ensino da leitura deveria possibilitar a pesquisa, a reflexão e o uso da linguagem em diferentes situações comunicativas.

Palavras-chave: Método global de contos; Leitura compreensiva; Modernidade pedagógica; Práticas alfabetizadoras.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article¹ discusses facets of the history of education in the city of Montes Claros, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil, and aims to identify representations about the method of global literacy of short stories, analyzing the role of reading in the process of renewal of teaching practices and in the establishment of modernity.

The research is in the scope of Cultural History, in the perspective proposed by Chartier (1990) who understands historiography as a process by which we can reconstitute the way in which a given social reality is built, thought and given to read in different places and moments. For the author, cultural history is the history of representations – considered as generating matrices of discourses and practices, representations that are not the truth, but what the subject thinks is real or what he would like it to be.

For this orientation, we made a historical incursion into the city of Montes Claros, not for the belief in real events, but for the search of representations, in order to map meanings and appropriations that constituted a tangle of actions and practices, attitudes and gestures. As documental sources, we used the newspaper ‘Gazeta do Norte’, a periodical publication of Montes Claros that circulated between the years of 1918 and 1962. Launched in Montes Claros by the lawyer José Thomaz de Oliveira, in July, 1918, on occasion of the city’s 39th anniversary, the newspaper ‘Gazeta do Norte’ identified itself as an “independent, literary and weekly newspaper” and enabled to capture local specificities, map out occurrences in the northern region of Minas Gerais, and discuss knowledge.

Discussing newspapers as a documental source, Zicman (1985, p. 90) shows that their daily periodicity presents an advantage by transforming them into “archives of everyday life” recording the memory of everyday life and enabling a chronology of facts. Therefore, the newspaper suffers pressure to seek and publicize

everyday occurrences. Possibly due to its weekly periodicity, 'Gazeta do Norte' did not feel the imperative need to see events and to be up to date. Thus, its informative aspect does not come first to prioritize the discussion of themes and issues of its time, aiming at forming public opinion, collaborating with the construction of a new mentality, instituting progress and modernity by the dissemination of ideas. The published articles addressed several themes, mainly political, economic and social issues. However, the newspaper also gave great visibility to education, publishing cultural and educational issues. Specifically in relation to education and instruction, in the period taken as reference for the study (1918-1938), we identified 178 articles of an informative or opinion-forming nature; 71 publications in which the events of the Official Normal School of Montes Claros were produced as news; 30 medical or pedagogical conferences, transcribed in full or in summary form; 19 pedagogical subjects, discussing concepts and educational conceptions, methodologies and teaching practices. About two thirds of these publications were highlighted on the front page, indicating the relevance of the education issue for the newspaper.

In our study, to extend the analysis of reality and to capture the synchrony of the local movement with broader occurrences, as complementary sources, we used 'Revista do Ensino' - official publication of the Minas Gerais government created in 1925 with the purpose of disseminating renovating ideals.

As a temporal cut, we worked from 1918 to 1938 - an option guided by local issues and referenced by events linked to Montes Claros. Specifically, the temporal cut is limited by the year of the beginning of the newspaper 'Gazeta do Norte' - taken as the study object and the main documental source - and the year that 'Escola Normal Oficial de Montes Claros' (Official Normal School of Montes Claros) closed and was responsible for influencing on dissemination of ideas and fed the newspaper's publications. Although the cut took into account local specificities, we are not unaware of the political, social, economic and cultural forces that moved the Brazilian society. The decades of 1920-30 constitute a unique historical time in which proposals for the modernization of Brazil were conceived and implemented in which Montes Claros imagined for itself an ideal of the future and sought to insert itself in this modern context.

In the global context, it is worth pointing that, through European and North American influence, a renewal process was proposed by the New School movement which establishes a movement of change in

educational and practiced discourses. In Brazil, the need to educate the population has integrated discourses disseminated since the end of the nineteenth century, once it is considered a condition for modernity, progress and individual and social development. At the state level, Minas Gerais redefined its educational policy and implemented the Francisco Campos Reform in 1927-28, adopting the New School principles as a sense of the intended renewal. In this scenario of changes, the Official Normal School of Montes Claros was a place of appropriation of this knowledge and production of representations and educational ideals, finding in the newspaper 'Gazeta do Norte' a privileged space for its circulation, aiming to modernize the city and favor its development. That is, the newspaper presents itself as a space of public opinion, capable of amplifying the ability to be the voice of Montes Claros intellectuals; while the Normal School becomes a reference and inspiration for the production of modern conceptions and ideas aimed at changing mentalities and sociabilities.

According to Graff (1997), since the first half of the 19th century, literacy and reading and writing skills have become the foundation and inspiration for changes in Western cultures. For these societies, and even today, education and schooling were determinants for development, considering reading and writing the ability to produce individual and social impacts. Through this understanding, literacy and the social use of reading and writing presented themselves as the engine of change in its users, from a cognitive, political, economic, social and cultural point of view; and for societies it would be considered a feature of modernity, a condition for civilization and progress.

When discussing reading practices, Hebrard (1996) considers that, from the proposals for reform in the Century of Lights to the nineteenth-century school expansions, all educational policies were fully convinced that the teaching of reading was a means of transforming values and habits of social groups. For the author, the belief was that the book lends itself to rituals of social, familiar, or wider cohesion, and may challenge the reader and interfere with their formation (HÉBRARD, 1996). By the same logic, Certeau (1998) affirms that "the idea of a society production by a 'scriptural' system did not cease to have as a corollary the conviction that, with more or less resistance, the public is shaped by the writing (verbal or iconic), "allowing the ideas of the text to be printed on the reader (1998, p.261 - Emphasis of the author).

Because of this positive representation of the individual and

social benefits provided by reading and writing skills, the defense of schooling is a true banner assumed by different societies. We place the city of Montes Claros and its search for modernity and development in this context.

In this article, we first discuss the defenses in favor of adopting the global method of short stories within the scope of the New School. In the next section, we discuss the need to produce teaching materials guided by the analytical approach as a condition for changes in literacy practices. In the third section, reading is the theme for a resource for learning and acquiring knowledge for a concern with the contextualized teaching of language, linked to the interests and expressive needs of the students which included reading, orality and also writing. In the fourth section, books and the story reading are taken as an object of discussion by representations that have the desire, interest and pleasure of the child as propulsive springs of activity and the search for books, also signaling for the interdiction of books which are inadequate for children education.

2. THE DEFENSE OF THE GLOBAL METHOD OF SHORT STORIES IN THE SCOPE OF THE NEW SCHOOL

In the context of the 1920s and 1930s, the adoption of New School principles represented pedagogical modernity. According to Lourenço Filho (1978), the expression New School does not refer to a type of school, but to a set of principles that aimed at the review of traditional forms of teaching. Although disseminated in Brazil in the first decades of the twentieth century, the New School movement originated in the last years of the nineteenth century - a time when educators from various countries discuss educational problems trying to solve them by applying the recent discoveries of science and the first “new schools” emerge in Europe as private educational institutions (LOURENÇO FILHO, 1978).

In Minas Gerais, the adoption of principles of the New School was institutionalized by the Francisco Campos Reform (1927-1928), implemented by the Regulation of Primary Education (Decree-law 7,970, October 15, 1927) and complemented by the Regulation of Normal Education (Decree-law 5,162, January 20, 1928) and by the Primary Education Programs (Decree-law 8,094, January 20, 1928). According to Frade and Maciel (2006), in order for the implementation of the reform to be viable the Training School was created in Belo

Horizonte, in addition to 21 other official normal schools in the countryside of Minas Gerais; courses and lectures were promoted, school libraries were open and the promotion of the Teaching Magazine to disseminate pedagogical innovations was intensified.

Still according to the authors, the Francisco Campos Reform marked disputes by methods of literacy and interfered in the teaching process developed in Minas Gerais schools. The reform proposal was comprehensive and had methodological innovation as its axis and produced a paradigm change in relation to reading and writing learning, denying the synthetic methods and prescribing the adoption of the global literacy method of short stories. For this reason, the year of 1927 is considered a landmark of change for teaching and for the history of literacy in Minas (FRADE and MACIEL, 2006).

The magazine 'Revista do Ensino' as an official organ of the Minas Gerais government responsible for the dissemination of reforming purposes in different articles has put these debates around methods in circulation. Still in 1928, Júlio de Oliveira defended literacy by Decroly's ideo-visual method which started from the sentence and was based on the exploitation of the ideas contained in the text and aimed at the formation of concepts in the child's spirit. Being an 'ideological method', it should not be confused with the method of 'phrasing', because to get the student to "memorize a phrase or sentence and then decompose it into words and syllables is not the same as forming ideas to express them later. And it is important to select coherent texts and work with the present meanings (OLIVEIRA, 1928, p. 100).

In 1929, Firmino Costa, Technical Director of the Application Course of the Model Normal School of Belo Horizonte, defends the method of literacy idealized by Decroly, denominated 'ideo-visual because the graphic image is always closely linked to the scene or to the object; global, because it presents the whole'. In addition to favoring the understanding of the contents presented in the text and not merely the deciphering of the code, the ideo-visual method was considered more adequate to the child's thought and perception process which was globalizing (COSTA, 1929, p. 44).

In defense of the global method of short stories, Lucia Schimidt Monteiro emphasizes its advantages, already 'scientifically demonstrated', emphasizing that the synthetic methods produced the memorization of fragments and a mechanical reading of words opposed to intelligent reading and understanding of texts (MONTEIRO, 1930a, p.48).

In the context of Montes Claros, a similar discussion occurred

some years later, in 1933, when the newspaper ‘Gazeta do Norte’ and the local Normal School began to defend literacy by the global method of short stories understood as more adequate to the acquisition of expected skills of reading and writing of modern citizens. In prescribing the use of analytical approaches, ‘Gazeta do Norte’ rejects synthetic methods and signals that the proposed new methodology is a mode of teaching that has understanding as basis starting from the word or from larger units to systematize literacy. In an article published by the newspaper, Alberto Conte emphasizes the importance of teaching methods whose value is not mediated by the amount of knowledge they allowed to transmit but by their educational coefficient.

The syntactic method of teaching reading, for example, is perhaps faster than the analytical method and this in non-globalized teaching is faster than learning to read in globalized teaching. But what does it matter, if the latter is the more educational, what else develops and shapes the spirit? (CONTE, 1933, p.22).

The defense of the quality of literacy had already been discussed by ‘Revista do Ensino’ in 1930, when Lúcia Schimidt Monteiro addressed the supposedly greater efficiency of synthetic methods, counter posing the argument of speed with that of the superiority of learning by the global method of short stories.

The global method, as it is scientifically demonstrated, is superior to the phonetic one - Experiences carried out by Germans and North Americans demonstrated that children have syncretic perception of things - It is certain that the phonetic process will give in the first three months a seemingly superior result to the global one but in fact inferior as has been surely verified (MONTEIRO, 1930a, p. 48).

By this logic, the adequate choice of the literacy method would bring consequences for learning reading and for the entire formation of the student. In 1933, an article by Helena Santos, student of the Application Course of the Official Normal School of Montes Claros reaffirms the supremacy of the global method, because it is consistent with the processes of mental organization, action and expression of the child.

“The child acts and expresses by syntheses”. Thus, it has been concluded that reading should accompany such structures or syntheses to be taught by the global process. Through this teaching, two purposes must be observed; an intrinsic one, characteristic of reading, which consists in endowing the student with the mechanism of graphical signatures, and another extrinsic proper to education, which is the formation of reading habits for the acquisition of experiences related to all teaching activities (SANTOS, 1933, p. 01 - emphases in the original).

The student believes that literacy should not be confined to deciphering, but should enable a comprehensive reading, in which the activity of reading texts favors access to other school knowledge. This is a position that reveals conceptions of the time and was discussed

by 'Revista do Ensino', in 1930. For the teacher Lucia Schimidt Monteiro, the acquisition of reading constituted an important tool for the learning of school knowledge:

The school needs to teach and first of all make reading a habit for the students, use it as an instrument for the acquisition of experiences. The first two or three weeks of schooling should be filled with exercises and activities to convince students of the need to learn how to read (MONTEIRO, 1930a, p.48).

Still in defense of the global method of short stories in 1931, 'Revista do Ensino' shows the disadvantages of synthetic methods claiming that they do not put emphasis on interpretation, which is the main attitude required in the global method. They do not favor the anticipations of ideas and do not arouse the interest for reading. And this was an issue that divided opinions, opposing proponents of synthetic methods and global analytical for short stories.

3. THE PRODUCTION OF GLOBAL PRE-BOOKS AS A CONDITION FOR THE EDUCATION RENEWAL

In the previous section we showed that in disputes over literacy methods, two basic questions guided the positioning. On the one hand, the apparent greater rapidity in literacy was the advantage attributed to synthetic methods; on the other hand, the integral education and the possibility of understanding texts, from the beginning of the learning process of reading, pointed to the supremacy of the global method of short stories. However, against the change and in favor of the permanence of the synthetic literacy processes, there was another element that generated difficulties: teachers did not master the steps for applying the global method, they had to tread unknown paths and give up knowledge already built in practice. Until then, in their literacy practices teachers used the synthetic booklets, which had been introduced in Brazil since the nineteenth century, whose methodology was widely known.

Discussing the context of implementation of the Francisco Campos Reform in Minas Gerais, Frade and Maciel (2006) state that the adoption of the global analytical method of short stories brought insecurity among teachers. The main obstacle was the lack of pedagogical support, because teachers were forced to adopt a methodological proposal for which they were not prepared and did not have didactic material. Teachers who were accustomed to use booklets suddenly found themselves without pedagogical support to teach their classes.

Still according to the authors, in order to meet the demands

and criticisms of the teachers and guarding against the dissatisfaction with the course of the reform, the Training School promoted a contest among its students. The school was created in 1929 to form multipliers of methodologies and spread the ideas of renewal and the contest organized by Lúcia Casassanta was inserted in this context and aimed at the production of textbooks that followed the theoretical and methodological assumptions of the global method of short stories. This new didactic production was named 'pre-book' and had the same purpose as the synthetic booklets and was tested in the Demonstration Classes of the Training School in Belo Horizonte. Some of the productions of the normalists being educated became an editorial success as the case of Anita Fonseca's book *O livro de Lili*, by Alaíde Lisboa de Oliveira, *Bonequinho Doce* and *A Pituchinha*, by Marieta Leite (FRADE, MACIEL, 2006).

In Montes Claros, to verify if the teachers resisted the adoption of the global method of short stories by the lack of didactic material was not possible. However, in 1933, 'Gazeta do Norte' published an article that explained the meaning and importance of the pre-book. In order to value the teaching of reading as a global experience, Helena Santos, a student of the Normal School Application Course, defended the need for special care in the elaboration of this reading teaching material.

The Pre-book which we make some observations, is constituted by the lessons organized by the teacher for the time corresponding to the first months of the school year in the classes of illiterates. It is composed of short stories, in number of three or more, contributing to the recognition of all the words that compose it (SANTOS, 1933, p. 01).

The main concern was for the child to learn the written code by understanding the meanings in the texts and by the overall recognition of the words. Hence the importance of short and illustrated stories that facilitated the reconstitution and interpretation of ideas whose work would be complemented by games and cards for the identification of linguistic elements and the reconstitution of words, phrases and text.

Once organized, these stories which are to be broadly illustrated with colored and dynamic engravings, suggestive and dramatizable engravings, the material will be completed with cards related to stories, phrases, words, syllables for recognition and reconstitution games (SANTOS, 1933, p.01).

In order to fulfill the function of fostering the overall development of the child, the teacher could not dedicate the time of class exclusively to the activities for literacy, but integrate them to

other contents provided by the school curriculum.

Generally, when preparing the Pre-book, the teacher is concerned with reading in an exclusive way, forgetting that teaching is now done in total situation and globally. During class she occupies time with stories, the writing of words and the drawing of pictures, completely changing her subject when she remembers that the education of the student requires experiences related to other subjects of the program. In this case she feels insurmountable difficulties and uses the process of occupying the first months of the year only with reading, writing and drawing (SANTOS, 1933, p.01)

From this view, the time of literacy should be linked to other teaching activities and not be a cut in the process of education, but inserted in the curriculum. The material used to teach reading should serve to establish associations among the contents and interconnect the school experiences. The stories were not merely a support for deciphering the written code, but understood as educational resources, meaningful texts for reading. Reading should not be understood as an end, but as a means, a strategy that would favor the experience and the acquisition of new knowledge. Teaching reading as an end in itself was considered a serious defect in pedagogy.

How can we correct this defect? Making sure that all the teaching is global and comprehends all curriculum subjects; choosing stories and pictures to the learning of a greater number of subjects; dividing the time of classes so that other subjects are contemplated and not only language, writing and drawing (SANTOS, 1933, p. 01).

The teaching activity should be adapted to the reading demands. The act of reading implied anticipating senses and understanding ideas after reading. The teacher should use pictures as support to understand ideas and interpretation of texts in a global way.

There is in the Pre-book in general a whole that contains an idea from which the child goes to the parts. In this way the comprehension of the whole must precede the reading. The anticipation of idea is made by two images: one illustrative provoked by the picture, another significant by the comprehension of the frame. This group is what forms the global process of reading which must be in a total situation, that is, by giving in to all the psychological forces that give activity and action to thought (SANTOS, 1933, p. 01).

Through this discourse, we can perceive the importance attributed to the content, the illustrations, the meanings conveyed by the texts and their understanding by the students. Being an activity which is a means, it was not enough to learn to read, reading should be presented as a necessary tool for learning other contents. That is, at the same time that the student learned to decipher, the student would understand the

texts and acquire new knowledge by reading stories and pictures.

Decipherment and meaning were central to these discussions of literacy methods and according to Frade (2004), the materialization of this polarization revolved around two models of books: the synthetic booklets focused on deciphering and the global pre-books that emphasized understanding. However, for the author, the global teaching method had to grant decryption, even when this process did not appear clearly in the body of the books which were apparently only for reading.

According to Frade (2004), the method definitions extrapolate framing and materialization in textbook support. However, a close link between book and method is easily perceived in the history of Brazilian literacy, where the method is inscribed in the activities, in which the book represents the way of doing. That is, methods are perceived and understood in their book materialization and most of the activities developed in the classroom are suggested by the authors of these books (FRADE, 2004). Therefore, in taking the booklet as a basis for literacy, teachers did not have to understand the logic of method organization nor did they plan a didactic sequence to be developed in class. In practice, to follow the activities proposed in the book was enough making adjustments to the students' interests.

Thus, to understand the insecurity is not difficult, the possible resistances as well as the concern of the Training School to produce and test literacy books guided by the global method. From the same perspective, we also understand the concerns of the newspaper 'Gazeta do Norte' which through its educational mission guided primary teachers in the elaboration and use of global pre-books. The critics of the Normalists in Montes Claros were addressed to the literacy practices developed in primary schools, centered in the decipherment and tracing of letters, disarticulated of the understanding of the texts and the subjects of the curriculum. We can also understand the guidelines on global literacy so that teachers could select illustrations and texts, produce their pre-book for teaching reading and supplementary material for linguistic analysis.

It was more convenient for the teachers to teach with synthetic methods, not only because they mastered the methodology and had already produced pedagogical knowledge, but because of the possibility of using the booklets and having the book as the basis for organizing their classes. Concerning the use of textbooks, Anne Marie Chartier considers that "reading manuals generally program a collective pedagogy through a single progression whose advantage is to make the class a working community." This is because all students do the same readings and activities, which become a shared experience and

constitute a memory of the group (CHARTIER, 2007: 156). In this direction, Frade (2004) considers that the textbook can be considered an organizational device that goes beyond the contents of subjects and can allow the homogenization and individualization by a process in which the school teaches everybody at the same time as if to one.

In the context of the Francisco Campos Reform, the change was not restricted to the adoption of global methods but also to the need to revise the purposes that reading assumed for the reader. It was not enough to change the initial orientation of teaching, to stop focusing the syllable, the letter or the sound as the starting point of teaching and begin to consider the word, the phrase, the story or the anecdote. Rather than changing the approach axis of the written code, a change in the whole process of teaching was necessary focusing on the ideas, the meanings inscribed in the linguistic units taken as reference. Not only was the method of teaching questioned but the purpose of teaching reading was at stake.

4. READING AS A RESOURCE FOR LEARNING AND ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE

In Montes Claros, we noticed that since the late 1920s, ‘Gazeta do Norte’ and the local Normal School refined the discussions about literacy, which was not confined to mere literacy. In the 1930s, New School ideals defined a new scenario, with expanded functions attributed to teaching which should be contextualized in situations involving the use of oral language, reading and writing. Due to the displacements, it became necessary to consider language as an object of teaching and an instrument for acquiring knowledge and expressing ideas. For Idoleta Maciel, student of the Application Course of the Normal School of Montes Claros, “the language is in double relation with the educative work. On the one hand it is used continuously in every social discipline of the school and on the other hand it is a special object of study” (MACIEL, 1933, page 02).

According to Helena Santos, also a student of the Application Course, the new functions attributed to language correspond to a new way of teaching. Reading started to be understood as a technique for deciphering graphic signals and a mechanism for acquiring and transmitting knowledge and experiences, a resource for research and investigation.

The purpose of reading learning is to provide the individual through graphic signs, with a technique or mechanism for acquiring and transmitting knowledge with the aim of creating investigation and research habits through the use of

books. These are the objectives, moving away from which the teacher fails to give to this important subject the character that really must have. In the processes of investigation reading aids the student in the acquisition of new knowledge, especially in relation to the other subjects of the curriculum being necessary to use this knowledge for a good understanding of its value by the student (SANTOS, 1933, p. 01).

This extension of the senses attributed to the learning of reading and writing was part of the renewal of ideas of the time and had already been dealt by 'Revista do Ensino' since 1930 by José Raymundo Netto, Technical Assistant of Teaching. For him, the United States had innovated its teaching, expanding the curricula destined to the popular classes beyond reading, writing and counting and Brazil was already moving in the same direction. In his words:

Despite the disbelief or routine, we begin to view the same road taken by the United States 40 or 50 years ago; we are at the beginning of the journey, it is quite certain, and we have before us great obstacles to overcome; but it is also certain that the innovative movement takes shape and is gaining heart, day by day (RAYMUNDO NETTO, 1930, p.4).

In the 1930s, the debate already indicated that literacy itself was not enough. To develop abilities of access to the world of writing, comprehension of texts, reflection on the content and acquisition of knowledge was necessary. Aiming to change the methodologies of reading teaching in the year of 1933, 'Revista do Ensino' publishes an article by Levindo Lambert which discusses the teaching of singing in primary schools, emphasizing that the act of singing should be preceded by the understanding of the lyrics of the song. Criticizing the teaching of singing, the teacher's glance does not focus on the student's musical skills, but rather on reading and understanding the text. Thus, the teacher proposes a work in which singing was preceded by interpreting and explaining the content and the form of the text so that children would know what they were singing (LAMBERT, 1933, p. 30).

Still in 1933, the teaching of reading is highlighted again as an important element for children's education and 'Revista do Ensino' hoped that schools would develop actions of wide reading publicity, creation of libraries and improvement of the existing ones (REVISTA DO ENSINO, 1933). Again in 1933, Adherbal Alvarenga affirms the need to develop more refined reading skills. The teacher considers that "one of the secrets of knowing is to read efficiently. Reading in a hurry is like a quick meal, could only be indigestible but never assimilated" (ALVARENGA, 1933, p.64).

In Montes Claros, the articles published by ‘Gazeta do Norte’ show that reading should be a research and investigation activity. Therefore, the choice of texts should enable an expressive and reflective work with language. Idoleta Maciel, student of the Normal School Application Course affirms:

Nothing could be achieved with theoretical acquisitions and abstract rules. The intimate contact with good dictions and good texts in all school activities, the practice directed by the reflexive concern of expressing oneself clearly and beautifully can lead to magnificent results in language learning, the child to be educated (MACIEL, 1933, p. 02).

Teaching reading was necessary but interpretation of texts and the development of language had to be considered the guiding principle of school activity. Exercising and refining the ability of reflection could not be limited to Portuguese classes, nor could it be thought of as a mechanical skill training activity.

Every subject is a subject of language and teachers should in any class, seek to improve and improve their students’ language, however, not leaving the main purpose for the secondary purpose. Obeying these considerations more or less is the way the language teaching must be done. Learning a language is not simply passing on thoughts. Comprehending is the main and basic task of this teaching, thus eliminating psittacism (MACIEL, 1933, p. 02).

These positions identified in Montes Claros had already been discussed in ‘Revista do Ensino’, indicating that language should be worked in situations of use and be an expressive need of children. In 1930, Lucia Schmidt Monteiro points “the need to extend the language to all the subjects, not to be the exclusive object of the language class” (MONTEIRO, 1930b, p. 47). The school should create opportunities for students to use their knowledge: during the presentation of ideas, in conversation, in argumentation and discussion about subjects of their interest; in “frequent and numerous opportunities for the children to clearly express their thoughts; in the “free manifestation of thoughts, questioning them above all, asking their opinion, provoking discussions among them, talking to them at length about matters of their interest”. Only by this approach will children “make use of the language and learn to think about things and clearly express their opinions, supporting them with courage, explaining them firmly.” It was hoped that children would develop their capacity of expression, that school would allow them to speak “abundantly, not disturbing them with corrections all the time but noting the defects and errors in order to correct them later” (REVISTA DO ENSINO, 1930a, p. 27-28).

This concern with the contextualized teaching of language, linked to the interests and expressive needs of students, included reading, orality and also writing. In 1930, 'Revista do Ensino' argued that the writing of school compositions could not become an ordeal for the children who were distressed in search of issues to write about. The article indicates the need to give meaning to the act of writing, to associate writing with the oral uses of language and to avoid that the compositions became mere school obligation. Thus, the magazine recommends the writing of contextualized diaries of the children's experience, with record of "experiences, adventures and setbacks of their daily life"; "Every exercise of language must therefore be, above all, an exercise of thought and a spoken exercise" (REVISTA DO ENSINO, 1930b, p. 9-11). The magazine also defended the need to break with verbalism and mechanical teaching, transforming the school into a work space, in which the student would learn through his action (REVISTA DO ENSINO, 1930c, p.12).

Reaffirming language as an instrument of communication in 1933, Abgar Renault considers that "there will be no exaggeration in affirming that a class - whatever subject it may be - must be above all a model, if not a masterpiece of expression". The teacher still considers that the study of grammar should occur in the context of language use (RENAULT, 1933, pp. 15-16).

In Montes Claros, similar representations were identified which were disseminated by the newspaper 'Gazeta do Norte'. For Idoleta Maciel, a student of the Normal School Application Course, the child's vocabulary was "acquired at home and sometimes very influenced by knowledge which needed to be expanded to become "precise and clear ". However, "this increase should not be made through lists of words, because those which have no current use in life are easily forgotten" (MACIEL, 1933, p. 02).

In the conceptions of Jenny Canella, also a student of the Normal School Application Course, it was the school's responsibility to redirect knowledge, to consider the experiences and linguistic knowledge of the child, to correct them, to adjust them and to order them. "The child is not going to learn a different language, a new language; the child is going to be re-directed by the teacher in order to correct, adjust and order the verbal experience he brings from home"(CANELLA, 1933, p.1).

The articles with educational mission published by 'Gazeta do Norte' aimed to produce changes in reading practices at school giving emphasis on interest as a resource to mobilize the child's activity. They are pedagogical conceptions that conceived the desire as a

driving force more powerful than coercion and imposition. Interest that should be used in all school activities, including working with oral language, knowledge of language, writing and reading. It would be up to the school to renew teaching methods, so that language could be used as mediation, an instrument of expression, but also considered a systematic object of teaching. By appropriating ideas from its time and believing in the power of reflexive reading, 'Gazeta do Norte' considered important to change teaching methods and resources in order to ensure the formation of readers and to produce changes in the uses of reading.

5. BOOKS AND STORY READING AS MEDIATION AND INTERDICTION IN TEACHING

As discussed previously, the renewal of reading teaching practices was a prerequisite for ensuring literacy and inclusion of learners in the world of written culture. Concerning this belief in the power of reading, Hébrard (1996) considers that all literacy and reading policies have an unshakable pedagogical optimism: "they know only one universal modality of reading, that through its transparency allows the book, pure message, to transform the soft wax that we imagine to be the reader" (1996, p. 36). However, according to the author, we should consider that any attempt at education through writing can be diverted from its ends, either because social groups dominate through practices of writing, or because knowing how to read leads to 'bad readings' (HÉBRARD, 1996).

The pedagogical modernity proposed by the New School movement reaffirms this belief in the power of books and reading. According to Vidal (2000), in the New School context, reading assumes a prominent role in the intellectual education of learners - from simple depository of universal culture, the book is seen as a source of experience.

In the representations disseminated by the New School, the desire, the interest and the pleasure of the child are understood as springs propelling the activity and the search for books. In the New School discourses, reading was essential, given the educational potential of books and the possibility of the child's interest who, finding pleasure would be involved with the text, independent of impositions or monitoring, becoming a reader of different types and textual genres. According to Vidal (2001):

The New School discourse was not concerned only to standardize the book, paying attention to its material aspect and of content. An explosion of sayings

about reading pointed to a new sensitivity. Pleasant reading, often identified with literature could be rediscovered at work and at school. Having abolished the textbook to which the schoolchildren were enslaved, a new pleasure for reading would awaken in the student: the intellectual adventure. A plurality of texts was offered for discovery (VIDAL, 2001, pp. 207-208).

In these representations the belief was implicit in the ability of books to change behaviors by reaching the reader's heart through sensitivity, emotion, involvement with texts and stories. And therein lay the "danger of reading", since not all books were considered suitable for readers in formation.

In Montes Claros, by associating with the local Normal School and adhering to the New School movement, 'Gazeta do Norte' included books and literary reading as a topic of discussion. In the newspaper's publications, the two strands of understanding discussed by Hebrard (1996) were considered: they revealed an unwavering belief in the power of reading and also a discussion of a possible misuse and negative influences of books and stories.

Still in 1925, 'Gazeta do Norte' argued that mothers should assume their role not only as "physical mothers but also as moral mothers" - a task that required available time for the children in order to tell them uplifting stories, their souls and hearts through reading.

We sure have to spend a few minutes from the day from our tasks and duties that we have in our routines to improve our children's souls and hearts, if we take some moments to read in some vague hours, some edifying story, chosen short stories to our children, then making comments and explanations, we will see how surprising the results can be in a short time. Let us remember the time of our childhood, the sublime charm that we found in those hours of sweet intimacy, of eagerness with which we heard the beautiful stories that grandmother, auntie or old black nanny told us. Who would not preserve until death the sweet memories of this unforgettable moment?! Instead of letting our little children loose in the streets, in the foot-ball field, the garden, God knows where else, why do not we gather them all around to instruct them and entertain them with useful stories and tales? (JORNAL GAZETA DO NORTE, 1925, p.1).

From the perspective shown, reading was understood as a social practice, also oriented toward non-school purposes. The mother, the author of the article, perceived reading as technology and mediation possibility through which one could reach certain ends, to which she agreed and for which he presented defense arguments. Imbued with representations circulating at that time, the mother prescribed new uses for the book and defended the transformation of children's behavior by reading. Books and reading constituted the means to produce a new sociability, withdrawing children from

the pernicious street space to insert them into the domestic space controlled by the educator-mother.

Analyzing these proposed practices, we realized that the attentions of the educator-mother did not focus only on the choice of uplifting books, but there was a prescriptive concern about ways of reading. The act of reading should be followed by comments and explanations, which would guide the understanding of the child, guiding his eyes and ensuring the positive effects of the stories. By suggesting that mothers read to their children, the author of the article generalizes and universalizes the conditions that enabled her to become a reader, attributing to others the same conditions of becoming mediators.

When we analyze the proposal to comment on the stories that are read, we can perceive a concern with the non-transparency in the relationship of the reader with the texts. By understanding that the text is registered differently to its readers, the subject indicated reading strategies that sought to impose an orthodoxy of the text and to neutralize the freedom of the reader. Suggesting that the mother readers explain the text, the intention was to control interpretation, ensuring that the meanings produced by the children were equivalent to the meanings intended by the adult readers.

This is because the diversity of meanings produced for a text depends on the readers' skills, expectations and dispositions, but they also depend on how readers read the texts. "Gazeta do Norte" understood reading not only as "listening to thereader", using Chartier (1990, p. 124). The author of the article published by the newspaper, the mother, understood that when the child reader listened was not passive in this activity, producing meanings that needed to be controlled. The mediator reader proposed was not a text repeater and the reading practice suggested gets close to the school readings and are prescriptive that aim to instill values and "incorporate necessary and convenient gestures on persons" (CHARTIER, 1990, p. 135).

In Montes Claros, in 1930, the newspaper 'Folha do Norte' states that the transformative possibilities of man by reading: "Just as the body grows by food, the spirit, the feeling, and the will grow and thrive by reading." And then, "in the book or in the booklet, in the magazine or in the newspaper, how often the intelligence, still embryonic or darkened, acquires a life of light, of feeling and of faith that marvels us." According to the newspaper, reading was capable of transforming the reader - by "inoculating himself deep inside the psychological being, making him different, modifying it, improving it, and ultimately making him so many times! - a hero or a saint. We may consider a second creation"(JORNAL FOLHA DO NORTE, 1930, p.2).

These representations show the danger inscribed in reading and in the books. Because it is a facet of the renewal proposed by the New School, not only reading, listening to stories, selecting texts and reading ways, but also the dangers of bad readings has been the subject of “Revista do Ensino” on different occasions. In 1926, Claudio Brandão laments that books intended for reading still distanced themselves from the pedagogical ideal. “Besides the antiesthetic work, many of them sin by choosing parts and issues and also by their distribution” (BRANDÃO, 1926, p.6).

In 1929, Firmino Costa considers that the positive relation with books depended on the teaching performance. “If the teacher does not know how to love books, if she does not feed her intelligence with study, if she enriches her body and leaves her spirit poor, then she can teach how to read, no doubt about it, but her teaching will not have given the love of reading to the student”(COSTA, 1929, page 43). In 1930, the teacher suggests to the primary teachers of Minas Gerais the narration of stories and the recitation of poetry as “appetizer” for the students to read good books. In his words, “inspire the students with the love of reading, giving them an example of this love, reflected in the lessons” (COSTA, 1930, p.65).

Still in 1930, Catharina Silveira considers that, in awakening the love of books in the students, they should be warned “to talk about the disadvantages and dangers that bad books may bring, awakening in the students the aversion to everything that can stain their conscience and pervert their hearts”(SILVEIRA, 1930, p.40). Already in 1933, the habit of reading is presented as a solution to the “danger of the vacant hours”, because reading, besides being an unequalled source of knowledge, is capable of “embellishing and elevating men” (REVISTA DO ENSINO, 1933, p. 02).

Still in REVISTA DO ENSINO, in the year 1933, Adherbal Alvarenga emphasized the reader’s care in “not reading every work that falls by hand.” Given the possible negative influences of certain materials, “not reading sometimes is more useful than reading. Frivolous novels, exotic and original doctrines, authors who are not recommended for the correctness of the form, purity of language and elevation of feelings, should be banished from our shelves “(ALVARENGA, 1933, p. 64).

These negative representations about the aesthetic quality of certain works reveal the tension between prescribing and proscribing readings and books - a contextualized concern in the discourses and practices of the 1920s and 1930s, which discussed the danger inscribed in certain books. The discussion about the prescription of

educational readings was identified in surveys carried out by Vidal (2001). When investigating the proposal of reform undertaken by the Normal School of Rio de Janeiro in the 1930s, the author claims to be an institutional space-time, in which the school and its power of cultural transformation were bet on, and teacher training was produced in the tension among reading prescriptions, ways of reading and using the book (VIDAL, 2001).

One facet of this “dangerous” involvement of the reader with books was discussed by Paiva (1997, 2000) who investigated the censorship of novels - censorship understood as one of the dimensions of the Catholic discourse on reading. In her study, there is an incursion into censorship instituted at the beginning of the 20th century, based on the work of Friar Pedro Sinzig, who elaborated and published a guide composed of criticisms of a significant number of books, classifying them, judging them, indicating or prohibiting them, as if they were a sound or dangerous reading to young women.

Discussing the issue historically, Abreu (2000) argues that in the eighteenth century, some people imagined that reading could pose a health risk. Continued effort to read a text could impair vision, produce depletion of nerves, digestive difficulties, irritability, and other problems. However, the physical problems of over-reading were not the worst. More caution inspired the readings that presented dangers to the soul, those that endangered morals. Books were said to disseminate false ideas, to make them appear true, to stimulate the imagination too much, to combat decency and honesty (ABREU, 2000).

In summary, the historical recovery of books and reading points to nonconsensual and often conflicting representations that signal the advantages and dangers of texts and practices developed by readers.

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

With the present article we discuss practices of reading teaching, pointing to the centrality of literacy in discourses on modernity and development. Taking an inquiring look at the past, we could perceive that since the end of the 19th century there has been a concern with literacy and education of the population. However, the years 1920-30 reveal an expansion of the debate, in which the pedagogical discourses are crossed by the principles of the New School, defending the development of abilities that aimed at the functional reading. Within the school, reading becomes understood as a condition for investigation, research and acquisition of knowledge.

In Montes Claros, in the late 1910s, through an awareness campaign the actions of the newspaper 'Gazeta do Norte' moved to a pedagogical discussion of reading teaching. Thus, from the last years of 1920, the disseminated representations indicate that, more than literacy, to develop the capacity of reflective reading of texts and to insert the readers in the world of culture was intended. In the context of New School influences, reading assumes the function of expressing feelings and thoughts and also considers the need to link teaching to students' interests and to contextualize writing, reading, oral and grammatical activities to situations of use. In order to implement intended changes, knowledge about the teaching of reading and writing is disseminated. Teachers are guided on the use of methods and materials, on the selection of books and the ways of reading.

Looking at the present moment, we realize that these discussions dialogue with current issues that focus on the social uses of reading and writing and the possibility of its use for social change. The emergence of a concern with the functionality of reading dialogues with questions related to the social use of reading which gains space in the contemporary moment and has been understood as the process of alphabetizing literacy.

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