



## The work *ethos* in brazilian education journals: *handworks* as sign of pedagogical modernization (1906 – 1934) <sup>1</sup>

O *ethos* do trabalho nas páginas de periódicos educacionais brasileiros: *trabalhos manuais* como signo da modernização pedagógica (1906 – 1934)

El *ethos* del trabajo en las páginas de periódicos pedagógicos brasileños: trabajos manuales como signo de la modernización pedagógica (1906 - 1934)

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### ABSTRACT

This study intends to discuss the Handworks presence in two pedagogical Brazilian journals: *A Escola*, published between 1906 and 1921 in Paraná state, and *Revista do Ensino*, published between 1925 and 1940, in Minas Gerais state, and the Manoel Penna's textbook *Trabalhos Manuais Escolares*, published in Minas Gerais in 1934. Beyond the concerns with workers formation for the factories, the primary school used different curricular strategies to stimulate students' activities. They were centered in students' experiences so as to develop a disposition for action, according to the modern industrial world. Expressed in various ways between the end of 19th century and beginning of 20th century in virtually all Western world, the relation between education and work presupposed the mobilization of corporal senses for the development of appropriate sensibilities for a new world. That intention was to stimulate action, will development, and creative capacity, all modernizing signs of the primary school and of Brazilian society, as show the Manoel Penna textbook highlighted in this article.

**Keywords:** Curriculum history; Body education; Education of senses and sensibilities; Education and work, Handworks.

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## RESUMO

O artigo discute a presença dos Trabalhos Manuais em duas revistas brasileiras: *A Escola*, publicada entre 1906 e 1921 no Estado do Paraná, e a *Revista do Ensino*, publicada a partir de 1925, no Estado de Minas Gerais, além de destacar o livro didático *Trabalhos Manuais Escolares*, de Manoel Penna, produzido em Minas Gerais, em 1934. Para além das preocupações com a formação de mão de obra para o trabalho fabril, a escola primária produziu nas primeiras décadas do século XX um conjunto de dispositivos curriculares para estimular a atividade do aluno, centrada na sua experiência. A relação entre educação escolar e trabalho pressupunha a mobilização dos sentidos para o desenvolvimento de sensibilidades apropriadas para um “novo mundo” que pretendia estimular a ação, o desenvolvimento da vontade e a capacidade de iniciativa como signos modernizadores da escola primária e da sociedade brasileira. Segundo a documentação mobilizada, tratava-se antes de fomentar o *ethos* do trabalho, mais do que visar qualquer tipo de preocupação com a formação de mão de obra, como bem demonstra o livro didático de Manoel Penna, a ser destacado ao longo do texto.

**Palavras-chave:** história do currículo, educação do corpo, educação dos sentidos e das sensibilidades, educação e trabalho, Trabalhos Manuais.

## RESUMEN

El artículo discute la presencia de los trabajos manuales en dos periódicos brasileños: *A Escola*, publicada entre 1906 y 1921 en el Estado de Paraná, y la *Revista de Ensino*, publicada a partir de 1925, en el Estado de Minas Gerais, además de destacar el libro didáctico *Trabalhos Manuais Escolares*, de Manoel Penna, producido en Minas Gerais, el 1934. Además de las preocupaciones por la formación de mano de obra para el trabajo fabril, la escuela primaria produjo en las primeras décadas del siglo XX un conjunto de dispositivos curriculares para estimular la actividad del alumno, centrada en su experiencia. La relación entre educación escolar y trabajo presuponía la movilización de los sentidos para el desarrollo de sensibilidades apropiadas para un "nuevo mundo" que pretendía estimular la acción, el desarrollo de la voluntad y la capacidad de iniciativa como signos modernizadores de la escuela primaria y de la sociedad brasileña. Según la documentación movilizada, se trataba antes de fomentar el *ethos* del trabajo, más que visar cualquier tipo de preocupación con la formación de mano de obra, como bien demuestra el libro didáctico de Manoel Penna, a ser destacado a lo largo del texto.

**Palavras-clave:** historia del currículum, educación del cuerpo, educación de los sentidos y de las sensibilidades, educación y trabajo, Trabajos manuales.

## Introduction

In the scope of the project<sup>2</sup>I have been coordinating in the past seven years, we tried to focus in a set of educational strategies, inside and outside school, that can be dealt in the sphere of the history of senses and sensibilities and, therefore, body education. The relations between education and work, having as one of its dimensions the Handworks in primary school, appeared in the pedagogic press in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as part of a modernizing course for Brazilian education, school, and society. We understand they were vectors to produce a new type of sensibility. They fulfilled a fundamental role in the reforming program of Physical Education, Arts Education, Lesson of Things, games, and sports, as well as rituals and routines that allowed students to “work with their own hands”, producing not only *useful things*. Furthermore, there are also sensible mental dispositions to an industrial world, considered as modern, always praising the need for students to have, from an early age, the possibility to develop a *love for work*. Thus, work is characterized as a strong instrument for general education during this period.

Having as historiographic support the notion of *moral economy* by Edward Thompson, besides the discussion on labor, work, and action developed by Hannah Arendt, I problematize and discuss in the first part of the text the presence of Handworks in two Brazilian publications, *A Escola*, published between 1906 and 1921 in the state of Paraná, and the *Revista do Ensino*, which began to be published in 1925 in the state of Minas Gerais. I conclude with the analysis of the textbook *Trabalhos Manuais Escolares*, by Manoel Penna, published in 1934, to which I dedicate the second part of this work. The magazine from Paraná was accessed in the archive of *Memorial Lysimaco Ferreira da Costa*, in Curitiba. The magazine from Minas Gerais is available in *Centro de Documentação da Faculdade de Educação da UFMG*, in Belo Horizonte.<sup>3</sup> Both publications represent the effort of intellectuals and public agents to establish parameters in the reform of Brazilian school that was gradually inserted in a movement of pedagogical renovation which would climax in Brazil from the 1920s on. This was as a moment of broad social reforms boosted by the increasing urbanization and industrialization process in the country, which helped combat a long tradition of disdain towards manual work. Penna’s book gains relevance as it is a publishing initiative clearly directed to teaching, in which the work *ethos* is glorified as a sign of new times in the formation of Brazilian society, not by chance, the 1930s.

Expressed in diverse ways between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> in almost all western society, the relation between school education and work presupposed the mobilization of senses to develop the appropriate sensibilities to a “new world” that intended to stimulate the action, the development of will, and the capacity of initiative as modernizing sign of primary school. Among the curriculum strategies that aimed to foment this *ethos* were the Handworks, sometimes present as a subject in curricula, other times as a type of activity that crossed different subjects.

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<sup>2</sup> *A educação dos sentidos na história: o tempo livre como possibilidade de formação (entre os anos finais do séc. XIX e os anos iniciais do séc. XXI)*, developed in Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais. The Project received the financial support of CNPq n. 470687/2011-8 (*Edital Universal*), from CAPES, n. AUX-PE-PNPD 2587/2011, and FAPEMIG, n. APQ 00635/11 (*Edital Universal*).

<sup>3</sup> The issue of Manoel Penna’s book was kindly given by Prof. Carla Simone Chamon, to whom I thank the trust.

## Which work? An education for will and action

Dealing with the theme work in Brazilian reality demands care. On one hand, because of our late end of slave work (1888), all incipient attempt of industrialization known up to that moment had on forced labor and captivity their basic pillars. On the other hand, the late modern industrial development in the country was focused in very limited types of production, non-diversified, commonly with a regional perspective. Due to this, what can be called a modern industrialization would become a significant part of Brazilian social scene only in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> This type of general consideration is developed by Manoel Penna, in 1934, to characterize the prejudice in Brazilian society towards any type of manual labor.

The direct consequence of these conditions was the denial, for a long time, of work as something dignified. In fact, Brazilian elites until the 19<sup>th</sup> century considered work in general, and manual work in particular, as expressions of an inferior condition. Work was the damnation of slaves and the need of free poor men, who maintained with their labor the idleness of the dominant classes. Thus, in that period of Brazilian reality, we cannot talk about a work *ethos* with a modernizing characteristic. Work as a sign of modernity was not part of Brazilian political agenda, what helps us to explain its absence on non-vocational public instruction plans, despite some isolated initiatives as those of religious groups or intellectuals such as Rocha Pombo (Taborda de Oliveira, 2014). On the contrary, until the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the emphasis of public instruction was on intellectual work which, on its turn, was guided towards the moral education of children and youngsters.

It is with the gradual denouncement of the possible dangers of excessive intellectual work in children, varying from fatigue- *surmenage*- until possible brain damage, that, for instance, gymnastic, as a work *with* and *of* the body, appears in the instruction laws in two provinces in the beginning of the 1880s (Puchta, 2015), following a general movement to define its obligation in Western world. Body work, as a small modernizing sign, had as a fundamental role the compensation of intellectual work. Therefore, not only gymnastics but also games would slowly gain space in school programs, but not without tensions. In that period there was already the circulation in the country of authors such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Fröebel, and Spencer, thinkers who believed that body work was a basic condition of what could be called a complete education. However, their reverberation in the education public systems was still shy. Probably, it was the combination of factors, such as the end of slavery and the development of free labor, with the massive arrival of immigrants, and the rhetoric around the Republic and consequently the appeal for the right of education (Rocha, 1999), that allowed public instruction to become the object of modernizing concerns, which understood the formative potential of work.

As has been shown by the historiography on Brazilian school, starting at the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we can see in the country a set of initiatives to reform public instruction. Among many other aspects of the time, one of the most important is the attempt to renew school curricula (SOUZA, 1998, 1999). Curricula, in their modern expression,

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<sup>4</sup> One can affirm that the expansion of coffee production in the Southeast of Brazil, in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was already marked by a modernizing cycle of national industry. Similarly, some initiatives of the industry to process *erva mate* and leather in the South of the country. Both examples allow us to observe how the states of Minas Gerais and Paraná already had a significative level of industrialization, beyond the mineral exploitation, in Minas Gerais, and wood, in Paraná. But the industrial diversification was on the shoulders of these two industries with a stronger consolidation and, therefore, it was very restricted. That is why the rhetoric that connected work to industrialization, as a diversification process, and both of them connected to the education for a new world, appeared with more power exactly in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when, in fact, we see in Brazil a wide and modern process of industrialization.

started to consider activities related to physical education, arts, handworks, Lesson of Things, in short, a wide array of ways to educate the body, beyond the traditional subjects. Articulated into very diverse ways, these activities helped to show the modernizing direction of Brazilian school, in a close connection with similar processes that took place in other countries.

At that same period, we can also observe an abundance of pedagogical press initiatives. Sometimes by the initiative of provinces and/or states, others by different religious congregations or, still, by individuals or groups that worried about the issue of public instruction. The fact is that the press would become a motor to disseminate ideas, projects, precepts, criticisms, and prescription *about* and *to* the modernizing pathway of public education, even propagating achievements of other countries in that area.<sup>5</sup> Many modernizing initiatives highlighted here were a constant object of concern by the editors and authors of the magazine *A Escola* (1906 – 1921) and of *Revista do Ensino* (1925 – 1934). The time frame suggested here obeys the objectives of this article regarding the role of Handworks in the schools of both states in a time I consider to be a period of renovation in primary education in Brazil. It is worth noting that, if the Paraná magazine ended in that period, the Minas one had a long life and was published until the 1950s.

*A Escola*, published by the Association of Public Teacher from the State of Paraná, was subsidized by the Government of the state and was led by intellectuals such as Sebastião Paraná and Dario Velozzo. Some of these authors- directors were among the main intellectuals of the time regarding pedagogical renovation. The *Revista do Ensino* was an official initiative of the state of Minas Gerais, responsible for the dissemination of innovative initiatives on public instruction. It had a didactic character and many of its pieces were written by teachers with a clear pragmatic perspective, as are some of the texts signed by Manoel Penna. Despite the methodological problems that can be triggered by these choices, my purpose when analyzing both magazines was to try to understand the senses given to the relation between education and work in those educational realities that evoked pedagogical renovation, how was the circulation of different senses to understand it, with no intention to outline a comparative analysis of such contexts. I am more interested in understanding how the theme appeared in the pedagogical debate of the time, considering a great boost on popular education, or the education of the masses, and how the bases for a sensibility guided towards work were established.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> We should remember that primary education in Brazil was decentralized. This means that each province, in the Empire, or each state, in the Republic, controlled their own educational systems. Therefore, it is always mistaken any history that intended to talk about education in Brazil, as general and homogeneous, as was frequently seen. The size, diversity, and complexity of the country, the great developmental differences of each region or province, demographic, political, and cultural characteristics demand caution when we try to understand the development of public instruction. Therefore, with no intention to establish comparisons, what I tried to do here was to understand some possible *connections* between two different realities, Paraná and Minas Gerais, observing how their pedagogical press circulated ideas and projects on education modernization, having handwork as the key. An effort to map differences and similarities in the constitution of Brazilian public school in different regions has been coordinated by Prof. Rosa Fatima de Souza (Souza et al, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> The establishment of school groups (*grupos escolares*), considered by some as the maximum expression of the graduated school model, took place in 1903 in Paraná and in 1906 in Minas Gerais, two among the first states to reform their education based on that type of organization. Besides this, in the 20s, both states would suffer instruction reforms with the movement of Escola Nova. In 1921, in Paraná, and in 1927, in Minas Gerais. Last, but not least, the first two National Conferences of Education took place in the capitals of both states. In 1927 in Curitiba (Paraná) and in 1927 in Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais). The extension of the time frame of the article until 1934 is exactly because Manoel Penna's book sums up the discussions that were previously held in the press, reason why I consider it the arrival point of a debate on the importance of handworks in school.

Directly connected to the education of will and the idea of an active life, the disposition to work was followed by notions such as progress, improvement, advancement, duty, aptitude, action, always with a positive character opposed to what was the public instruction up until that moment. In a report published in the magazine *A Escola*, the teacher Julia Wanderley Petrich defended that,

After the physical and intellectual education, the teacher will take care of moral education, because it is in this order that we observe human progress.

In the vast field of moral, that having as an object the human actions, study and guide the faculties that preside over them – the sensibility and the will- the preceptor will play a preponderant role perfecting the character and heart of his students, because, as it is known, the moral feeling, unifying education, elevates the teacher and dignifies the school. During the lessons, the field trips, in all activities, the teacher has the imperious duty to awaken in them a moral consciousness, instilling in their spirit the ideas of good and duty; feelings of dignity and honor (Petrich, 1906, p. 19).<sup>7</sup>

The magazine also published a *Curso de Pedagogia* (Pedagogy Course) that said that: “the teacher guides the child towards the practice of duty, keeping and guaranteeing freedom of consciousness” (Pereira, 1906: 123). This emphasis on moral was also seen in the “principles related to students”: “*Desire to instruct themselves-* the will is the base of moral education”. Finally, the Course affirmed that moral education was the main educational dimension: “Moral has as a base the experience, the reasoning, and the will”(1906: 126). The parameters to develop will involved exercising the body, the games, and school manual works.

According to that perspective the “highest moral” was represented in individuals prone to action. Besides this, “new knowledge” from science regarding *modern pedagogy*<sup>8</sup> were mobilized. We have on the words of some of these women authors, teachers, militants, intellectuals, published in Paraná, an expression of what action would mean to the construction of a desired new world. To educate the will meant the complete formation of men, besides its simple instruction, as a condition to build a modern based society: civilized, active, industrious. Thus, the importance of the education of individuals. We have to remember that this desire of an individual who was free, enlightened, endowed with will as a condition to transform the world, an heir of illuminist tradition, was present in the revolutionary utopias, as well as in the liberal- republican rhetoric in countries strongly marked by monarchical tradition, such as Brazil, in the period we analyze.<sup>9</sup>

An example of this emphasis appears in the report of the aforementioned teacher Julia Wanderly, responsible for the ‘women subject’ of *Grupo Escolar Xavier da Silva*. Proving that she followed to the letter what was defined the School Program, the teacher highlighted the need of a general formation of girls, which would include notions of work.

<sup>7</sup> The trajectory of Julia Wanderley can be seen on the study of Araújo (2013).

<sup>8</sup> A collection of reflections of Alicia Moreau, English feminist and socialist living in Argentina, was translated by *El Tiempo*, from Buenos Aires, issue of September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1906. The author quotes Froebel, Bebel, Le Bom, and Pestalozzi, proposing an evolutionary sequence: *sensations, instruction, will, education*, as a process to affirm free individuals, ready to act in the world. She also highlights the contribution of natural sciences against the “word babble and cultivation of memory”. See Ver: Taborda de Oliveira (2017).

<sup>9</sup> I explore in details the rhetoric on the education of will, including teachers’ registries, in Taborda de Oliveira (2017).

As a complement of the Agronomy studies, I also give them some notions of botany, always having examples of *d'apres nature* in the horizon; and when I have the opportunity I also give them some notions of zoology, anatomy, and physiology for believing that, even though these issues are not part of the official program, they are, nonetheless, extremely useful for the general knowledge every young woman should have.

I reserve Thursday to the execution of domestic works, according to the determination of Mr. Doctor School Inspector of the Capital... (1906, p. 21-22).

Usefulness, domestic works. The teacher advocates the practice as an effort for the general formation of her students, with no emphasis in what could be considered as an education for the factories, but there is the expression of the activity, of work, as an important dimension of the educational process of the students' autonomy. Not surprisingly, during this time there were hard criticisms to the previous model of school that did not allow the movement, the activity, and the initiative of students. Here we can talk about an *ethos* that thinks work as a production of the world, in the sense proposed by Arendt (1958 [2014]), in her criticism of Marxian topic. We should observe that, only two decades after the end of slavery in the country, the need for activity and action appears in the sources with no reference to the work of African slaves or indigenous. Perhaps because work as an *ethos* to the modern world with an industrial character should not have a relation with forms of work that existed under slavery, that appeared to deny the notion of laboriousness as something to be stimulated. Teacher Petrich reports that:

150 objects of different shapes and diverse types were made by the work of the laborious students of this school. From them however, only 90 participated on the school exhibition which, thanks to the commendable efforts of the meritorious School Inspector of the Capital, took place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of this month. To that exhibition I did not sent the duplicated objects as I considered that no interest would be enticed by identical works (1906, p. 25).

At that moment, Handworks were not a subject in school, they were not even predicted in the Program. Even so, there was the dissemination of the practice in the public schools of Parana, to the point that they were part of the evaluation events in school, as part of school exhibitions, including the attribution of grades.<sup>10</sup> It is no surprise that Ermelino de Leão demanded:

The school of life against the previously so glorious temple of instruction, which poets and utopians pointed as an antidote to crime, is guaranteeing to the peoples that created it the supremacy in contemporary history: here is North America emerged only yesterday, from the bosom of the forests to the great concert of dominant nations (Leão, 1908, p. 76).

A escola da vida tinha no homem industrial, não necessariamente no operário especializado, o seu mais destacado vetor de modernização.

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<sup>10</sup> The *Arquivo Público Mineiro-APM*, in Belo Horizonte, keeps several pieces made by students in the state during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among them, it is possible to find drawings, models, embroidery, sewing, notebooks, etc. This extremely rich archive, also part of the material culture of Minas Gerais schools, was not yet carefully treated by historians. The exhibition referred to by the Paraná teacher took place on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1905.

## Handworks as a curriculum practice

If educating is to prepare man to life, one understands that by a more adequate education is created a more intense, more perfect, and more dignified way of life. There is no doubt that the educational methods cannot deny having an essentially utilitarian end (Santos, nº 4, 1925, p. 81).

This was announced in the Editorial of the 4<sup>th</sup> number of *Revista de Ensino de Minas Gerais*, in 1925. Since its first number the magazine from Minas highlighted the connection between work and education, always claiming the usefulness of the later to the creating of a desired new world. If, on one hand, “Education cannot be merely utilitarian (Santos, 1925, p. 81), on the other, an education that was abstract, belletrist, with no practical sense would be of use to the country. In his editorial Santos mentions the United States and Horace Mann, among other authors, as examples of successful industrious spirits.

Quoting Ferdinand Buisson, the magazine, already in its first number, asks: “Should there be connections between the vocational education and primary education? Which ones?” (p. 4). The lengthy answer, which took two pages of the magazine, starts from a meaningful counterpoint. If taking vocational education in its broad sense, the answer would be negative. Simply because vocational education would be related to a certain degree of technical preparation aiming a specialized work. The author offers as an example the schools of Medicine and Law. However, when considering in a narrow sense “...the elucidation of the present thesis will depend in a larger or smaller extent that there is that education in the primary schools. Thus, the extension given was such that the state converts the student into a worker or an artisan- the negative will continue, *because this is not the exclusive, or the main, mission of primary education...* However, if vocational education is taught in such a way that it is before an education that is merely manual, an educator of senses, a guideline for motor faculties, a initiator of dexterity and motilization (sic!), only a preparation for vocational education that will be taught in schools organized with this purpose...them an affirmative is imposed: there should be connections between vocational education, considered as merely manual, and primary education” (GOES, 1925, p. 5, my highlight).

Dexterity and motility, two expressions that evidence activity as a fundamental element in school educational practices. Thus, Handworks would be a safe pathway for the full formation of students, with differences of gender. The training could actually prepare future factory workers, but it was not reduced to it. However, in the sequence of his text Carlos Goes related a series of arguments from A to Z in favor of Handworks in schools. Among the arguments he defended that “primary teaching proposes, above all, the general education of children’s faculties”; Handwork would represent the balance between the physical and the intellectual “being”; it would exercise the three maximum faculties of the activity: attention, perception, and intuition; it would discipline the student to have method and patience; develop the aesthetic sense and will; fomented the “generative forces of social wealth”, among others. The author finishes by remembering that “according to Sundberg, pedagogical manual work, by allowing the eyes to see, the hands to work, and contributing to the physical and moral development of student, is a counterweight to a purely bookish pedagogy” (Goes, 1925, p. 5). All this to develop a “general aptitude to various circumstances of practical life” constantly evoked in those renovation times.

Recalling Rousseau, the author highlights that “manual work is the occupation that more closely connects men to the natural state”. Nonetheless, he references Diderot, Comenius, Rabelais, Saint Just, compliments the French Revolution, and the French

Law of March, 28<sup>th</sup> 1988, which established the obligation of primary instruction including Handworks (with or without tools) in schools. Also, here, as in the texts published during the previous two decades in *A Escola*, in Paraná, the modernizing rhetoric that had Handworks as a privileged vector used examples of Europe and the United States. Concluding his long text, Goes remembers that Handworks demanded an accurate ability to observe nature and could be dispersed in the subjects of Drawing, Arithmetic, and Lesson of Things, even though the author observed that this would not be a subject itself, but a process of teaching related to the intuitive method (p. 6).

In the same year, in the issue 5 of *Revista do Ensino* we observe other works related to the theme, such as “The study of drawing and the culture of aesthetic senses”, by teacher Anibal Mattos – p. 83; “Visual and auditive memory”, anonymous – pp. 86; and a long work entitled “The goal of handwork for women” by Aprigio de Almeida Gonzaga – pp. 117-140. This author presented profound criticisms to the importation of “foreign models” to Brazilian education, showing a bit of the polyphony of the magazine.

The school that does not answer the nature and the character of the race it educates and instructs; the school that uses educational systems of other countries, without considering the diosyncrasies (sic!), does not pay a great service to the country, because it does not cherish the most beautiful part of the human soul: the expansion of personality. We shall do a Brazilian school in the Brazilian environment (Almeida Gonzaga, 1925, p. 117).

According to the author, women’s education should target the role of “mother of the family, a housewife” (Almeida Gonzaga, 1925, p. 117). Reason why he made strong criticisms to the renovation at march. About the school object, he affirmed:

The goal of vocation education for arts and crafts to women does not seem well guided. The vocational school should be called “School for Domestic and Professional Education”. I want schools that prepare the housewife, giving them a profession, not a school that forms factory workers to the detriment of its social mission. We shall put aside all these issues of rights, revindications, and feminisms. We answer to the nature that, in the organization and organic differentiation of each one, has established the functions and adaptations to life (Almeida Gonzaga, 1925, p. 117).

To the author, the role of women was undoubtful, and to attend her there was the need to organize a “domestic school”:

The professional domestic school should be organized in a way that the woman should be self-sufficient and an element of human evolution. To do so, women has duties and rights; to educate herself, guide the home and the work, as said by a great educator. By educating herself, she acquires the qualities necessary to arm her spirit and became better; to elevate herself and understand her high social function, her responsibilities in the major issue of children education, guidance of the husband, manage the home,

and preparing the citizens of the country. Managing the home, the mother, in her true role, in her royalty throne, where, shaping the character of the children, forming their soul, restraining and advising the husband, is the cause of greatness, of the value of the country” (Almeida Gonzaga, 1925, p. 118).

The author considers that “Today, as believed by Kropotkin, men and women, all should work and earn their living with their own effort. In the world there is no more space for the useless” (Almeida Gonzaga, 1925, p. 118). The end of school for women should also have an utilitarian character destined more to the development of a specific type of sensibility, than to the training of skilled labor, even though this was not denied:

But, I repeat, domestic school should not take care of only this: educate the housewife. It is important to give them a profession, so that, when single, the woman can live of her work and also help, alongside men; and, going into factories, offices, liberal professions, work for the wealth and progress of the country. Therefore, organized the domestic school, *without creating factory workers, but aiming the harmonious education of women*, we should focus among all the subject the home economics, that can be divided in 3 parts: the kitchen, children hygiene, and the house (Almeida Gonzaga, 1925, 118-119, my highlight).

Men also deserved their own topic in the considerations of Almeida Gonzaga. The second item of this work, entitled *Goal of Handwork to men* refers to *Sloyd* as “cerebral gymnastics”. There he defends that “Manual work is the core of school life and all other subjects gravitate around it” (Almeida Gonzaga, 1925, p. 126). Remembering that work was the condemnation imposed to men due to his “crime”, he commented that human nature needed work to maintain the species. Thus, “In the education of body and soul, by manual and intellectual exercise combined, one supporting the other, we try to make in school the evolution of the being itself, the new education, that is the center of future democracy” (Almeida Gonzaga, 1925, p. 126).

Among other important goals, Handworks would fill a fundamental role in the civic formation of youngsters, according to the text transcribed in *Revista de Ensino* of São Paulo, what only confirms the circulation of ideas on the theme in that period, not only in Brazil. Mentioning the Bavarian reformer Georg Kerchensteiner and his pedagogy based on the school of work, as well as, once more, the Swedish *Sloyd*, he affirms that “ This education [...] leads to the elimination or correction of innate, physical, and moral aberrations [...]” (Almeida Gonzaga, 1925, p. 182).<sup>11</sup> Among the five actions highlighted by the author to respect the practical spirit of the State, and the educational method of public school, he mentions sports, including soccer, field trips, libraries, and handworks. The fifth action was table tennis. (Gonzaga, 1925, p. 183).

The theme in the magazine was so strong in that period that, in 1926, on issue 11, they published the poem *Canto do trabalho* (Work Hymn) by Anna Amelia de Queiroz Mendonça:

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<sup>11</sup> On the emphasis of work in the educational concepts of Georg Kerchensteiner see Caruso (2005).

Trabalho é glória. Quem trabalha (Work is glory. Who Works)  
 Vive feliz, sereno e são. (Lives joyfully, serene, and sane)  
 No ferro em brasa o homem que malha (In the red hot iron the man who forges)  
 Busca a beleza e a perfeição. (aims beauty and perfection)

Em boca ardente da fornalha (In the fiery furnace mouth)  
 Ergue-se um hino à criação. [...] (rises an hymn to creation)

A vida é áspera batalha, (Life is a rough battle)  
 Em que a arma rude é a rude mão. (in which the rude weapon is the rude hand)  
 Bendito seja quem trabalha (Blessed be who works)  
 Pela grandeza e a perfeição” (for the greatness and perfection) (Mendonça, RdE, nº 11, 1926, p. 52).

Vocational education also attracted the spotlight in the period and was among the thesis presented in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> National Conference in Education in Curitiba and Belo Horizonte, respectively. In 1927, the *Revista de Ensino* transcribes the text by José Rangel, in which we can see the start of a clear displacement of Handworks perceived as a fundamental dimension of general formation of children- what I have been referring to as a work *ethos*- to another perspective in which school, theoretically, would be responsible for a careful preparation of future workers (Rangel, 1927, n. 22, pp. 523-524).

We have to remember that 1927 was the year of the Francisco Campos reform in Minas Gerais, which established in the state some fundamentals of Escola Nova. Many articles in the magazine were about the exploration of active school fundamentals, having, once again, the United States as a model. In “Orientation of active school in the United States” Gustavo Lessa approached its origin, principles, its relation to the Lesson of Things, and practices. He highlighted what he called training of thought and will, the need to overcome rhetoric or project to action, and finalized by talking about moral education and social education (pp. 52-73)

In this point we can stop and observe how, in approximately two decades, Handworks transformed from a diffuse set of practices in primary schools into one of the central aspects of public education in both analyzed magazines. The didactic manual of Manoel Penna can be considered the climax of that emphasis.

### **A didactic manual to school handworks**

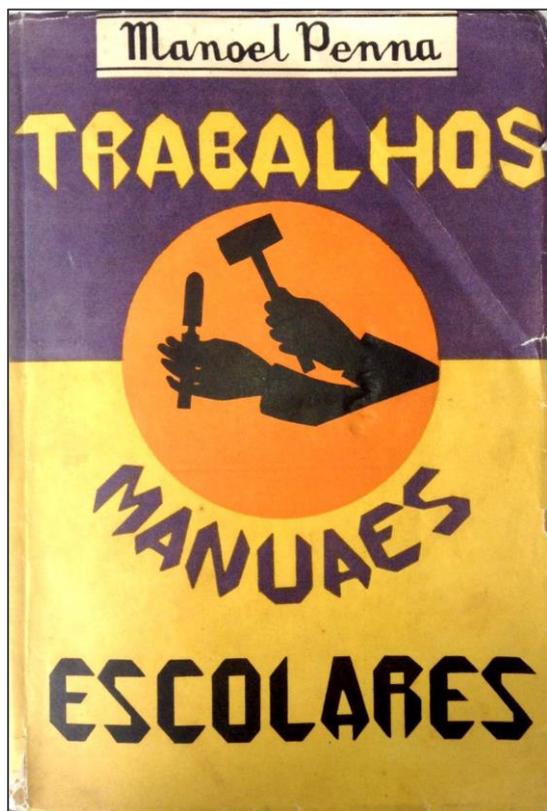
Right from the presentation of his book Manoel Penna affirms that the work was not original.<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, he consulted and used several authors to give the

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<sup>12</sup> Manoel Penna dedicates the book to the “memory of the unforgettable technocrat João Pinheiro da Silva and my estimated teachers Caetano de Azeredo Coutinho and João Diniz Barbosa”. The author was a teacher of Handworks in *Grupo Escolar Barão do Rio Branco*, in Belo Horizonte. In the moment of the manual release he was a “Specialized Technical Assistant” in state teaching and teacher of the Drawing course in the *Escola de Aprendizagem Artificiais de Minas Gerais*. On the book analyzed we can read at the top of the first page the date 04/05/1944, dedicated to “D.Noemi” as a souvenir, but it is not possible to identify the signature of the present-giver. In the bottom of the same page it was registered “given by D. Noemi. 10/06/1945 Eulália Maria de Almeida *Grupo Escolar ‘Bias Fortes’ 2º. Year Barbacena*”. Thus, we can see that, 10 years after its publication, Penna’s book apparently circulated among the teachers in Minas. I cannot affirm precisely who was “D.Noemi”,

dimension of the space of handworks in school. The book, originally impressed by the Official Press of Minas Gerais in 1934, has 171 pages, richly illustrated “with 402 drawings in the text, 30 of them colored or in intercalated pages”. The author highlights the cover as an example of handworks, as it was an “imagine cut in paper with scissors”, focusing on two hands holding a chisel and a hammer.

**FIGURE 1** - Manoel Penna’s cover book.



**Source:** Personal archives by Carla Simone Chamom (Cefet/MG)

In the Preface, Penna affirms that the book “is the fruit of long years of practice as a teacher of Handworks, studying and experimenting with what the masters taught. Then he enlists the authors he used to write his compendium: “Omer Buyse, G. Kerchensteiner, J. Montua, Dewey, E. Solana, Manael Frazão, Daujat et Dumont, P. Martin, M. Montessori, Froebel, F. Blanch and others”.

The book is organized from a general introduction, in which the author presents different perspectives to understand handworks, taking examples from different countries and authors. After, in a topic called *Various Systems* he presents the advantages and disadvantages of different concepts, in which the author assumes some favoritism towards the Swedish *Sloyd* and the school of work by Georg Kerchensteiner, the latest expression of “new school or active school” (Penna, 1934, p. 16).<sup>13</sup> Later, in a topic called *About the need of handworks*, the author presents a set of arguments in favor of its development, highlighting its goals in a process of general formation. He continues with a topic called *Modern orientation to the teaching of handworks*, in which

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but it can be *Dona Noemi Gontijo*, a teacher who dedicated herself to Industrial Arts and Arts Education. At that time, she would be a bit older than 20 years old.

<sup>13</sup> Handworks in school was the object of study of Pinheiro e Munakata (2017), which shows that despite the boastful importance, they gained diverse meanings depending on the social and economic position of the students who would have access to it.

he discusses “sensibility, activity, and intelligence”, emphasizing the “learning by doing” (p. 22). From there, the book shows the different expressions of school handworks, having drawing as the fundament to all of them: paper work (folding), fabric, cardboard work, collage, modeling, and wood work, in that order. To each of these sections, the author proposes a sequence: *Plan, Materials, First Exercises*, followed by a profusion of exercises to be developed in schools, 153 in total. To these sequence follows comments on the effects of those exercises in the students’ formation, as Handworks contribute to reaching the objectives of all other school subjects, been the base of a broad process of general formation.

Going through Penna’s ponderations, we highlight a set of objectives that the author gradually defines for the teaching of handworks in schools. Recognizing the “lateness of our people” regarding its importance, the author emphasizes its educational character in primary and secondary school. In this sense, in the initial pages of his text, Handworks are considered a specific school subject, which supports all other subjects. It would not be responsible for a specialized formation “because this would be humanly impossible and even a great absurd” to imagine that with it one could learn a craft and become “true professionals” (Penna, 1934, p. 10). Educational Handworks in this sense would be radically different from vocational education *per se*, to which there should be specific establishments to form the “modern factory worker”. He remembers that by the simple recognition of our slave tradition and by the prejudice that surrounded manual work and factory workers, it would already be worthwhile teaching handworks in schools, as it could form “ideas of equality and fraternity characteristic of republican and democratic ideals”. In a moment of strong repression of foreign immigrant traditions in the country, it is symptomatic that the author claimed that poor Brazilian youngsters were in disadvantage faced by “foreign competitors” (p.11). Thus, Penna mixed general arguments with a formative-pedagogical character evoking a “complete education” passing through Physical Education and “especially the education of senses”, with pragmatic arguments referring to the place that should be occupied by students in the job world, to which school should be aware. To him, the touch was, by excellence, the sense to develop the idea of activity, action in students. He reminds that *Sloyd* was rooted in the word *slog*, meaning able, dexterous, and that the world “impresses our senses”, its full development would represent an important “moral measure” desired to all generations (p. 31), such as highlighted by the teachers who wrote on *A Escola*, from Paraná, or the authors who published on *Revista do Ensino*, in Minas.

By dealing, for example, with the drawing as a fundament to manual works, he already recognizes that the practice was *per se* a type of handwork with a great aesthetic appeal:

Drawing is recommended in teaching as one of the best, if not the best way of activity to the development and education of the moral sensibility in the child, mainly referring to pleasure, to taste, kindling the feelings of Beauty, of Fairness, making their souls more sensitive to continuous exercises and the detailed examination of natural things, in observations and meticulous studies (Penna, 1934, p. 24).

Calling his system educational-instructive, by combining the contributions of Decroly and Kerchensteiner with the “undeniable merits of *sloyd*, on its more educational sense”, Penna enlists the set of potentialities of his proposals.

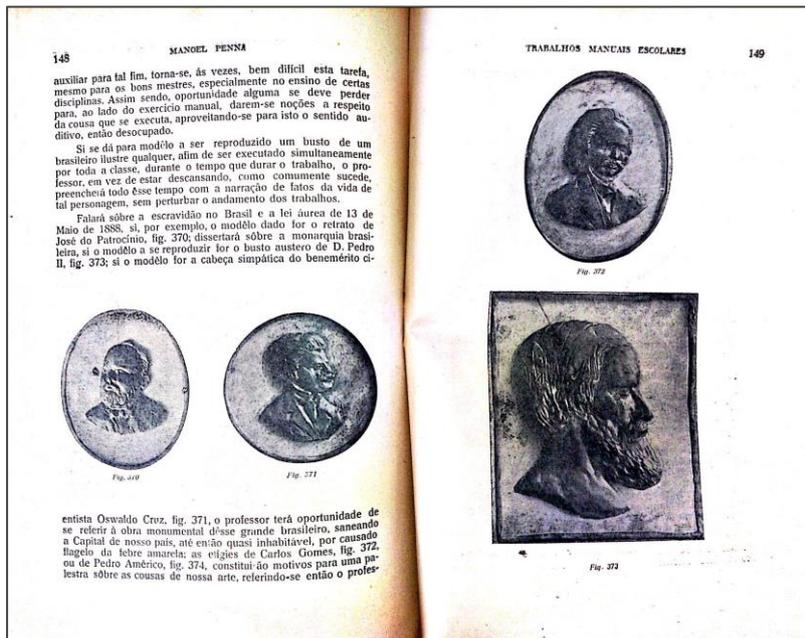
...inspire in children the love of work, mainly in the rudest; give them the habits of order, cleanness, elegance, and exactness; educate their sight, also giving them hand dexterity; develop in them independence and confidence, familiarizing them with perseverance, they will profit of natural activity in its three forms - instinct, will, and habit, an activity that constitutes the base of human life, to develop it, since the early years, through handwork, in a logic and intelligent association, starting the teaching of other subjects in the program, such as Reading, Writing, History, Geography, Geometry, Arithmetic, Natural History, Physics, etc... (1934, p. 25).

He concluded:

Organized carefully and obeying the growing difficulties of teaching, these lessons, established by a subtle entanglement of manual education with the intellectual one, aim, as said, the parallel and full development of all childhood faculties, through conscious actions of the senses, because only through them, which are originated in the motor cells of the brain, we have an enrichment of imagination, elaboration of thought, development of will, etc. (Penna, 1934, p. 26).

This moral emphasis, covered by civic concerns, which increased the list of objectives attributed to Handworks is put into evidence when Penna discusses the result of the works with modelling in clay and wax. Following minutely the guidelines given by his book, the teachers would produce pieces that would portray the “great names” or episodes of the history of the country, listing the importance of characters such as “Deodoro, Santos Dumont, Oswaldo Cruz, Pedro Américo, Carlos Gomes” (p. 148). Also, Brazilian geography and fauna could be represented, giving evidence to the fundamental role of those works as a support to different subjects.

FIGURE 2 – Working Lessons with clay and wax.

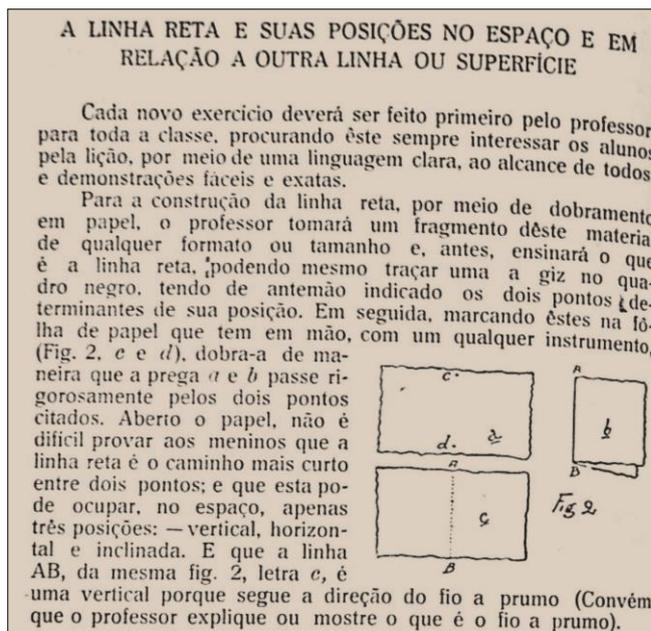


Source: Penna (1934, p. 372-3)

When dealing with wood works, the author remembers that, differently from the famous calisthenics gymnastics or the Swedish one, which had no goal apart from the simple body exercise, wood works would represent a type of “natural gymnastic”, “utilitarian and productive”, characterizing an important vector of general formation.

The book goes a long way starting with prescriptions and exercises to teach drawing, reaching the complexity of wood works. It presents ways to hold and maintain the basic materials, as well as the training of necessary abilities to use complex tools.

FIGURE 3 – Basic exercises of drawing.



Source: Penna (1934, p. 34)

Later, from the first drawings teachers were stimulated to teach their practical application, even in relation to other abilities required by students.

**FIGURE 4** – Examples of how drawing classes could help students to learn how to read and write.

Feitas as letras obedecendo-se em tudo ao modelo dado, deverão as mesmas ser pregadas no papel quadriculado, com toda a exatidão possível, tal qual se vê na referida figura.

**EXERCÍCIO N. 2**

Formar, pela mesma maneira, o grupo VL (fig. 39).

Sempre que a tira tenha de traçar um ângulo reto, a dobra da mesma deverá ser pela diagonal do quadrado; mas, para ângulos de outros graus, a prega varia, como acontece na execução da letra V dêsse conjunto.

No mais se procede como se fez no primeiro dêstes exercícios.

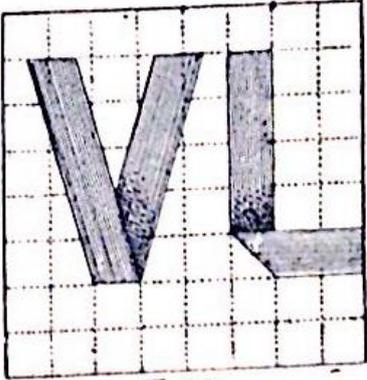


Fig 39

**EXERCÍCIO N. 3**

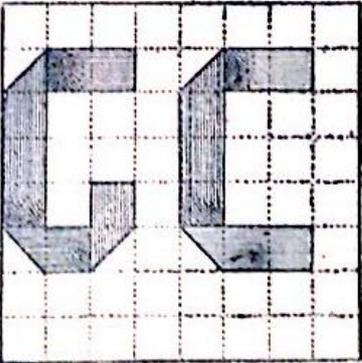


Fig 40

Compor o grupo das consoantes — G e C.

Proceder-se-á pela mesma forma que nos anteriores exercícios; adverte-se, porém, que as dobras devem ser alternadas, como se nota nestas duas da fig. 40. Ora para um lado, ora para o outro.

**EXERCÍCIO N. 4**

Composição das letras AN (fig. 41).

Há algumas letras, como o A, por exemplo, cujas dobras ficam ocultas por detrás, parecendo que são feitas em pedaços, o que na realidade não acontece.

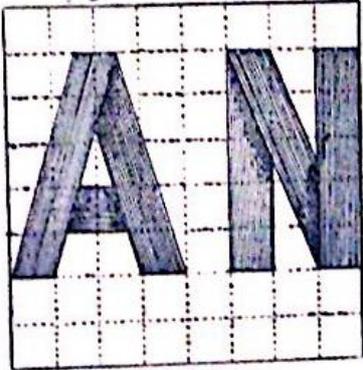
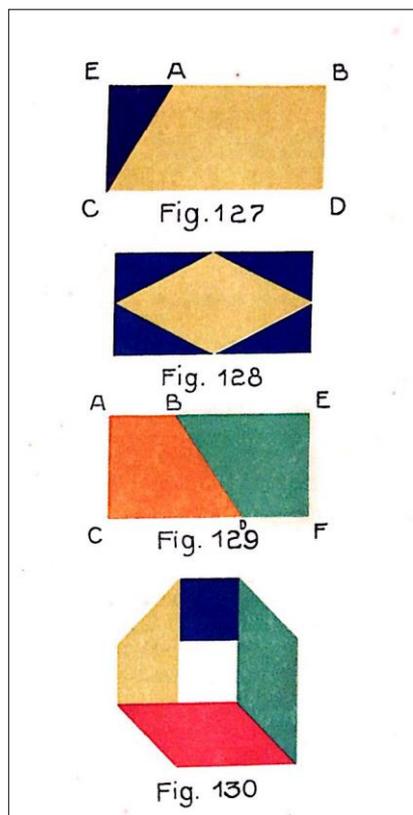


Fig 41

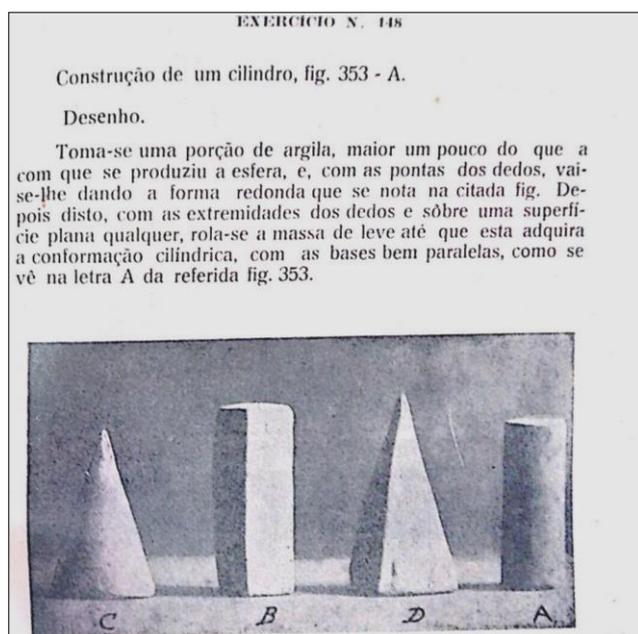
**FIGURE 5** - Exercises of folding and collage.



Source: Penna (1934, no page.)

The progression was concluded by exercises of modeling in clay and way, and a discussion on the elaboration of wood pieces. This last material received relatively little attention of the author when compared to others.

**FIGURE 6** – Exercise to construct a cylinder.



Source: Fonte: Penna (1934, p. 137).

The centrality of Handworks in the period lays not only on the fact that it served as a core element to other subjects, but also because it gave grounds to the appeal for a public school education that wanted to be perceived as modern, that had action, activity, initiative, and autonomy as basic assumptions, opposing to the traditional education considered intellectual, mnemonic, and passive. At least in the discourse, the intention was to overcome the pedagogical models of the past, giving the students the aptitudes to face the challenges of a new world that was being unveiled. However, as shown by the meticulous manual of Manoel Penna, it was not only about a discourse. The intention, at least in the beginning, was not to form artisans or factory workers, but the adequate sensibility to the industrial urban world that was being established. This sensibility presupposed the knowledge of your own body, the careful education of the senses, the emphasis on the education of the will, and the students' ability to take decisions. The precepts, part of what was known as a liberal agenda to organize culture, were not foreign to the formulation of socialist and anarchist educators in those initial decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the development of a work *ethos* did not seem to follow, as well shown by the revindication of the right to work denounced by Paul Lafargue in 1882 (1990), the notion of work as damnation, what the author calls a *disastrous dogma*. Before, at least in this discursive dispersion in which both magazines analyzed are a sample, the initial decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century seem to have been years of belief in the passage towards a world that would free men from the chains of servile work, as praised by Penna in his book. Thus, Handworks would play a key role in the affirmation of that *ethos* showing that the full realization of a new world would depend on the contribution of all and each one, through the sweat of their brows and the ability of their hands. The malediction of slave work, or even considerations on alienation through work, marks of Brazilian society, were not mentioned in the analyzed magazines, as work was seen through positive lenses and affirmed itself as able to redeem men from the dependence of the pure state of nature, competing to their humanization, which would depend of their effective action over the world. Following the critic of Lafargue (1990) it was about the blessings of work. However, Manoel Penna started his book denouncing a supposed Brazilian delay in comparison with other countries, as here work was still seen as an object of despise. So, simply for that, according to the author, it should be stimulated in schools.

It is exactly in this sense that the notions of moral economy, as developed by Edward Thompson (1998) and active life, explored by Hannah Arendt (1958[2014]), become important to contrapose reductionist readings that take work only under a negative light. After all, as observed by Marx, work is “the metabolism of men with nature”, to worry about the development of a work *ethos* through school seems to be the recognition that men become human also through work. The issued to be updated is to always question when and how work assumed, in History, a “positive” or “negative” dimension regarding educational practices, maybe in the way attempted by Pinheiro and Munakata (2017).

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