



## **History of training and work of teachers in rural schools (1940-1970)<sup>1</sup>**

História da formação e do trabalho de professoras e professores de escolas rurais (1940-1970)

Historia de la formación y el trabajo de los maestros de las escuelas rurales (1940-1970)

### **Organization**

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### **Presentation**

The history of the training and work of teachers in rural primary schools holds great potential for investigation, for it allows further development of various correlated themes in the educational field, such as the history of the teaching profession and of the school, as well as schooling of children and of adults, and the ways of dissemination of a culture of literacy in the rural area.

In the different countries of Latin America, the education of rural laborers has historically constituted a challenge of undeniable proportions. Nevertheless, the important role of rural schools in schooling children in Latin America cannot be disregarded. For that reason, the expansion of historiographic production regarding this theme in the past decade has been of fundamental significance.

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In this regard, the proposal of a dossier to take up the theme of the history of the training and work of rural teachers (1940 to 1970)<sup>2</sup> arises from the results obtained in the project *Training and Work of Rural Teachers in Brazil: PR, SP, MG, RJ, MA, MS, MT, PE, PI, SE, PB, and RO (from the 1940s to 1970s)* [*Formação e Trabalho de Professoras e Professores Rurais no Brasil: PR, SP, MG, RJ, MA, MS, MT, PE, PI, SE, PB, RO (décadas de 40 a 70 do século XX)*], carried out under the coordination of Prof. Dr. Rosa Fátima de Souza Chaloba (Unesp). The aim of this project, of an interinstitutional nature, was to analyze the professionalization of teachers in Brazil, seeking to understand the public policies undertaken on a national and state level for training of rural teachers and the manners of recruitment, the career, salaries, and working conditions of teachers in the countryside. As such, the aim is to contribute to writing up the history of rural education in Brazil.

The theme chosen to direct the investigation mentioned was guided by the assumption that the history of the institutionalization of elementary school is inseparable from the history of the teaching profession, since primary school teaching personnel were one of the first collective groups of teachers to professionalize their work, that is, to exercise a specialized occupation based on a common identity. Actually, it can be affirmed that the primary teaching profession established itself as one of the fronts of consolidation of national educational systems and of expansion of elementary school. Especially in the rural areas, where single unit (one room) schools predominated (called isolated or multigrade schools in Brazil), in which one teacher taught children of different ages and levels of advancement in the same classroom, the centrality of the teacher was even more clear to be seen. For that reason, telling the story of rural education focusing on primary education through the history of the training and work of its teachers has proven to be a fruitful alternative, both from the methodological perspective and from the perspective of production of historical knowledge.

Such a choice, to a certain extent, makes it possible to get around the limitations of documental sources by drawing upon the production and examination of oral sources. Documentation regarding rural schools tends to be scarce and not well preserved, due to the location of these teaching establishments, the discontinuous nature of the operation of the rural schools, the difficulties of providing for teachers, and the disappearance/closing of most of these schools by the deliberate action of public authorities and by the developments of the process of intensification of urbanization that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century. Thus, through the memories and representations of the teachers, the production and examination of oral sources make it possible to reconstruct the experience of schooling in the rural area, the difficulties faced, the limits of political action, and the educational differences and inequalities experienced by the rural population.

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<sup>2</sup> The initial reference for the time period is taken from the initiatives of the federal government in promoting expansion of rural primary education through allocating funds, construction of schools, and regulations and directives for teacher education. The final reference in the 1970s is explained by the extinction of this model of training and the adoption of new models through implementation of the Educational Reform of Primary and Secondary School [*Reforma do Ensino de 1º e 2º Graus*] (Law 5.692/71). In this respect, the texts that compose this dossier address the period from 1940 to 1970, except for the first article, which takes up the object of study situating it at the beginning of the twentieth century. Notwithstanding this discrepancy, we consider that the analysis undertaken by its author is important for situating the discussion in the context of Argentina and, consequently, the time frame is consistent with the problematic addressed. We therefore evaluate there not to be any loss to the temporal consistency underlying this dossier.

In addition, prominent aspects of the problematic of teacher training are the prevalence and the importance of lay (non-professional) teachers, the numerous manners of training for teaching through practice, the initiatives for a specific manner of training in the rural teacher-training schools (*Escolas Normais Rurais*), and the different proposals for training teachers for the rural primary schools.

In regard to the work itself (enrollment in teacher education, career, salaries, and work conditions), as yet little-known aspects of the teaching profession in the rural areas appear. The teacher seen as a worker and teaching understood as an occupation give rise to sociohistorical reflections regarding the conditions of the exercise of teaching in a capitalist society whose division of labor reaffirms differences of gender, race, and particularities of the rural and urban world. Furthermore, it requires consideration of the school as a social organization and school work (the tasks performed by teachers) related to standards and to bureaucratic, hierarchical, and organizational conditioning. It thus implies dispelling the notion that teaching is naturally women's work, as well as the need to perform other tasks exercised by women in their lives and, that way, bear in mind the impasses and daily confrontations of the instructors in the classrooms, the formation of professionalism, the centrality and the social and cultural meaning of the work of the teachers (especially of the female gender) in the rural communities.

For all these reasons, to postulate a history of rural education from the perspective of the teachers is, above all, to affirm a thematic, methodological, and interpretive possibility, whose fruitfulness is well expressed in the set of texts gathered here, three of which were written by contributors from Brazil and four from researchers outside of Brazil, namely, two articles from Mexico, one from Uruguay, and another from Argentina. In the sphere of the theme of teacher training and work, although the texts take on specific aspects related to the contexts investigated, points of convergence underlie all of them concerning the insufficient investment in teacher training and in the maintenance and conservation of the rural school units – characterized by their rustic and precarious nature – and the innumerable problems faced in the exercise of teaching. The persistence of these problems, both in regard to the passage of decades and in the geographic diversity itself addressed by the texts, gives rise to a reflection, also present in most of the articles, regarding the role that the rural world and the schools set up therein played from the 1940s to 1970 in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and Uruguay.

*Alejandro Ramón Herrero* discusses rural education in Argentina in the period from 1905-1960 with the concern of understanding the diagnoses and the official initiatives for regulating and providing for the rural schools and what the limits of these actions were. *Pamela Ruth Reisin* researches the activity of the rural pedagogical movement and its effects on the education of teacher-training students in Uruguay from 1940 to 1960. The movement was based on practical training that considered the particular aspects of the work of teachers in rural schools. *Oresta López* discusses the antecedents and the educational challenges of the professionalization of rural teacher training in Mexico in the period of 1940-1946 and provides a view of the unionization controlled by the federal government, as well as the precariousness and feminization of that organization. *Noely C. D. Garcia* and *Rosa Fátima de Souza Chaloba* take up the training and work of teachers in the state of São Paulo from 1940 to 1970 with emphasis on the recollections of nine teachers of rural schools interviewed by the authors. *Nilce Vieira Campos Ferreira* investigates the training of teachers for the rural schools set up in Brazil from 1950 to 1963 by the National Campaign for Rural Education (*Campanha Nacional de Educação Rural*). *Josemir A. Barros*, *Márcia Jovani de O. Nunes*, and *Andressa L. da Silva* identify and analyze the ways of teaching, the work of rural teachers, and school infrastructure

within the context of migration of settlers to the Amazon region (Rondônia) in the period from 1955 to 1971. *Arianna V. Hernández* and *Jesús Adolfo T. Holguín* examine the training of students in teacher-training schools and their participation in agrarian movements in Chihuahua, Mexico, in the 1960s, looking closely at the ideological influences of socialist education in the *Cardenista* period.

With the publication of this dossier, we hope to provide researchers involved with the theme of the history of schooling in rural areas with the possibility of a broader understanding regarding questions related to the training and the work of teachers in rural schools in Brazil. In addition, we hope to be able to expand the analysis through the participation of authors outside of Brazil that also research the theme and analyze it from their countries of origin.

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