



In search of the school building: contribution to the Local History of Education (S. Vicente de Pereira parish, Ovar, 1888-1892)¹

Em busca do edifício escolar: contributo para a História Local da Educação (freguesia de S. Vicente de Pereira, Ovar, 1888-1892)

En busca del edificio escolar: contribución a la Historia Local de la Educación (parroquia de S. Vicente de Pereira, Ovar, 1888-1892)

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Abstract

The text focuses on a less enlightened theme in the History of Education in Portugal – the educational statute of the parish in the context of school provision. The parish constituted the geographical, administrative and social instance of school literacy. It is a study of microhistory, perhaps of “small history”, but representative of a historical cycle of school universalization in Portugal, at the end of the Eight Hundred. It is based on documents from the Ovar Municipal Archive and the parish of São Vicente de Pereira, such as minute books, correspondence and the press. The process of construction of the school building for boys is recovered between 1888 and 1892, as a result of the effort of the Parish Council and a “Brazilian” of that parish who, for this purpose, managed to obtain donate land and a significant amount of money from friends residing in Brazil. Thus, it was possible to understand part of the complexity of the schooling process that was intended in Portugal in the late nineteenth century.

Keywords: Instruction in Portugal. School construction. São Vicente de Pereira parish.

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Resumo

O texto incide sobre tema menos esclarecido na História da Educação em Portugal – o estatuto educacional da freguesia no contexto da oferta escolar. A freguesia constituiu a instância geográfica, administrativa e social de alfabetização escolar. É um estudo de micro-história, porventura de “pequena história”, mas representativo de um ciclo histórico de universalização escolar em Portugal, no final de Oitocentos. Fundamenta-se em documentos do Arquivo Municipal de Ovar e da freguesia de São Vicente de Pereira, como livros de atas, correspondências e imprensa. Recupera-se o processo de construção do prédio da escola para o sexo masculino, entre 1888 e 1892, como resultado do esforço da Junta de Paróquia e de um “brasileiro” daquela freguesia que, para esse fim, conseguiu doação de terreno e significativa quantia de amigos residentes no Brasil. Foi possível perceber parte da complexidade do processo de escolarização que se pretendia em Portugal no final do século XIX.

Palavras-chave: Instrução em Portugal. Construção de escola. Freguesia de São Vicente de Pereira.

Resumen

El texto se centra en un tema menos investigado en la Historia de la Educación en Portugal – el estatuto educativo de la parroquia en el contexto de la provisión escolar. La parroquia constituyó la instancia geográfica, administrativa y social de la alfabetización escolar. Es un estudio de microhistoria, quizás de "pequeña historia", pero representativo de un ciclo histórico de universalización escolar en Portugal, al final de los Ochocientos. Se basa en documentos del Archivo Municipal de Ovar y la parroquia de São Vicente de Pereira, como libros de actas, correspondencia y la prensa. Fue recuperado el proceso de construcción del edificio escolar para niños varones entre 1888 y 1892, como resultado del esfuerzo del Consejo Parroquial y un "brasileño" de esa parroquia que, con este propósito, logró donación de tierras y una cantidad significativa de dinero de amigos que residían en Brasil. Así, fue posible comprender parte de la complejidad del proceso de escolarización que se pretendía en Portugal a fines del siglo XIX.

Palabras clave: Instrucción en Portugal. Construcción de escuela. Parroquia de São Vicente de Pereira.

This text emerges in the sequence of two prior studies that dealt with the efforts spent in the opening of a female school in the parish of São Vicente de Pereira, municipality of Ovar, in the second half of the nineteenth century. The first study arose from existent documentation of the Tombo Tower and discussed the stormy process that occurred between 1873-1876, concerning the donation of a school for girls by an industrialist of the São Vicente de Pereira parish, the “Brazilian” returned-emigrant João Rodrigues de Oliveira Santos. It was a school for the daughters of the female workers of his hat factory. It shows the difficulties through which he passed next to the Municipal Chamber of Ovar, which denied or postponed the donation approval since the process was submitted to several instances until it reached the Consultative Board of Public Instruction of the Ministry of the Kingdom. The set of documents consulted did not clarify if the school did or did not function one day². The second study, elaborated from existent documentation of the São Vicente de Pereira Civil Parish³ archives and Ovar Municipal Archives, retook the investigation, seeking to comprehend from new sources the motivations, political dissensions and, finally, to confirm the inauguration of the referred girls' school on 1888, which happened almost 15 years after the bureaucratic procedure begun in December 1873⁴.

In this incursion through the São Vicente de Pereira archives, it was identified another project in the domains of this parish, also with the participation of the mentioned industrialist, which began in the same year that the girls' school inaugurated, 1888, but now focused on the construction of a boys' school building, viewing the improvement of the teaching work conditions and boys' instruction. This second movement, with the changes in the power structures of the municipality of Ovar, is not going to experience the same bureaucratic difficulties of the previous initiative, but it will be a difficult process too, and, sometimes, afflictive, reaching its end in the final of 1892. Here is the route that we wish to recover in the next pages, in an attempt to clarify a little more how the institutionalization process of primary education occurred in Portugal at the end of the nineteenth century.

Portugal and the challenges of instruction in the second half of the nineteenth century

The instruction was considered a substantial element of progress in the European territory in the nineteenth century, when most countries structured their national education systems. Consequently, the foundations were laid down to consolidate the structures that based these societies at the end of that century and the beginning of the next, ensuring or propitiating the economic development and achievement of better living conditions to the population: secularism, representative democracy, political rights equalization, economic liberalism, universal access to education, etc. However, in Portugal, the progress of facts did not follow this path, or, at least, not at the same pace, and neither at the same time. At the end of the nineteenth century, Portugal presented economical and educational indicators much lower than most of the rest of Europe, problems that marked it for a good share of the twentieth century.

² GONÇALVES NETO, Wenceslau; MAGALHÃES, Justino. Ação privada e poder público na luta pela instrução: Portugal na segunda metade do século XIX. *Revista Brasileira de História da Educação*, n. 20, 2009, p. 15-39.

³ During the nineteenth century, the designation of this administrative instance is changed many times by the legislation, alternating from Junta de Paróquia to Junta de Freguesia. In this text, as these denominations appear in the documentation in both versions, they are used with the same meaning.

⁴ GONÇALVES NETO, Wenceslau; MAGALHÃES, Justino Pereira de. Luta pela instrução e disputas políticas em Portugal na segunda metade do século XIX: a escola para meninas na freguesia de São Vicente de Pereira, Município de Ovar. *Sarmiento*, v. 23, 2019, p. 51-69.

While analyzing the Portuguese socio-political conditions and their interrelations with the economic development, as well as the indicators that are used to identify the so-called modernity, such as literacy and written culture, among others, António Candeias⁵ observes:

We realize that democracy, wealth, literacy and political rights, aggregate among themselves, are part of the “progress” that is associated to the idea of “Modernity”, through which, during the second half of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, societies with high literacy rates usually tend to be presented as wealthy, democratic, with own demographic growth rates, typically urban, as societies in which citizens can freely associate and the vote tends to become universal during the first half of the twentieth century.

By this passage, we realize the dimension of the challenge that was put to Portugal at that time, searching for its space in the European nation's concert. Despite reminding, as Candeias does next, that not always full literacy and economical or political development walk hand in hand, in general, all states that reached significant levels of modernity had their education problems previously solved. Portugal's indicators, however, showed an uncomfortable situation: at the twentieth-century turn, literacy rate still skated around 25%, increasing only 10% in 50 years, going from 15% in 1850 to 25% in 1900 (approximately indexes). Meanwhile, many other European countries already approached full literacy of their school-age children and standing in the back, but with indicators far higher than those of Portugal, were Spain, Italy, and Poland. In this way, Portugal is far from the European education movement and development pace, occupying, according to Candeias, the “periphery of the periphery”⁶, a situation that has been worse in the first decades of the twentieth century.

The effort in the concretization of a national education system is frustrated in the nineteenth century. It does not mean that the Portuguese state was just omissive or did not face the problem. Seeking to comprehend the nature of the nationalization process of education and the dimension of such a challenge, Justino Magalhães presents three significant aspects:

First, it is essential to recognize the importance of ideological dimensions, foment of strategies and forms of participation, as a reinforcement of the sense of civic belonging and involvement. Second, it is necessary to interpret the continuation of the nationalization of education in a double orientation: that the resolution of material issues needed openness and negotiation with associative, private and domestic sectors and local power (municipal, parish) and, finally, with social beneficence; that, to assure a particular uniformity and efficacy of action of the entire national, it was necessary standard guided principles, appropriate bookkeeping, and governance, the creation of a central control instance, acting in an integrated form, for what was created an inspection system. A third aspect regards the standardization of contents and methods, of which the central intervention was to foment the production of manuals and books, holders of a culture, and a school *práxis*.

⁵ Modernidade e cultura escrita nos séculos XIX e XX em Portugal: População, economia, legitimação política e educação. *Educação, sociedade & culturas*, n. 31, 2010, p. 149.

It is also possible to observe that Portugal was not inattentive about what happened in the field of education in other European countries. Justino Magalhães, in other lines, highlights: “Following the Enlightenment tradition that aimed through the school to form subjects of the king, in the course of the nineteenth century, beyond the concern to intensify the capacities of reading, writing, and counting, the intention was that primary education also views the citizenship exercise and professional initiations”⁶. There was, therefore, a direct contemporaneity between what was discussed in European territory and what was proclaimed in Portugal. There was, even, in historiography, the indication for a certain Portuguese “precocity” in this field, with laws that supported the mandatory attendance of children to school, openness to girls' education, school gratuity, which dated back from the eighteenth century and extended throughout the nineteenth, configuring in the search for a mass school system. Helena Costa Araújo warns, however, that other peripheral European countries also passed by similar paths but with different results, and this condition “shall be understood, in the frame of inter-States power relations, as a natural process of all countries in the same structural situation”⁷. By using the characterization developed by Yasemin Nuhogiu Soysal and David Strang (1989)⁸ about the emergence of mass education system in Europe of the nineteenth century with three different processes, “statal forms of education construction” (activity centered in the State), “societal forms of education construction” (intervention of civil society organizations) and “rhetorical construction of education”, she seeks to do an approximation with the education conditions in Portugal of the nineteenth century. In the last category would be the “processes of intervention that were characterized for announcing early, from a temporal point of view, the intention and interest of the State in the public education, in particular at the launch of the mass school system, but who were late in its realization”⁹. For the author, this last concept would be appropriate to the comprehension of the Portuguese case, where the creation and debate of conditions to the formation of a national system of education took place without, however, becoming it a reality.

António Candeias, while working with the demographic census of the nineteenth and twentieth century, brings us relevant considerations on the reasons for the Portuguese delay, which go far beyond the analysis of numbers and percentages present in statistics reports. He observes that explanations to the advance of written culture in the Western culture are associated in historiography to movements of the economic cycles of the European expansion, with emphasis on the industrial revolution; to the reflections from the protestant reform and Enlightenment; and to the consolidation of the State-Nation conception and creation of state ideological diffusion systems, “to drum an universal cultural base unifying and generating of consensus”¹⁰, consequently, that legitimizes the dominant bourgeois culture. He progresses, in the search for the justification of the Portuguese delay, indicating how things work differently in Portugal, who had a different economic expansion from Europe; who did not suffer a great impact with the protestant Reformation but was reached by the Counter-Reformation; the fragility of the Portuguese industrialization; the presence of consolidated borders and no existence of “ethnic or religious tensions that would need constructors apparatuses of a

⁶ Um contributo para a história do processo de escolarização da sociedade portuguesa na transição do Antigo Regime. *Educação, sociedade & culturas*, n. 5, 1996, p. 18.

⁷ Precocidade e “retórica” na construção da escola de massas em Portugal. *Educação, sociedade & culturas*, n. 5, 1999, p. 166.

⁸ Construction of the first mass education systems in the nineteenth-century in Europe, *Sociology of education*, n. 62, 1989, p. 277-288.

⁹ Helena Costa Araújo, op. cit., p. 167.

¹⁰ Ritmos e formas de alfabetização da população portuguesa na transição de século: o que nos mostram os censos populacionais compreendidos entre os anos de 1890 e 1930. *Educação, sociedade & culturas*, n. 5, 1996, p. 36-37.

‘national culture’ constituted factors that seem always to have dismissed the urgency of affirmation in modern and sophisticated terms of a dominant culture”, even if subordinate to big European centers of power¹¹.

Ernesto Candeias Martins also makes interesting considerations as the difficulties in the implementation of public instruction in the country in the middle of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the presence of “clairvoyant pedagogical ideas that germinated and caused primary education to reach all Portuguese children”¹², although the process has been completed with a long delay in relation to the ensemble of Europe. He highlights, for the nineteenth century, advances of issues concerning the free and mandatory education, school network increase, curricular plans definition, teaching methods, etc. And concludes:

However, it is difficult to distinguish a basis of elementary principles in which are based on all these plans, despite the different ideologies, and sometimes differentiated, of their proponents. The gap between reforming intentions (legislation) and concrete educative reality was the general indicator, coupled with the social scourge of illiteracy and the lack of a more extended school network, economically supported by local authorities (decentralization of education)¹³.

By these quickly strokes, it is possible to note not only the poor conditions of public instruction of Portugal, in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, immersed with problems of material conditions – number of schools, conditions of schoolhouses, pedagogy material, etc. –, teachers’ qualification and salaries, teaching methods, shortage of financial resources for the school network maintenance and almost inexistence to its expansion, the lack of continuity in the policies formulated by the State, the continuous ambivalence between centralization and decentralization, the systematic persistence of illiteracy, and so on, but, mainly, the grandiosity of the enterprise to overcome such a challenge. A monumental task, for which the State was unable to offer an alternative on its own, accomplishing, as it did, the call for the contest of the chambers, civil society, and private companies, including benefaction.

The reflex of this set of problems, from macro to micro, we can visualize in the instruction conditions of the village of Ovar and the parish of São Vicente de Pereira. There, we see schools - whenever they exist - in poor conditions, such as underpaid teachers, infrequent students, lack of financial resources to end education, a bureaucracy that hinders and avoids the progression of initiatives in favor of education, political disputes that delays or preclude these processes, private action searching for teaching improvement and recognition of their charitable social action, and many other forms, as we will see later.

The “Brazilians” and the charity in Ovar

To advance in the comprehension of the object that occupies us, the construction of a school for boys in the parish of São Vicente de Pereira, we need to resume some enlightening elements, among which, the social origin of the citizen who will present the proposal of donation of land and partial resources to build the referred school, as well as to assist the Parish Council in the bureaucratic procedures, resources application and accounting of the project. We are talking of João Rodrigues de Oliveira Santos (1832-1900), a rich "Brazilian" returned emigrant, resident of the parish, where he had, in past times, implemented a modern hat factory

¹¹ Idem, p. 37.

¹² O ideário da Escola Pública Portuguesa entre os séculos XIX e XX. *Montagem*, v. 10, 2008, p. 16.

¹³ Idem, *ibidem*.

(1872-1877), which, by the way, motivated the creation of a school for girls that was the subject of the first study we did about the parish, previously mentioned.

The "Brazilian" figure has been studied by many researchers and its importance dimensioned, mainly in the North of Portugal¹⁴. Literature has also been in charge of registering their image in the nineteenth century, although it did so in a more stereotyped manner, pointing to unworthy traces of their way of being and acting, yet recognizing their economic and social importance. According to Fernanda Sousa Maia, analyzing the trajectory of two "Brazilian" returned emigrant brothers who in the first decade of the twentieth century constructed a modern building for male and female schools in the community of Válega, Municipality of Ovar, the literature highlighted "the exoticism of language and clothing, the ostentation of props and external signs of wealth, often associated with a psychological profile little credible, in which the immodesty, lack of culture and education, resulting from a moneyed arrivisme, are the tone"¹⁵. About the constant and varied influence of these characters in the subjects of their cities, villages, and parishes of origin, in which they promoted various improvements, the author draws attention to the motivations that existed in these interventions:

Mere philanthropy or setting up a jubilee return in which it was necessary to impress others, drawing attention to themselves, through the shrill actions of public benevolence that, at the local level, caused inherent symbolic consequences of power, which had also expected media repercussion¹⁶.

In the case of the municipality of Ovar, from the sources researched, the presence of this personage was remarkable. Even with the mentioned media repercussion, through the constant presence in the newspapers of the municipality, which announce departures and arrivals of "Brazilians" who were not definitively settled in place, highlight actions that have repercussion in the entire village, promoted by present, as well as by absent "Brazilians" represented by a local patrician. To indicate the importance of this migratory movement between Ovar and the Atlantic overseas destinations, which included Africa and not just Brazil, newspapers of the studied period contain continued advertisements about navigation services that had in the village a representative to provide appropriate travel tickets. These figures also made themselves noted in other forms, including public manifestations related to important political facts occurred in Brazil, which is evident in the newspapers: "they decided to celebrate the abolition of slavery in the kingdom that received them, and where working hard and honorably, they owned the fortune that today they benefit from. Motta Square was flagged on Sunday, and in the center, a bandstand destined for Philharmonic."¹⁷. In other moments, it is explicit in the news the deep imbrication between the local economy and resources coming from emigrates, who drove progress as could bring problems in time of crisis:

Since the exchange rate of Brazil is increasing, this council starts to feel the lack of money. Many patricians want to send the outcome of their savings, but the transfer of funds is very onerous, and for that, everybody is waiting for the exchange rate to come down. So, this is why there are so many works stopped of houses that were under construction¹⁸.

¹⁴ See, for example, ALVES, Jorge Fernandes, O "brasileiro" oitocentista e seu papel social. *Revista de História*, FLUP, v. 12, 1993, p. 257-296.

¹⁵ A acção dos "brasileiros" de torna-viagem em Ovar: a obra dos irmãos Oliveira Lopes (Válega). *Dunas*, n. 5, novembro 2005, p. 6.

¹⁶ Idem, p. 7.

¹⁷ MANIFESTAÇÃO. *O Povo d'Ovar*, 29 de julho de 1888, ano III, n. 105, p. 2.

¹⁸ O CAMBIO do Brazil. *O Povo d'Ovar*, 7 de junho de 1891, ano V, n. 213, p. 1-2.

However, it is essential to observe that Portuguese society was not inattentive to problems resulting from the intense emigration that occurred in the country in the second half of the nineteenth century. Both central administration and local governments, in a country of little population, perceived the risk occasioned by this labor departure that could put in trouble its economic survival, the traumatic representation of emigration will end by being one of the predominant traces of the written discourse, official or not, present in Portugal until the twentieth century¹⁹. The debate rebounds also in Ovar, where newspapers present, transcribe news or comment about the emigration risks and consequences, as well as highlight the reality that affects the major part of emigrants, and that is much different from the glamorous description commonly made concerning the moneyed "Brazilians", who return elegant and proud to their homeland. In a report entitled "The Brazilians who return", we find the following picture:

It has been days they left Lazareto, Lisbon, seventy and a few more quarantiners, to whom the government has to pay the quarantine expense for they were considered indigents. Do you know whom those indigents are, where they come from? They are emigrants returning from Brazil, disappointed people coming from the *country of gold*, *Brazilians* that bring tatters. And, yet, they are not the unhappiest among those who went to Brazil! At least they could return when many of them do not have money for a return ticket to their homeland, and how many of them wander by there begging, and how many will never come back! It is expected more indigents. In the city of São Paulo, numerous migrants beg on the streets. And the gloomy pilgrimage of the deceived people who leave for Brazil in search of fortune continues!²⁰

By these passages, we can recognize the importance of "Brazilians" in the village of Ovar and its parishes, as well as we can understand that it is not a surprise the several marks they left in these locations for their initiatives. As mentioned before, if by philanthropy or for the search of social acceptance, it is sure that those moneyed people, after returning to their roots or contributing from distant to local improvements, generated development and propitiated benefit in a long extension of the Portuguese territory, transmitting also to the local population benefits enabled by fortunes accumulated by emigrants who attain an economic success in other lands. And in Ovar, we find many of these occurrences, like the one that occupies us, and that we will retake later.

Ovar in the second half of the nineteenth century

Ovar is a village localized in the Center region of Portugal, in the District of Aveiro. In the second half of the nineteenth century, it passed through numerous transformations that affected its political, economic, social and cultural structure, some of them related to facts that we have been treating in the field of instruction. According to Manuel Bernardo, it was a "county of farmers and fishermen", where the "modern manufacturing industry practically did not exist in Ovar, in the finals of the nineteenth century"²¹, in a time where the rurality was a marking feature of Portugal. Mainly for the proximity to the sea, the fishing activities were predominant. By this time, the author mentions as existent industrial activities in the council

¹⁹ MAIA, Fernanda Sousa, op. cit., p. 3.

²⁰ OS BRAZILEIROS que voltam. *O Ovarense*, 17 de maio de 1891, ano VIII, n. 408, p. 2-3.

²¹ A indústria no concelho de Ovar. *Dunas*, n. 2, julho 2002, p. 30.

only the already commented “steam hat factory” (1872-1877), of João Rodrigues de Oliveira Santos, in the parish of São Vicente de Pereira, and an establishment of cotton fabrics and dyeing, which would have functioned in the 1890s in Ovar.

The changes occur mainly from the 1860s, marked by the arrival of the railways in 1865, and the possibilities opened with this advantage in terms of transportation of people, goods, etc., and the consequent dynamization of commercial activities. In the words of Rui Martins, “the train completely changed life in Ovar, a large urban and trade center. (...) On the other hand, Ovar developed its commerce, putting it in contact each time faster with the North and South of the Country”²².

Along with this significant advance, the city, according to the listing of improvements presented by the historian Alberto Sousa Lamy, changed significantly in the period of 21 years in which Manuel de Oliveira Arala e Costa, a politician of the Regenerator Party, controlled the Municipal Chamber and administered the municipality (1866-1887). Are part of the changes of this period the opening of many roads, the construction of the municipal market (1871), the illumination of the village (1874), the theater inauguration (1875), the district enlargement with the incorporation of the three parishes that were part of the municipality of Feira (1875-1879), creation of the post-telegraph station (1876), the water supply to the village (1877), the emergence of 2 newspapers (1883 and 1886), etc.

In political terms, besides the long period of power of the Aralist group, the intrigues and disputes between the groups that fought - literally - for power, must be highlighted. The papers described many times the presence of “quarrelers”, personages many times decisive in the victory of power dispute, especially for the club (and firearms) as ‘dissuasion’ instrument so that political adversaries would not attend to the polls and ensure, like this, the desired voting result. In Ovar, but not only there, the confrontation of the elites did not happen only in the plan of ideas, of the provocation by the press or the debate in the county plenary, but also through hits and shots. According to the same Alberto Sousa Lamy, the political model was Caciquism, and the parties in dispute (Regenerator and Progressive) were made up by “*local political leaders, notable people, local bosses, electoral influent people, caciques*”. To this author, the

Cacique obtained the vote of the elector by promising him support to his pretensions: get a son rid of the military service, obtain a reduction of his contributions, find him a small job, get his street fixed, etc. The agrarian population of the municipality was the traditional ally of monarchical caciques²³.

In cultural and institutional terms, Ovar also had its significance. As we remembered above, in the period in focus (1888-1892) the theater was functioning, there were representative newspapers of the different parties that ran for the power, two philharmonics, several schools, etc. Besides, the papers offered to the public poetry, chronicles, history about the formation of the village, ads of private teachers, scientific books, and literature to sell, etc. In other words, it is possible to note a certain cultural effervescence in the urban territory, which can be observed in a report that appeals against what is not wanted to appear and indicates what is expected to value as a distinctive feature of the village:

²² O caminho-de-ferro: veio estruturante da evolução sócio-urbana entre Porto e Aveiro, em exemplo Espinho e Ovar. *Dunas*, n. 6, novembro de 2006, p. 65.

²³ Op. cit., p. 15.

Political commotions driven by passions, have been making people from Ovar to be considered as people in an almost wild state, ignorant, without notion of what is fair or unfair; and, yet, this is not true, as there will be few villages where instruction is so advanced as here: enough is to say that besides five public schools, there are fifteen schools of free education! The result is that, in this village, there are very few women who do not read and write. The immediate consequence experiences the post office: every day, from 1 to 6 in the afternoon, it is necessary an agent for the sale of stamps only²⁴.

An unusual initiative, which indicates contemporaneity with concerns and social conditions of that time, is related to the second public school of Ovar, created in 1780, who on 1867, as reports us Joaquim Manoel Monteiro Fidalgo, opens its doors to the night teaching, “post-work, an experience perhaps enriching in the time, in which, much probably teacher [João] Madail would not use with his students the same exigency of contents demanded from the students of daytime classes”. To complete the information, the transcription of the public notice published by the municipality administrator, where it is said: “I make know that, from the 15th of the current month on, there will be a night class for adults and boys that for their occupation or their families' cannot attend the daytime class”²⁵. In this way, we can identify in those responsible for the conduction of Ovar's business a particular sensibility, both for the education of adults and for children in school-age who, probably, by their involvement with labor activities that ensured the family livelihood, were appropriately and continuously unable to attend day time classes.

Other exciting discussions appear, still, in the press, regarding the question of public education, which reinforces the already mentioned up-to-dateness of local elites to what occurred in the court and other parts of Europe. In the text signed by João Frederico Teixeira de Pinho²⁶, we find the following considerations:

It is seen, though, that the figures of students [male and female] are not in harmony with the population; and it would be quite suitable for serious men, actually engaged with the progress of public education, to prodigalize all forces of their social energy against ignorance - the worst scourge of humanity. Carefully ask the history and find out if we were wrong. We will say, further, with one of the most important figures of our age: education shall be compulsory and free; compulsory at the first level, free in all. Primary instruction represents the rights of infancy and childhood, more sacred than the father's rights, as they are confused with State rights.

O Ovarense, the journal that brought the information above, initiated in 1883, was the “Newspaper of the Progressive Party”, defending strongly all ideas, chamber decisions, political confrontations, practices of violence that involved that party. On the other hand, *O Povo d'Ovar*, created in 1886, represented the Regenerator Party (a role occupied later by *A Folha d'Ovar*, after 1892). And, equally, in this journal, we came across discussions concerning the social responsibility of instruction and its power of transforming the society and individuals. With the arrival of the Regenerator Party to the municipal power in 1890, *O Povo d'Ovar* publishes a series of articles in which it presents a kind of program containing actions and

²⁴ O SERVIÇO telegrapho-postal em Ovar. *O Ovarense*, 17 de março de 1889, ano VI, n. 298, p. 1.

²⁵ O ensino na vila de Ovar. A escola da Arruela. *Dunas*, n. 18, nov 2018, p. 104.

²⁶ Memórias e datas para a vila de Ovar. *O Ovarense*, 10 de novembro de 1889, ano VII, n. 331, p. 1.

interventions considered necessary to the progress of the village, indicating problems and presenting suggestions to overcome them. While referring to Marinha, a coastal region of the municipality of Ovar, the writer draws attention to its importance, both for the density of its population as for being much obedient, in such a way that “if the governor needs corporals, he recruits them there, from an instant to the other, and forces them to all kind of service that they do with no complain”. After highlighting that Marinha would need, for its development, a road (to enable communication), a church (as an integrant part of people’s education) and a school, he weighs about the advantages of the latter: “Instructing people, teaching them, at least the first elements, is a modern tendency. Instruction is the basis of progress: “it is a seed that produces admirable fruits”. Much ahead, he concludes:

And the *Marinhão* [inhabitant of Marinha] who pays for the parish, who pays for the municipality and pays for the State, do not take advantage of primary education, either secondary, either superior. (...) Is it because he does not complain that we leave him abandoned? That is possible. So, it is for the *Marinhão* in the future to know how to complain, to ask for the improvements he needs, that we shall give him instruction, creating a school in a central location, where he can go without any difficulties²⁷.

There we see what was expected from public instruction in the nineteenth-century speech, oriented to reach modernity, as previously observed by Justino Magalhães: stop forming subjects to form citizens. And, maybe, it is possible to say that, in this proposition of the newspaper is implicit the conception of instruction as a direct instrument of political awareness, capable of taking the citizen to claim for his rights and to comprehend himself as part of a collective, having as horizon the construction of a democratic society, derived from there.

Concerning the cultural and institutional conditions of the parish of São Vicente de Pereira, little information appears in the documentation previous to the period that we are studying. However, it is possible to recover some aspects that help in the comprehension of its particular situation and relations with the municipality of Ovar. Besides having its communication improved in the period with the construction of a road that connected it to the location of Agoncida (1890), it occurred the creation and functioning of the hat factory between 1872-1877 and the opening of the school for girls, by donation of João Rodrigues de Oliveira Santos, in 1888. This benefactor, in a book published in 1868, when he still was in Brazil, tenderly describes São Vicente de Pereira but recognizing its little importance to the general picture of the municipality: “This village, through which the traveler will pass - with no doubt - distracted or indifferent, because nothing he will find in there can particularly call his attention, has - notwithstanding - to me, unspeakable charms”²⁸. However, according to Helder J. de Pinho Almeida, attention should be drawn to the relative stability of the parish population that, within 1865 and 1885, in spite of migratory pressures of the period, could maintain and even increase its number, passing from 1081 to 1209 inhabitants²⁹. With this, it is predictable that did not only school necessities for children be kept, but they also increased.

To further clarify the relations between the municipality and parish around the themes of instruction, Justino Magalhães warns us about the greater sensibility shown by parishes with problems of this nature, which affected these two administrative instances differently. According to this author,

²⁷ ADMINISTRAÇÃO municipal V. *O Povo d’Ovar*, 11 de maio de 1890, ano IV, n. 168, p. 1-2.

²⁸ SANTOS, João Rodrigues de Oliveira. *Horas Vagas: poesias e prosa*. Maranhão [São Luís]: Typ. do Frias, 1868, p. 115.

²⁹ A complexidade nos agregados domésticos da freguesia de S. Vicente de Pereira, na 2ª metade do século XIX. *Dunas*, n. 14, novembro de 2014, p. 26-28.

It was in the Parish Councils that the responsiveness to the questions of instruction was most noticeable, tending the Municipalities to be in line with demographic figures and for political convenience. Apart from factors of ideological nature and a reinforcement of the urban element in the face of the rural one, what was effectively in confront, were different expectations and different educational horizons. The parish board was of literacy, while the public board was of schooling and active citizenship initiation³⁰.

Indeed, the school was the condition and means for the church to become an educational place. The school (schools) and not the parish, was recognized as a place of learning. Differently, the municipality contained in its base the recognized prerogatives of pedagogical sovereignty and representation. It was a place of education. Perhaps for that, returned or absent "Brazilians" have so often worried about providing their parishes with the benefit of a primary school. It is necessary to note that João Rodrigues de Oliveira Santos mentions in his book that the parish had a royal school for boys and a private school for girls³¹, and, maybe, it came from there, his motivation to the posterior donation for the female school, which would be public. The male school was also unsatisfactory, being multiple the claims about its operational conditions, according to what can be observed in the minutes of the Parish Council of São Vicente de Pereira. On April 30, 1882, for example, it was presented a claim of the schoolteacher exposing the "incapacity of the house for the primary education, given the large number of students who want to attend to it"³². The Council recognizes the fairness of the claim but declares to be unable to solve the matter, once in the "parish, there is no separate and specific building for a school, either private buildings that can be rent for such end". Some years later, on February 13, 1887, a new claim is made by the teacher, "about that furniture, which in the year of one thousand, eight hundred and eighty-four, had its purchase ordered by the Parish Council, who was in charge of the parish business, to serve in its school, which never was delivered to the school and it is unknown if it was ever delivered".

We see, by these mentions in the book of minutes of the Parish Council that São Vicente de Pereira needed a house built specifically for the school, once the location did not have an available and appropriate building for this purpose. In this same way, we have indications of how bureaucratic issues halted these initiatives taken in search of improvements, like the delay in the delivery of school furniture, with a three-years-delay or more. The justification for the donation of land and resources to help in the construction of a modern school building to the parish was patent. And "Brazilians" of São Vicente of Pereira perceived there a form not only meritorious, in search of social recognition, but a real opportunity to contribute to the advancement of instructional conditions of the parish, and, consequently, advance in the future of the children of the location.

³⁰ *Da cadeira ao banco*, op. cit., p. 235-236.

³¹ SANTOS, João Rodrigues de Oliveira, op. cit., p. 114.

³² JUNTA de Paróquia de S. Vicente de Pereira. *Livro de Actas*, de 30 de setembro de 1879 a 26 de junho de 1887 [8 de outubro de 1893]. Arquivo da Junta de São Vicente de Pereira. Embora o termo de abertura do livro mencione seu final em 26 de junho de 1887, os registros das atas no mesmo avançam até 8 de outubro de 1893. As menções seguintes à Junta de Paróquia de São Vicente de Pereira provêm todas desta mesma fonte documental.

The school for boys in São Vicente de Pereira

Once made, this contextualization, involving Portugal and Ovar in the second half of the nineteenth century, as well as about the general conditions of instructions in the country and council, moving forward the Parish of São Vicente de Pereira, we believe to be able to present now the documentation pertinent to the formulation of the idea, the progress of the process and the construction of the male school, highlighting its principal moments and the difficulties by which it passed within 1888 and 1892.

The political situation in Ovar improved for the Progressists after their victory in the council elections of 1886, having this group, to which João Rodrigues de Oliveira Santos was connected, the control of the Council after 1887. In this new scene, as previously remembered, it was possible to proceed to the acceptance of the donation made by this personage to the girls' school, accomplished in 1888 and, in this same year, to advance in the solution of serious problems that affected the school building of the male primary school. The first discussion, present in the minutes of the Parish Council, occurred in January 24, 1888 and, despite the president highlighting the limitations of the building in use by the school, the necessity of requesting the government a subsidy and the use of donations of absent Portuguese to the construction of the new school, there was no mention to the names of donators, indicating just their disposition for such purpose:

since this Council has to pay a rent for the male school of this parish, and there is no house to rent under the conditions needed for the exercise of such duty, and the house where the school is presently installed is too inadequate, by lack of light and even for not having the necessary hygienic conditions, for being relatively underground, cold and inappropriate, and, in this case, taking into account the motives with which children's instruction is highly impaired and despised, and having in view many offers of donations of fellow countrymen, who are away, proposed to represent to Y. M. the King, begging a subsidy, and with this and the above-mentioned donations, to construct a building that would have the necessary conditions to avoid the effects with which the public instruction is under damage. This proposal was, unanimously, approved by all members. Next, the President presented the project of the mentioned building with the respective supplementary budget, which the Council agreed to approve, unanimously, consisting the referred budget of expenses quoted in 620:000 Réis and similar income, being the provenance of donations 310:000 Réis and the same amount of subsidy from the Government.

The initial pace was done, but still, much to do. First, it was necessary to face the delay problem through which the bureaucratic arrangements passed concerning the request for the government subsidy, which needed to go from the Council to the Chamber of Ovar and, after its approval, to the Civil Government of Aveiro and, finally, to the central administration in Lisbon. And the same route to come back. Even if there was no contestation or surprise, the period of process proceedings was not short. Hence the importance of starting it the soonest, including to take advantage of the Progressive Party deputy's presence, who represented the council next to the Government. As we will see, later, the school's budget and project were substantially changed in the course of events, and the Parish Council had to think of new funding alternatives. In May 27, 1888, the donation proposal was formalized next to the parish administration:

it was a present, a letter from the Gent. Mr. João Rodrigues d'Oliveira Santos, from the Tour place, in which he shows by taking into account the disregard to the public instruction of this parish (...); and in addition, he asked Dr. Barboza de Magalhães, deputy by Ovar, to put some interest in obtaining from the government the subsidy that this Municipality decided to request in the session of last January 24, and, that he asked, and obtained, from our fellow countrymen resident in Brazil - Manoel Alves da Cruz and Antonio Gomes Leite, the donations - of the first 100\$000 Réis fortes, and of the second, besides similar amount, a property in land *lavradia cita* in the referred Tower place, facing the public road in the east side, to build in there a school for male instruction, renting the rest of the land that is not occupied to raise funds to make a small library, proper to the public education of the inhabitants of this parish, and who is ready to pass the donation deed to this Council, of both the valued offer, as well as the property of the aforementioned benefactor Antonio Gomes Leite, who gave him a power of attorney to this purpose, to whenever this Council designates.

The Parish Council approves the donation, immediately and unanimously, registers the vote of honor in favor of João Rodrigues de Oliveira Santos and schedules a meeting for the next month for the official registration of the proposal to give sequence to the proceedings. On the 29th of Jun, in an extraordinary session, the formal questions were resolved. Initially, the president observed that this was a “session destined exclusively to the celebration of a fact of higher importance to this parish, to primary instruction”, asking then for the transcription of the letter of João Rodrigues de Oliveira Santos. The letter main points concerned the question of the government subsidy, which should be reached with the “intermediation of the zealous and decent deputy from this circle, Dr. Barboza de Magalhães, who, genteelly, promised me to this end his valuable sponsorship”; the name of the donators, residents in Brazil; the description of the “property of the plowed land” and values promised; and the complementary note about the use of the land that will be not occupied after the construction of the school, which should be rented and, with the product, a small library of books proper to public instruction should be formed. Next, the president informed that he had previously taken care of the registration of the land donation and deed in Ovar, which had no pending issue. A new vote of honor was registered, now to the donators of the land and financial resources, and defined that it would be asked to the press the publication of the Municipal minute, for “being this not only the best way of more extensively manifesting to the benefactors donators the unforgettable gratitude of this people, but also the most adequate to help the beneficial contagion of the noble feelings from which those gentlemen got inspired”.

We would highlight in these excerpts the mention regarding the necessary intervention of the deputy representative of the municipality to the success of the subsidy, denoting the relations of dependence of small locations with state elites; the media repercussion of the donations from "Brazilians", while dedicating them the publication of the Council minutes; stimulus to new donations from "Brazilians", in a search for the "beneficial contagion of noble feelings"; and reference to the public library creation. According to Ernesto Candeias Martins, talking about public libraries, this was a significant action of the Portuguese education in the nineteenth century, instituted by Decree-Law of August 2, 1870: it “intended to take the

population to read, to include reading in their homes (art. 5), corresponding to educational purposes followed by other European countries (Switzerland, Prussia, France, Spain, England, Germany, and Sweden)"³³.

In the *O Ovarense* journal, we found the eco of these initiatives, in the news that announced the donations occurred in São Vicente de Pereira for the construction of the male school. In one of them, the reporter speaks of the Parish Council decision, pays compliments to the benefactors of the parish, praises the deputy care for the council, and finalizes: "Actions as those are glorified with all the enthusiasm and ineradicably registered. Well, let there be, the distinguished benefactors!"³⁴. Another publication presents the transcription of the minutes from Jun 29, 1888, of the Parish Council, accomplishing what they established at the end of that extraordinary session³⁵.

Likewise, the Ovar Chamber followed the process conduction and gave all necessary approval for its continuity. In the session of May 23, 1888, the Chamber

approved the supplementary budget of the council of the S. Vicent Parish to the construction of a building for a male school, asking for the agreement with the following content: - In regard of the present supplementary budget of the council of the S. Vicent Parish: Considering that it is a necessity and of utility the construction of a male school for the referred parish; considering that income and expense are balanced; and considering that the respective formalities are accomplished; The Chamber of Ovar, in session of May 26, 1888, agrees in approving it, recommending to the council of the S. Vicente Parish the exact compliance with Art. 390 of the Administrative Code³⁶.

In the session of September 30, 1888, the Parish Council, while discussing the inadequate conditions in which the primary instruction was operating and the delay in the subsidy approval for the school construction, proposes that they should seek for the acceleration of the process, and that the "Council would be obligated to directly construct the referred building, within a year from the date they would obtain the alluded subsidy". The referral approved, the president presented a new project and budget for the building where it previewed "expense of one thousand Escudos and three hundred and fifty thousand Réis and similar income, being the provenances - from donations of six hundred and fifty thousand Réis and a similar amount of government subsidy". This budget was approved at the Ovar Chamber session of December 12, 1888. The new value for the school construction, the double of the original cost, was probably attached to the process that requested the subsidy, once, as we will see later, the aid approved by the side of the Government was based upon it.

In the session of March 3, 1888, the president informs the Parish Council the approval of the supplementary budget by the Ovar Chamber and that it was authorized, as well the "divestiture of some empty lots of this parish", viewing to meet the expenses, within which, the

³³ Op. cit., p. 26.

³⁴ BENEMERITOS. *O Ovarense*, 10 de junho de 1888, ano V, n. 258, p. 2.

³⁵ BENEMERENCIA em favor da instrução popular. *O Ovarense*, 8 de julho de 1888, ano V, n. 262, p. 1-2.

³⁶ CÂMARA Municipal de Ovar. *Livro de Actas n. 32*, de 12 de Fevereiro de 1887 a 14 de Junho de 1890. Arquivo Municipal de Ovar. The following mentions concerning the Municipal Chamber of Over are all them from this same documental source.

complementary values of the received donations and subsidy previewed from the Government, necessary to the construction of the school building, deciding, however, by putting in auction the referred real states. The Council's book of minutes contains two auction notices: one, dated April 14, 1889, in which only one of the vacant lots have been sold for 70\$272 Réis; and the other, of June 9, 1889, which includes the sale of three vacant lots: the first was divided into two parts, yielding, respectively, 20\$350 Réis and 3\$160 Réis; the second lot was sold for 6\$003 Réis; the third, was also split in two, each yielding 47\$520 Réis. A total of 194\$825 Réis collected for the Parish Council's coffers, which would be sufficient to cover the costs of the school building, when added to the funds that had been given in donation and the subsidy to be conceded by the Government.

By the occasion of the first auction, the result of the subsidy request was already known, as in the session of April 7, 1889, it was announced its approval by the Ministry of the Kingdom, through ordinance of February 16 of that year, of 650\$000 Réis, divided into two similar installments, one for the middle and the other for the end of the school construction. A new vote of honor was registered to deputy Jose Maria Barboza de Magalhães, who represented the council, "for his notable services, tireless manner, and immeasurable protection, who so valuably assisted us". They won the first round of the fight for the school construction and respected the subsidy approval, the reception of the donations, land, and collection of complementary income to sustain the enterprise. Now, it was possible to move to a new stage, the construction itself.

The next step sought to ensure the speed of the process, since the ordinance that conceded the government subsidy established that the work should be completed one year after receiving the first installment. For that, on May 26, 1889, it was asked from the Civil Governor to submit to the Council, as soon as possible, any suggestions presented by the "Director of the District Public Works", regarding possible changes on the school plan, an essential document for the bid public notice. On Jun 30 of that same year, the president of the Council declares that being in possession of all the necessary documentation and "giving that the time conceded for the building construction of the male primary school is too short, (...) he proposes, with no further loss of time, the opening of a bid for the mentioned construction". The conditions of the public notice were approved, including plan, budget, requirements, and deadlines:

first, admitting as the base for the bid the amount of 1:020\$000 Réis; second, that the payment is going to be made in two similar installments, one while the construction is in the middle, and the other, at its conclusion; third, that the adjudicator is giving a guarantor to the contract faithful completion, to whom the Council is assuring the construction price; fourth, that the competitor is presenting his proposal by close letter addressed to the Parish Council; fifth, that the Council reserves the right of opening a new contest if understood this is convenient to the interests of this Parish, in the female school building of this parish, by the term of 20 days, to count from this date, in order those who are interested can see, examine, calculate and deliver to the illustrious Teacher the proposal letters, in the designated form; and which are going to be open in a session in this Council on next July 21.

The public notice, published by *O Ovarense*, highlighted: "The plan, budget and other conditions related to this contest, are patent every Sunday, holiday, and Thursday, from 9 to 12 a.m., in the building of the female primary school, at the Tour of this community"³⁷. Despite the divulgation through public notices and by the press, the disposal did not occur on July 21, 1889, by lack of proposals, and the Council decided in a meeting on this same day for the prorogation of the deadline to the 28 of the same month. Finally, in this new date, 6 proposals were presented, which varied from 1:300\$000 to 994\$000 Réis, being this last amount considered the winner. The Parish Council offers as a guarantee to the construction the governmental subsidy, "the property in which the school building is going to be constructed, and the donations, in money, still existent in power of Mr. João Rodrigues d'Oliveira Santos". To generate more income to help in the maintenance of the school works, the Parish Council, on Jun 8, 1890, after discussions in previous sessions, decides to rent for planting a part of the land that was not used by the school for the amount of 1\$800 Réis. With these procedures, one more step was over in the way to the concretization of the school building.

Meanwhile, problems appear. First, on July 6, 1890, the winning bidder asks for a six month dilation time to deliver the work, "as it had missed, in the agreement, the quarries with whom he had adjusted the casing of doors, and windows", making it impossible to complete the building within the stipulated deadline. The new final date would be January 20, 1891, and the "Council, attentive to the matter and recognizing the alleged fact, deliberated conceding the prorogation". Second, it is registered in the minutes of the Ovar Chamber, in the session of October 11, 1890, an agreement of the Administrative Court of Aveiro, "revoking the deliberations of the Parish Council of S. Vicente de Pereira community on the sale of some empty lots belonging to this same Council, who sold them without previous authorization of the Government and of the District Council"³⁸. The specter of lack of resources for the completion of the work would again haunt the Parish Council of São Vicente de Pereira community.

The first challenge for work completion was put in the session of October 12, 1890, when the winning bidder asked for the first payment that he thought too long overdue as the respective construction had three of four parts ready. Since the Council, to receive the first part of the subsidy, which was essential to be able to pay the first installment, needed to demonstrate to the Government that the construction was already in its middles, deliberated by addressing a letter to the Director of the Aveiro District Public Works asking for an auditor to inspect the works. In the following session, on October 27 of the same year, the engineer sent by Aveiro came to the Council, declaring

that the school building mason work was complete, except for the external stairs; the trowel work is complete, and the external finishing just began; the carpenter work is almost done, remaining only the interior doors and teacher's habitation finishing. The engineer still mentioned that works have been done in safety and the plans approved by the Direction of Public Works of the District of Aveiro were obeyed.

³⁷ CONCURSO. *O Ovarense*, 7 de julho de 1889, ano VI, n. 313, p. 3.

³⁸ CÂMARA Municipal de Ovar. *Livro de Actas n. 33*, de 21 de Julho de 1890 a 17 de Julho de 1893. Arquivo Municipal de Ovar. The following mentions concerning the Municipal Chamber of Over are all them from this same documental source.

With this report, the Parish Council was qualified to take half of the government subsidy, the amount of 325\$000 Réis, diminishing, momentarily, the pressures on the coffers of the parish. However, the relief remains for little time: in the extraordinary session of November 1, 1890, arrives to the parish the decision of the Administrative Court of Aveiro, which passed previously by the Chamber of Ovar, through which “the Council was assuredly aware that it was annulled the deliberations consisted of the session of Jun 22, 1888, related to the disposal of the empty lots”. Perceived the gravity and the irreversibility of the situation, the president proposes that they “should put the quantities received at the buyers disposal, in cash”, and that, given the continuity of the lack of resources, as “unexpectedly some donations that they counted with as complementary funds to the construction of the male primary school building were missing”, with the works already in course, “they should propose, through legal manner, the sale of the referred empty lots”, for what it would be asked instructions to the superior instances. Despite the reference made by the president of the Council, without mentioning any names, to possible donations that did not come true, it is necessary to observe that other forms of collaboration also happened, which exposed the collective character that took the construction of the school building. On November 10, 1889, it was recorded in the minutes of the Parish Council that João Rodrigues de Oliveira Santos informed that the “plan and respective budget [of the school building] was prepared by Mr. Thomaz Antonio Ferreira, of Venda-Nova, from Couto de Cucujães, and delivered without any compensation for his work, with a declaration that he did it in benefit of the public instruction”. The Council immediately registered a vote of honor, in a “sign of gratitude, for the donation with which he faced the competition, helping and serving with the product of his work all inhabitants of this parish”.

The work delayed, but not only on account of financial problems faced by the Parish Council. Again, in the session of January 18, 1891, the winning bidder asked for a postponement of the delivery, alleging lack of space in the lot “annex to the building, which was necessary to the storage of the respective materials, since the area available for that end was occupied by materials belonging to trowel work”. As the contractor did not receive the first part of his payment, we presumed that, in reality, he sought to postpone the completion of the work, as a way of pressuring the parish to pay what was due. The Council agrees with the request, and a new date is fixed for Jun 30 of the same year. The Ovar Chamber approves this prorogation in a session of February 3, 1891.

In April 12, 1891, finally, the Council accused the receipt of the first installment of the government subsidy in the value of 325\$000 and that, for still being in debt with the payment of the bidder, the president “proposed that they should pay it without waste of time, for the alluded bidder could abbreviate the completion of the Works”. To reach the 497\$000 Réis due, they used part of the donations that were under the guard of João Rodrigues de Oliveira Santos. One more moment of relief to the Council.

On May 24, 1891, the president of the Council argued next to the members about the pertinence of proceeding to the sale of the extra land, unnecessary to the school building, teacher residence and sports yard, whose value, estimated in more than 100\$000 Réis, could yield in titles of the government much more than the 2\$000 Réis earned with the lot rental. As the land donator had already been contacted in Brazil and agreed with the transaction, the proposal was approved. After being communicated of the decision, the Chamber of Ovar, in the session of Jun 8, 1891, deliberated “to authorize the referred council for that sale, in what concerned them”. Put in an

tender public notice on October 24, 1891, the lot was sold by 151\$500 Réis, and the product, with the mediation of João Rodrigues de Oliveira Santos, was converted “into inscriptions of the Portuguese Government, registered in the same Council, having the latter the obligation of employing, annually, the interests of the referred inscriptions, in books suitable to the creation, at the mentioned school, of a library, for the public instruction”.

Although with some delay, the work arrives at an end. In the session of September 13, 1891, the bidder required from the Council the rest of the payment, justifying that he had given an end to the work, his commitment provided in the terms of the auction clauses. The Council restarts the procedures next to the Director of Public Works of the District of Aveiro, requesting a new inspection. The competent report was registered in the session of October 5, 1891, where the engineer declared that the work was complete, in harmony with the approved plan and budget, and, consequently, the Council could now require the second installment of the subsidy to which it had right. Given the engineer's report about the school building, the Council also judges the construction of the school in acceptable condition and approves it. With that, it was possible to give sequence to the process next to the superior authorities to release the remained funds of the government subsidy.

In the session of November 22, 1891, the president inform the members that João Rodrigues de Oliveira Santos had obtained, some time ago, from Antonio Domingues Geraldo and his wife, compatriots resident in Brazil, one more donation to the male school in the value of 18\$000 Réis, “employed in furniture to the same school”. It was registered as an act of honor in the Council with the presence of the benefactors. In the following month, in the session of December 20, 1891, the same João Rodrigues de Oliveira Santos, depositary of the donations obtained to the school, presented to the Council an account of the financial movements for which he was responsible. In the session minutes, the final table is transcribed as follows:

			Owe	Left
1888		Donation that I obtained from Mr. Antonio Gomes Leite, from Bahia, to the male school		100:000
“		Ditto of Mr. Manoel Alves da Cruz, from Pará, for the same purpose		100:000
1889		Ditto of Mr. Antonio Domingues Geraldo, from Ceará, idem		18:000
“		Money that I delivered to Mr. President of the Council, Antonio Jose da Silva, for the payment of Vinhas [winning bidding of the work]	117:000	
1891		Ditto that the same Mr. Silva gave to the purchase of inscriptions		50:000
November	27	Purchase of three inscriptions that I remitted to the Council by post	133:835	
		Registered Letter	175	
December	9	Obligation purchase n° 090550 of loan for the roads, that remains in my power at the disposal of the Council	17:000	
		Difference in my favor, to close.	268\$010	268\$000

As the reader may have noticed, even with the government subsidy and benefactors' donations, the relation between the school construction incomes and expenses would not be similar for the sale annulation of the vacant lots. The president of the Parish Council confirms the situation in the session of January 17, 1892, while presenting the incapacity of the parish to pay the debt referent to the school construction and proposing the application for a loan to face it:

payment to which was included in the budget only the amount of 850\$000 Réis, when the total value, expected by the winning bidder, is 994\$000 Réis; and since the promotion of the ordinary budget there are not sufficient means to cover the remaining amount of 144\$000 Réis, either there is no prevision for having them in the future, the proposition is to apply for a loan of the mentioned missing amount of hundred and forty-four thousand Réis, assuming this Council the respective interests until there are resources, and it can be depreciated.

As such a loan depended on superior approval formalization, it probably was not given, at least in the following months. In the extraordinary session of December 31, 1892, while closing the annual activities, the Council declares to be in debt with the bidder of the male school of "an amount of a hundred and ninety-four thousand Réis, (...) once he received just the amount of eight hundred and fifty thousand Réis from the budget of the current year". The Council closed the book of minutes of São Vicente de Pereira Parish on October 8, 1893, with no mention of the debt outcome. No complementary information was found in the minutes of the Municipal Chamber or journals of Ovar. Concerning the school, we can conclude that it started to work in the new building in 1892, once that, in the session of February 14 of that year, the president

informed all members, that last Wednesday, the 10th of the current month, in his presence, the new male primary school building of this parish had an inspection and sanitary exam made by the School Sub-Inspector; and that the same officer concluded by stating that the building was in the appropriated conditions for the operation of the mentioned school; and for that, he authorized the access of the respective teacher in there to exercise his functions, next Monday, the 14th of the current month. For that reason, it would be given publicity to public notice preventing the school change. Attentive to the same matter, the Council decided to make the communication to the respective teacher for the same end.

Through the illustrations below, it is possible to note the solidity of the school construction, which started to function in the year of 1892, until currently in good state of conservation, as well as the modern elements of its layout are, besides appearing to have adequate learning and comfort conditions for the teacher and boys of the parish. In the final, the Parish Council and the "Brazilians" philanthropy bequeathed a work that persists in the parish educational scene, even if it does not work as an educative unity anymore.

Picture 1: Male primary school, in São Vicente de Pereira



Source: Archive of the authors

Picture 2: Informative detail about the male primary school of São Vicente de Pereira



Source: Archive of the authors

Final Considerations

It was intended with this work, taking as starting point the construction of a male school building in the parish of São Vicente de Pereira, in the Municipality of Ovar, within the years of 1888-1892, to discuss both the tribulations through which the small Portuguese locations passed in the second half of the nineteenth century, mainly in what concerns the instructional matters, as well as the parish relations with the municipalities and other instances of the Kingdom, progressing into the relation of local difficulties with the general conditions of the society and instruction of the same period, pursued by an affliction that reached it, from the parish to the Court, illiteracy in high degree.

Through this study, of local character, which opens to the general, we could realize how the budgetary difficulties, presented by the central power to justify the inexistence or lack of continuity of effective policies in favor of public instruction, were felt with much more vehemence in the parishes as the impasse that the São Vicente de Pereira parish faced in the final efforts to construct the male school building, impotent in the face of a deficit of 144 thousand Réis, little more than the annual salary of a primary teacher at the time. And note that teachers were within the public workers with the worst remuneration, for that and their determination to conduct children towards civilization, a report from the local press called them “cheap heroes”³⁹.

Also, it is possible to perceive the importance of the study of the bureaucratic complexity that involved Portuguese education in the past. The delay to have all approvals for the execution of a work that should pass by several instances tormented the parish leaders who, equally, needed to repeat the entire path at the final of the project to prove its completion. That, if no accident happens on the way to almost prevent the conclusion of some action, like the sale annulation of São Vicente de Pereira empty lots that left the parish, at the end of the male school work, in a situation of almost insolvency.

Another significant aspect is related to the competition of individuals in searching for improvements for the parishes or municipalities to supplant both lack of progress and lack of resources in municipal or parish coffers. For this, much did the so-called “Brazilians”, returned emigrants, who invested significantly, mainly in the North of Portugal, in improvements such as orphanages, nursing homes, hospitals, and schools. In the small parish of São Vicente de Pereira, the building and furniture for the girls' public school resulted from the donation of the “Brazilian” João Rodrigues de Oliveira Santos, who will lead the donation process that drove the decision of the Parish Council to take up the challenge of constructing the male school building, given the precarious conditions in which it was operating. Whether due to philanthropy, to the sense of responsibility towards their homeland or the search for social recognition, the respectability that money alone could not guarantee, the fact is that these characters marked part of Portuguese lands, both in material terms, with palaces and architectural props, as immaterial, by contributing to the advancements of instruction and culture.

In short, many are the lessons that we can draw from this study, but they all converge to the realization of Portugal's late-nineteenth-century instructional delay concerning other European countries and to the urgency with which this problem should have been addressed - what did not happen. Despite all the efforts of the state, municipalities, parishes, and private parties, Portugal will enter the twentieth century with alarming illiteracy rates for the European standards, and it will still take several decades to finally make mass education available to its people.

³⁹ O SR. MINISTRO do Reino e os professores primários. *O Ovarense*, 18 de dezembro de 1892, n. 489, ano X, p. 1.

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