



**Bernardo Pereira de Vasconcelos: educate the people; guarantee independence!<sup>1</sup>**

Bernardo Pereira de Vasconcelos: letrar a população; garantir a independência!

Bernardo Pereira de Vasconcelos: educar a la población; ¡garantizar la independencia!

Bernardo Pereira de Vasconcelos: éduquer la population; garantie d'indépendance!

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**Abstract**

Bernardo Vasconcelos' actions in the First Empire (1822-1840) were fundamental in guaranteeing the independence of Brazil and consolidating its institutions. From his first steps as a parliamentary representative, he discussed and thought about education as a system that required public regulation, inspection and investment. His Study Plan became the embryo of the First Letters Schools Law, in 1827. By regulating imperial law in the province of Minas Gerais, he created the conditions for its inspection by investing in public financing of education. When looking for gaps and clues in the speech of and about Bernardo Vasconcelos, we find the politician who saw public education as the necessary engine for building the Brazilian nation. After 200 years, problems in education still present themselves to the Brazilian State.

**Keywords:** Educational laws; Bernardo Pereira de Vasconcelos; Modernity; Liberalism; First Letters.

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## Resumo

As ações de Bernardo Vasconcelos no Primeiro Império (1822-1840) foram fundamentais para garantir a independência do Brasil e consolidar as suas instituições. Desde seus primeiros passos como representante parlamentar discutiu e pensou a educação enquanto um sistema que necessitava de regulação, inspeção e investimento públicos. Seu Plano de Estudos tornou-se o embrião da Lei das Escolas de Primeiras Letras, em 1827. Ao regulamentar a lei imperial na província de Minas Gerais criou as condições para a sua inspeção investindo no financiamento público da educação. Ao buscar as brechas e os indícios no discurso de e sobre Bernardo Vasconcelos encontramos o homem político que via na educação pública o motor necessário para a construção da nação brasileira. Após 200 anos, os problemas na educação ainda se apresentam ao Estado brasileiro.

**Palavras-Chave:** Leis educacionais; Bernardo Pereira de Vasconcelos; Modernidade; Liberalismo; Primeiras Letras.

## Resumen

Las acciones de Bernardo Vasconcelos en el Primer Imperio (1822-1840) fueron fundamentales para garantizar la independencia de Brasil y consolidar sus instituciones. Desde sus primeros pasos como diputado parlamentario discutió y pensó en la educación como un sistema que requería regulación, fiscalización e inversión públicas. Su Plan de Estudios pasó a ser el embrión de la Ley de Escuelas de Primeras Letras, de 1827. Al regular la ley imperial en la provincia de Minas Gerais, creó las condiciones para su inspección invirtiendo en la financiación pública de la educación. Al buscar lagunas y pistas en el discurso de y sobre Bernardo Vasconcelos, encontramos al político que vio en la educación pública el motor necesario para la construcción de la nación brasileña. Después de 200 años, los problemas en materia de educación aún se presentan al Estado brasileño.

**Palabras Clave:** Leyes educativas; Bernardo Pereira de Vasconcelos; Modernidad; Liberalismo; Primeras letras.

## Résumé

L'action de Bernardo Vasconcelos sous le Premier Empire (1822-1840) fut fondamentale pour garantir l'indépendance du Brésil et consolider ses institutions. Dès ses premiers pas en tant que représentant parlementaire, il a discuté et réfléchi sur l'éducation comme un système qui nécessitait une réglementation, une inspection et des investissements publics. Son Projet d'Études devint l'embryon de la Loi sur l'Écoles des Premières Lettres, en 1827. En réglementant le droit impérial dans la province du Minas Gerais, il a créé les conditions de son contrôle en investissant dans le financement public de l'éducation. En cherchant des lacunes et des indices dans le discours de et sur Bernardo Vasconcelos, nous trouvons l'homme politique qui considérait l'éducation publique comme le moteur nécessaire à la construction de la nation brésilienne. Après 200 ans, les problèmes d'éducation se posent toujours à l'État brésilien.

**Mots-Clés:** Lois éducatives; Bernardo Pereira de Vasconcelos; La modernité; Libéralisme; Premières lettres.

## Introduction

On August 27, 1820, Bernardo Pereira de Vasconcelos (1795-1850) turned 25 years old; three days before, the Liberal Revolution broke out in the city of Porto, demanding the Court of Lisbon. The Court decreed the return of King D. João VI in 1821 and later in 1822, by the regent prince D. Pedro de Alcântara. For Brazilians, the culmination of these movements occurred on September 7, 1822 with the proclamation of Independence.

Bernardo Vasconcelos, already ill, was possibly convalescing from another of his bouts of pain that would affect him throughout his life. The fact is that, despite being contemporary, there is no record of his participation in Brazil's Independence. He had tried with the king for another position in Ouro Preto, as he had left his position as judge in the city of Guaratinguetá-SP to be with his family. His mother and several other relatives lived in the capital of the province of Minas Gerais. Who knows, perhaps he would pursue a local political career: his father, councilor in Vila Rica, later Ouro Preto; the maternal grandfather, João de Souza Barradas, councilor in Mariana. But he had prepared himself for the magistracy and service to the king.

Over time, pressed by the desire to contribute to the incipient State or the need for work, he ended up radically involved in local, provincial and imperial politics. He had no time or health left for anything else in life, dedicating himself entirely to politics. Vasconcelos was not an educator, despite valuing education to the point of placing it as one of the central axes of his national project. In the second quarter of the 19th century, Vasconcelos became one of the main producers of Brazilian institutions, including schools and education, as necessary for the process of consolidating Brazilian political and educational language in the first half of the 19th century.

He spoke of an enlightenment education whose main objective would be the rational man defending his ideas and arguments without the prejudices and superstitions present in the *Ancien Régime*. This presupposed a distancing from the Catholic Church, which built a large educational investment in seminaries and convents. Vasconcelos understood the urgency and need for the nationalization of education, starting the process of regulating and creating schools already at the General Council of the Province. Later, he would take his ideas to the National Assembly as soon as he took up the position of Deputy. He discussed the creation of Law Faculties and also worked in the Executive branch, when minister of the Empire, creating the Colégio de Pedro II.

Thus, our research problem is to understand the role of a public man who was willing to build a country by investing in its laws, codes and institutions and, in our case, Education as a social institution that requires state financing and regulation. Although Education has been a widely discussed topic since its legalization in 1827, not much attention is paid to the role played by Bernardo Vasconcelos, one of the many makers and operators of the law, forgotten by a liberal historiography that ignored the conservative politicians of the Empire of Brazil. In order to understand the role of Bernardo Vasconcelos and in the absence of more direct sources to be analyzed, we developed our research based on the evidentiary method, found on a wide range of information, collecting small excerpts, clues and traces, mentions in the theater, in cartoons and, mainly in legal texts and in the press. With the expansion of technology, Bernardo Vasconcelos, who until then had been introduced to us with the books by Otávio Tarquinio de Sousa (1937) and Salomão de Vasconcelos (1953), sought to increase our knowledge about man and his actions.

## At the General Council of the Province – 1825

With the Independence process in 1822, the new State would only think about the first letters during the Constituent Assembly of 1823 with the reception of the project by Martim Francisco (1775-1844). The idea would die with the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and would return in 1826, in the first legislature, culminating in the Law of Schools of First Letters in 1827. In this interval, the General Councils acted according to their autonomy, seeking each one, given their possibilities, not just install, but also legislate about the subject. Vasconcelos, elected alternate to the General Council of the Province of Minas Gerais, was immediately sworn in the absence of the chair holder. This is how he began his political career. Only the General Council of the Province of Minas Gerais carried out a Study Plan, voted on and approved.

As soon as he took office on the Council, Bernardo Vasconcelos pointed out the need for statistics that could guarantee information about the conditions of education in the province. It was already a second request, now added by a threat from the State forces to execute it - “[...] neither they [the Ombudsmen] nor the teachers will receive their salaries” (MINAS GERAIS, Conselho Geral da Província-CGP, 1825 (III), p. 14) - demonstrating the need, urgency and authority of the General Council of the Province.

At the next Council meeting, another example of this statistical rationality was given, when questions were presented to investigate the state of the School in the province, with the Ombudsman being responsible for reporting about the attendance of both Masters and disciples. Due to the brevity of the presentation of Bernardo Vasconcelos' nomination, there was no time for them to carry out the task: 45 days, at that time, would possibly not be enough to collect the responses and send them. As a result:

The Government Council certified the terrible state of public education in this Province, which is partly due to the lack of good Masters and further studies in which the defects of minors can be corrected and partly to the lack of good elementary books, and taking into account what will be of interest to the Public a Compendium or Catechism, through which Youth are instructed in their physical, intellectual and moral duties, [...] (MINAS GERAIS, CGP, 1825 (14), p. 66).

Public education was in a terrible condition and Bernardo Vasconcelos pointed out the causes: first, lack of good teachers to reproduce knowledge; second, larger studies that could research, train and guide the teachers who reproduced knowledge in primary schools. In other words, the General Council, in this document, already knew of the need for a Normal School that thought about instruction and prepared the teachers that the Province needed. On the other hand, the recommendation presents what it considers a solution: a compendium, a kind of summary of general knowledge that would provide children with as much information as possible. However, it defined its content: a catechism that paid attention to the body, intellect and spirit.

This was the year 1825. The General Council of the Province of Minas Gerais, concerned with the education of its youth, even anticipated the Empire. When we looked for interventions from other general councils – Bahia, Ceará, São Paulo – we found few records and when they began their activities, education would not be a priority on the agenda at their meetings. Everyone was waiting for a general law. The Bernardo Vasconcelos's action of and the General Council of the Province of Minas Gerais is unprecedented in starting the direction of education, first in the province and then throughout the Empire. When searching for an educational system prior to the Law of Schools of First Letters, of October 15, 1827, we did not find in our sources indications of legislation

other than the Study Plan that Bernardo Vasconcelos offered to the Council in February 1827. We found a series of requests – increase in classes, increase in salaries – with the majority being denied due to the situation of the National Treasury, despite the Literary Subsidy still being in force, even if its collection has been weakened.

In the sources consulted – annals, periodicals, legislation – we noticed that the various interventions proposed by Bernardo Vasconcelos demonstrate his enlightenment and liberal, yet conservative character. As an enlightenment man, he invested in education as a way of taking Brazil to another level of civilization, a rational civilization; as a liberal, he believed in and defended a state education in the figure of the public teacher paid by the State and free in his chair, putting the citizen in a position to confront the State; as a conservative, he would adapt to the circumstances of an Empire under construction, seeking to contribute to the formation of a rational belief in the Crown and in the figure of the Emperor as the best that a society can have for its conduct.

Until then, educational legislation in Brazil came from Portugal and the last major legislation was the Literary Subsidy – a tax on green meat and *cachaça* – to finance local education, provided by the City Council. There was still no general regulation that would make education a single object for the entire nation. Bernardo Vasconcelos' proposal was objectively simple, but it denoted the degree of spread of instruction throughout the province. No wonder it will be almost completely reproduced in the Law on Schools of First Letters of October 15, 1827. Let's look at the proposal:

Study Plan for this Province.

First Letters

Art. 1st. There will be a School of First Letters in each of the places, which this Council proposed to give to *Vilas and Julgados*.

Article 2. Masters must teach not only reading, writing and counting, but also Brazilian Grammar.

Article 3. Masters will have salaries of 100\$rs, which can rise to 300\$rs with bonuses, which they will receive for the largest number of students they teach. There will be no bonus for the Master who does not have more than twenty-four disciples.

Sciences

Art. 4th. There will be a surgical course in this city, or in the town of S. João d'El-Rei, like the one in Rio de Janeiro. There will be one more Veterinary chair.

Art. 5th. The following studies will take place in the city of Mariana.

1st. A chair in Mineralogy and Chemistry.

2nd. Another of Zoology, and Metallurgy.

3rd. Another for Botany, with a Botanical Garden, and Physics.

4th. One of Arithmetic, and Geometry.

5th. One for Calculus.

Art. 6th. In the city of Mariana, the building called the Seminary could be used for this study, in the village of S. João d'El-Rei the *Casa da Intendência*, and in this city the *[H]ospital Militar*.

Art. 7th. The Public Treasury will not pay Masters other than those declared in this Plan. Those from the Studies who were excluded will receive salaries for the duration of their provisions.

Government Council Room, February 15, 1827 – Government advisor Bernardo Pereira de Vasconcelos (O UNIVERSAL, 1827 (266), p. 1062).

The law project was divided into two parts: First Letters and Sciences. The first dealt with schools in each locality, *vila* or *julgado*, defining the school organization, indicating a minimum curriculum and teachers' remuneration. In the second part, it dealt with the higher education courses needed by the province. The last article, of a general nature, obliged the Province (here the role of the State was being defined) to spend on education.

The first article was intended to cover the entire province with the first letters, as it created schools from the largest to the smallest administrative division recognized by the Council. It was a minimum, which we dare say the maximum, creating a hitherto non-existent capillarity, to the extent that many *julgados* might not have been able to finance, with their Literary Subsidy their local school.

The novelty of the second article was the introduction of the teaching of Brazilian Grammar, pointing to the language standardization and nationalization. The unusual nature of the proposal was true, in that talking about nationalization for just one part, the province of Minas Gerais, was an exaggeration. However, as Bernardo de Vasconcelos saw the Provincial Council as an example for the others, he used the law as a piece of propaganda in the construction of a general proposal for the entire Empire. Teaching Brazilian Grammar was a political necessity, as by affirming nationality it was opposed to religious schools that taught Latin Grammar, seen and considered as something useless at the time, as it was only useful to those who went to the priesthood, in addition to the ideological character of submission to the clergy.

The third article fixed the teachers' salaries and encouraged competition among them, making clear the legislator's intention to serve as many students as possible, causing a race in the spread of knowledge. In those locations – especially the *julgados* which, as we have seen, are small – everyone would be covered, since the law does not set the minimum number of students, only clarifying that the master would only receive a bonus if he exceeded this minimum, guaranteeing his salary. Served at its minimum, the locality or the master could and should seek to serve the maximum number of students.

As for Sciences, the subject of the fourth article, a hierarchy can be seen in teaching: doctors and veterinarians would have a regular course recognized by the province, probably with quick employment in line troops and farms. The surgical course would follow the model of Rio de Janeiro, where the *Escola de Medicina da Corte*, the future *Faculdade de Medicina do Rio de Janeiro*, had already been operating since 1808. In the fifth article, the needs of the province are exposed: mining and agriculture lead these needs, due to the very vocation of the territory. The exact sciences – perhaps due to the difficulty of teachers and their immediate applicability – would be reserved for when it was possible. The schools needed to test the region was spread across the central territory – Ouro Preto, Mariana and São João del Rei -, allowing students from other regions to access higher education more easily. It is also clear that there is no concern with the teaching of Humanities, as the law does not provide for any subject.

Finally, in its seventh article it is clear that there would be no payments to teachers of studies unnecessary to the province, as it excludes them from the same law. A clear example was Latin Grammar, very common in teaching at the time and in those preparing for a higher education course in another location: Medicine in Bahia or Rio de Janeiro; Law in Europe. It is clear that such chairs would no longer be financed by the Council and not even those dedicated to religious education, where available. These subjects were not listed in the province's official curriculum. The provisions previously passed extinguished the chairs on their expiration date and, as the law shows, they would no longer be renewed.

What is missing in the Sciences part to increase education and which could have used the same strategy above would be the installation of a Normal School to train as many boys and girls' teachers as necessary for provision in the province. Criticism of the quality of teachers was increasing, in a continuous increase presented in Minas Gerais and national periodicals and

pointing out only salary improvements as a solution. Not that it wasn't necessary, as journalists blame the lack of interest in the career on the low salary, creating a vicious circle that has been unbreakable to this day. There was no urgency in the training of male and female teachers, either in the Study Plan or in the daily practice of counselors. When there was, it was left to the teachers and at their expense.

### **The First Letter Schools Act - 1827**

In May 1826, the opinion of the Public Instruction Commission about the Law Faculties of São Paulo and Olinda was presented. The faculties had already been discussed by the Constituent Assembly, however and according to Bernardo Vasconcelos, “[...] the decree of the constituent assembly, which is in question, was not promulgated, and could therefore admit additions and amendments, which are deemed more interesting” (BRASIL, Anais da Câmara dos Deputados-ACD, 1826 (I), p. 64-65). In other words, as there was no sanction from the Emperor, the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly nullified all activities, but not discussions. Therefore, this was an opportunity to review and improve the project. Bernardo Vasconcelos suggested his return to the Instruction Committee. The opinion discussion continuation became an opportunity for debate about the need and usefulness of the extremes of education: the first letters *versus* the university.

There was a kind of unanimity about the need for the school. Periodicals from all corners of the Empire echoed the General Assembly: this was indisputable, because “[...] how can we have educated citizens without public schools? Who can deny our obligation to promote youth education” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (I), p. 61)? The question posed to the deputies was: what was the priority in the discussion, given that everything was urgent? Where to start? The General Assembly would first discuss primary schools or colleges, even knowing that a project was already ready and that it was possibly just a matter of adding new ideas. However, in this discussion about priorities, Bernardo Vasconcelos reinforces his proposal to return the colleges' proposal to the Public Instruction Commission. His arguments were: we need to have at least a college degree and at the same time take care of our first letters. It was not a question of one or the other and it improved the argument of deputy Mr. Lino Coutinho: “[...] the first lights cannot be improved without increasing the great sciences” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (I), p. 64). He reinforced his argument by stating that “[...] there is no nation that would know how to improve smaller schools until after the larger sciences had been expanded” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (I), p. 64). It would take a double movement, preparing one and the other end of a study plan. Form a new generation without neglecting the current one. However, it pointed to the larger studies in Brazil that would only be subject to reorganization, raising doubts as to whether we would no longer have them in good working order.

A speech by deputy Mr. Ferreira França (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (I), p. 61) presents us with the deputies' doubts, but also guides us in their intentions regarding education. A project for general education would not be thought of anytime soon, but the Assembly thought in parts, by education levels. The first big question was whether we should start building the national building from below, prioritizing boys and girls and inserting them into citizenship. Know, at least, the first letters and crude arts. Everything is very common and general, necessary and indispensable in the deputy's view.

The process of building the nation involved building schools along Brazilian lines, taking into account the desire of that landlord class to completely separate itself from any foreign dependence. It was in this way that deputy Mr. Lino Coutinho presented his thesis. According to the deputy, not building the faculties, the larger classes, meant that “[...] in fact we find ourselves forced to beg these sciences from foreign countries” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (I), p. 61). For many, it was a degrading situation and proof that we were not in a position to become sovereign. With

this argument, the deputy explained the objective of national education at that time: “[...] the education of the class, called the people, is an element on which the happiness of the state depends, [...] the prosperity of the nation depends, because this is the principle of all moral and political education” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (I), p. 61). In this way, he pointed out the double objective that was expected from education at that time: moral education, which taken to its conclusion, would guarantee the happiness of the state, and political education – of political economy – it would guarantee the prosperity of the nation. With this formula, the continuity of the State and the nation was guaranteed. However, to achieve this goal it was necessary to learn how to read and write. The problem, according to deputy Mr. Lino Coutinho, was that our instruction was concentrated in the Court, therefore poorly distributed across the country and, in other places, it was very late: “[...] there are a lot of people who don't know read nor write; the teaching method is terrible” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (I), p. 61). What bothered the deputy most was his colleagues' insistence on asking for primary schools for their provinces instead of thinking about a law general, but also criticizes the position of the Public Instruction Commission that asks to wait for an education plan. It also asks for statistics, both on need and resources, with taxes subsidizing all national education, “[...] as public education educates the nation” (BRASIL, ACD). Based on this last argument and contradicting it, deputy Mr. Cunha Mattos asked for more schools for the Province of Goiás, even without the necessary income since “[...] the nation wants men to be educated, because while If they are not, it will be, as Mr. França said, a people equal to the savages” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (II), p. 100).

The demands clarified the vision that the deputies had: the educated nation wants, desires that the people, its opposite, also be so, to become its complement. A formula in which education was fundamental. The people were not even seen as a complement, another part, of the nation, but their opponent who had to be dominated, civilized with moral and political education. This differentiation between nation and people, with a clear connotation of superior and inferior, will guide the creation of educational laws in the Empire of Brazil. The nation was cultured, the people were barbaric; the nation was civilized, the people were savage. Bernardo Vasconcelos, in his *Cartas aos Senhores Eleitores*, shares this vision, believing that only education would level the two classes, therefore, removing the character of social distinction from education, leaving only property with this political function (VASCONCELOS, 1899, p. 84), so that, “[...] we will be happier with the education of the people, than with the large number of doctors (*Supported!*)” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (I), p. 62 (italics in the original). “We”, refers to the lordly class, reinforcing with this formula an idea of control through education and a barrier – few further studies – to that career open to talents.

Then a problem arose for the education of boys and girls: their parents. Perhaps someone would think like Pilar's father, the character in Machado de Assis's *Conto de Escola*: “[...] I dreamed of a great commercial position for myself and I was eager to get involved with mercantile elements, reading, writing and telling, to become a cashier. He mentioned to me the names of capitalists who had started at the counter” (ASSIS, 2007, p. 326). Was it enough? Deputy Mr. José da Cruz Ferreira proposed an argument that did not support his decision, but that informed us of his view of the parents of poor families in the Empire. His argument transferred to his parents what he considered the problem of society at the time: “[...] public morals are corrupted” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (I), p. 66) and he continues: “[...] parents currently do not want their children to study, they judge that it is not decent or useful and give them another career” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (I), p. 66). For the deputy, Pilar's father drew the line at education for his son. A remnant of those abominable French ideas, the decency mentioned by the deputy would be the possibility of reading anything that came to hand – newspapers, poems, novels – also demonstrating its uselessness. The usefulness would therefore lie in the fact that poor boys and girls entered work early, following their parents, and then forming another career: possibly, that of



farmers. In this way, the idea of public education that the deputy proclaimed was also a form of control and limit.

Deep religiosity led our legislators to think about mandatory religious education mixed with first letters, further increasing the dependence on education from the Church. Being a religious State – not theocratic, be clear! – it was natural to include the Church in this educational responsibility. With the General Assembly's delay in voting on an education plan, proposals emerged that placed schools within or attached to religious convents. So, the deputy Mr. Raimundo José da Cunha Matos (1776-1839) proposed that “[...] in all religious houses of both sexes, there will be public schools, subject to the regulations and inspection of the general director of studies of the empire” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (I), p. 97). Combining the costs of the undertaking, the deputy Mr. José Lino Coutinho (1784-1836) presented the matter in a more direct way and in the arguments of his proposed law stated “[...] as the main duty of these establishments [the convents], is to instruct young people, I present a law project to teach girls to read in nun convents” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (I), p. 153).

Many deputies were not in favor of the project. Despite the urgency, he went to the Instruction Committee. Bernardo Vasconcelos was not in favor of the proposal to send girls' education to the Church, in this case convents. However, the tone of the conversations in the Assembly was still quite mild, with proposals being presented to solve the problem: the people's education. Immediately, Bernardo Vasconcelos supported the proposal of the deputy Mr. Clemente Pereira, but preferred to study the subject a little more. He found the proposal of “[...] having people who do not live in this world learn doctrines” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (IV), p. 193). The model involved giving girls, always with their parents' permission, to teach them how to be good mothers and housewives. However, this immediately removed the nuns from the cloister. Bernardo Vasconcelos was suspicious of the effectiveness of this teaching, for reasons that were obvious to his eyes. Later, after reading the proposal and talking to his colleagues, he declared in his speech the horror of life in cloisters, a true prison for women. And he ends, irritated: “[...] I do not admit educational schools, whether in convents or in retreats: they are people from the other world and people from this world should not be mixed with them” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (IV), p. 234).

On May 31, 1826, the Public Instruction Commission acknowledged receipt of an Education Plan offered by deputy Mr. Domingos Malaquias de Aguiar Pires Ferreira (1788-1859). It was “[...] the plan made by Lieutenant General Stockler” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (I), p. 203) and requests that the first part dealing with smaller schools be printed. On June 16, 1826, the plan was presented in first reading at the General Assembly (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (II), p. 153). After the work carried out by Mr. Januário da Cunha Barbosa, his version was printed and its reading in plenary was dispensed with. The project by Garção Stockler (1759-1829) was transformed into the “Law Project on Public Instruction in the Empire of Brazil” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (II), p. 151-160) with some adaptations.

Therefore, this was the proposed law that the General Assembly would focus on to compose an education law in Brazil. It was a proposal that made the most of the ideas of the French Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794), through Lieutenant General Gastão Stockler and with the adaptations of the Public Instruction Commission headed by deputy Mr. Januário da Cunha Barbosa. Condorcet's law project was broader and more republican, assuming that it would provide maximum equality of rights through law and education. Januário da Cunha's law project was more restrictive.

However, it is not known where the project disappeared. When we leaf through the pages of the Annals of the General Assembly (1826-1828) in its first legislature, we do not find any indication of the project's fate. It is known that it was printed and presented to the General Assembly, but nothing was decided, assuming that it went to the Public Instruction Commission for its opinion, as required by the Internal Regulations. Bernardo Vasconcelos still showed little

optimism regarding the education plan. He demonstrated this when an excerpt from the initial proposal that dealt only with the legal course was presented to the General Assembly, by the Public Instruction Committee. The Deputies were discussing a part of the whole without outlining the general principles of education in Brazil. The article under discussion proposed that the law discussed would be valid “[...] until a complete public instruction plan definitively establishes what is appropriate” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (III), p. 39) for all higher education courses. In this conditioned way, Bernardo Vasconcelos proposed the suppression of the validity article of the law since “[...] this complete plan of public instruction will not be made until 15 or 20 years from now” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (III), p. 39). The deputy Mr. Luiz Cavalcante also showed a certain discouragement, as “[...] these plans are difficult to deal with” (BRASIL, ACD, 1827 (I), p. 37), supporting the creation of chairs in the provinces, advancing the Public Instruction. In this way, the project began to disappear from the view of deputies in 1826. Bernardo Vasconcelos called for urgency in the legal courses project: “[...] can anyone doubt the usefulness of establishing a legal course in Brazil? [...] (Supported, Supported) (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (IV), p. 10)”.

In the session of June 9, 1827, deputy Mr. Januário da Cunha Barbosa presented the first version of the bill “About primary schools or pedagogies” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (II), p. 39). Bernardo Vasconcelos, on several occasions, showed the unconstitutionality of the law already in its 1st article, stating that “[...] The constitution guarantees primary education and the project as it is conceived does not meet the vision of the constitution, which is why even if these schools will be established in the most populated places” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (III), p. 200). It was clear that the imperial law contradicted the Study Plan of the province of Minas Gerais, which made the teaching of first letters much broader.

Of all the problems highlighted by the General Assembly, the ones that attracted the most attention were the number of first letters seats that continued to be requested by deputies and the cost, as the income of the Literary Subsidy had been falling for the most diverse reasons, the main one being the difficulty of collecting it. For Bernardo Vasconcelos the account did not add up and he stated that “[...] the nation does not have the means, nor do I find it necessary to increase so many salaries for these teachers” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (III), p. 200) suggesting the proportionality in assistance to students as a criterion for payment. The problem lay in the justification. For the deputies, the fact that those masters did not “[...] have consumed large sums of money” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (III), p. 200) in their training did not need to “[...] be paid so liberally” (BRASIL, ACD, 1826 (III), p. 200).

Desired and requested as the solution for the civilizing process and redemption of the people, the school of first letters - which should be and was seen as a stepping stone - took on the air of being definitive in the Empire, as “[...] the presidents [of province] don't really like this diffusion of lights” (BRASIL, ACD, 1827 (IV), p. 65), said Bernardo Vasconcelos. A limit imposed on talents: “[...] This project is for reading and writing and nothing else” (BRASIL, ACD, 1827 (III), p. 103), stated the deputy Mr. Ferreira France. The great project presented to the Instruction Committee went down in History as the record of an attempt, but the contradiction of its French genesis did not fit into the English model adopted by the Empire of Brazil. It was very democratic, egalitarian and expensive, several deputies had noticed and the Literary Subsidy showed signs of inefficiency. Bernardo Vasconcelos himself gave us the first analysis of the law: its unconstitutionality, insofar as it contradicted a liberal Constitution that provided for free primary education for all citizens.

## The Law of First Letters Schools in Minas Gerais - 1834

With the decentralization of power and administrative functions promoted by the Additional Act of 1834, the problem of primary education was definitively transferred to provincial governments. Among the various responsibilities of the Provincial Assemblies was elementary public instruction. There was, however, a problem still unsolved: the transfer of and only part of the power, as the municipality's economy – revenues and expenses – passed to the Assembly. Therefore, just a principle of federalism, in that the great actor in relation to the first letters was lost, which was the municipality and its Chamber, which collected the Literary Subsidy and marked its schools.

Therefore, the reference to municipalities, in law no. 16 of August 12, 1834, was recurrent in taking away a large part of its autonomy, causing that parish voter, who decided the direction of his locality right there, to lose his importance. At this moment, there was a transfer of his political capital to someone, with whom he would not have direct contact and would establish a representative democracy in Brazil that made no sense. The small voting population generated the representative of the province and the nation, which made the elected person a representative of himself. It generated a distance between the voter and the person elected before parliament, even in the capital of the province, perhaps even more so in the General Assembly. However, this strategy was also part of the Empire's centralization process: removing power from parish voters, thus removing power from municipalities; centralizing debate in provincial assemblies and decisions in the General Assembly. The Constitution of the Empire (1824) placed the province's presidency and ministries on the same institutional level, linked directly to the Executive Branch. This put an end once and for all to the pretensions of a municipal way that brought the City Council to the center of decisions. The last time the City Council was consulted was to endorse and swear the Constitution. It was the death of colonial council power.

Even with the final decision in the General Assembly, it was up to each province to organize and take care of its first letters education. This is what Bernardo Vasconcelos did as provincial deputy elected and sworn in for the first legislature that began in February 1835, since the law allowed double representation. Already in the session of February 10, 1835 “[...] Mr. *Vasconcellos* presented a Law Project reforming those that governed the method of Public Instruction in the Province” (O UNIVERSAL, 1835 (1145), p. 2), that is, it was an adaptation and revocation (MINAS GERAIS, Book of the Mining Law - LLM, 1835 (A0004), p.33) of its Study Plan approved by the General Council to the new Law of First Letters.

When presenting itself to the Province, the Provincial Assembly, voiced by its president, deputy Mr. José Joaquim Fernandes Torres, responded to the President of the Province's speech when it was installed. For him, this Assembly did not forget “[...] its first duty [and] important object” (O UNIVERSAL, 1835 (1145), p. 5) which was “[...] to provide primary and free Instruction that the Constitution guarantees to all Citizens” (O UNIVERSAL, 1835 (1145), p. 5). He recognized that, despite the new laws about public education and, despite the efforts for their implementation, a stationary state was observed in the province, accusing that “[...] the expenses it costs today exceed more than four times the previous” (O UNIVERSAL, 1835 (1145), p. 5). However, with the help of the Executive Branch, the province “[...] hopes to remove obstacles to this branch of public prosperity” (O UNIVERSAL, 1835 (1145), p. 5).

Below the publication of the Provincial Assembly's response to the President of the Province, the newspaper *O Universal* published a letter from the *Sociedade Promotora da Instrução Pública* addressed to the Provincial Assembly. The first paragraph was congratulatory and rejoicing for the implementation of legislative power, believing that it

set an example and would serve as a model for the other provinces of the Empire (O UNIVERSAL, 1835 (1145), p. 6). The *Sociedade Promotora* considered it unnecessary to state, as it trusted the deputies' insights,

but, to be consistent with the purposes of its institution, it cannot fail to invoke Your patriotism in favor of Public Instruction, which is undoubtedly the first need of Free Governments. [...] Great improvements are expected from Your wisdom in this important branch of Public Administration and the Promoting Society, agree with your Fellow Citizens in this sweet hope, augurs the blessings and praises of the grateful Province (O UNIVERSAL, 1835 (1145), p. 6).

There was pessimism on one side and optimism on the other. The law about Public Instruction by Bernardo Vasconcelos became Law no. 13 of March 28, 1835 (MINAS GERAIS, LLM, 1835 (A0004), p. 27-34). It was regular established by Bernardo Vasconcelos himself, when vice-president in the province by Regulation no. 3 of April 22, 1835. In this way, the instruction of first letters as a constitutional right was regulated, seeking, from that moment on, the best way to execute the law.

Some differences between the laws – which presuppose a difference in practices – are visible. The national law requires teaching the “[...] principles of Christian morality and the doctrine of the Catholic and Roman apostolic religion” (BRASIL, Coleção de Leis-CL, 1827, p. 72) while the Minas Gerais law requires teaching “[...] general notions of moral and religious duties” (MINAS GERAIS, LLM, 1835 (A0004), p. 27) without specifying which religion or which morality. The deputies from Minas Gerais knew that the national law overrides the provincial law, but it was still an act of differentiation and affirmation of autonomy. In this way, the Province of Minas Gerais was able to receive foreign settlers and teachers with greater religious freedom and willing to recognize their schools. In fact, an important distinction was in relation to foreign teachers: they would be admitted only on condition that they spoke Portuguese well. National law prevented foreigners from accessing teaching, a way of preventing, mainly, Portuguese teachers.

Another difference that was established was regarding the teaching method: imperial law was clear when it chose mutual teaching, or the Lancaster Method as the official method, while Minas Gerais law believed in the teaching and practice of the “[...] method more expeditious and recently discovered and practiced in civilized countries” (MINAS GERAIS, LLM, 1835 (A0004), p. 29). This demonstrates the need for constant pedagogical updating. To do this, it would be necessary to create an *Escola Normal*, which the Minas Gerais law provides as a significant difference from the imperial law, which did not create one. The Lancaster Method favored the speed and cheapness with which they wanted to reduce illiteracy in imperial Brazil, but it was only applicable in those more populous places, as provided for in the law, making its difficult application in smaller locations. Furthermore, the training of teachers would be their responsibility, with no investment from the National Treasury planned for a preparatory school. The *Escola Normal* in Minas Gerais was not an option for high school teachers, but an obligation for those who wanted to start or continue the profession. After two years, it was expected that there would be no more untrained teachers in the province.

In addition to the comparisons above, the Minas Gerais law clarified some situations that well characterized its place in that liberal modernity: a) it would be a public school in which “[...] only free people can attend” (MINAS GERAIS, LLM, 1835 (A0004), p. 29) not defining the color of these people, whether white, brown or black; b) “[...] parents of families are obliged to give their children first grade primary education” (MINAS GERAIS, LLM, 1835 (A0004), p. 29) wherever it was, in a public school or privately, at home or in fraternities until this stage

is completed; c) the installation of four professional application schools for those who completed high school (MINAS GERAIS, LLM, 1835 (A0004), p. 28); d) the permission of private schools, as long as the teachers were qualified in accordance with the law (MINAS GERAIS, LLM, 1835 (A0004), p. 28); e) would expand the possibility of knowledge for girls by creating secondary schools and a curriculum for them (MINAS GERAIS, LLM, 1835 (A0004), p. 27); f) a public fund to help teachers and their families (MINAS GERAIS, LLM, 1835 (A0004), p. 32). Furthermore, it created an entire legal and bureaucratic structure of inspection and surveillance – of parents and teachers – for the enforcement of the law.

### First Letters Schools and their financing

The first letters in imperial Brazil advanced very slowly given the need for an Empire that wanted to be new and modern. Geographical distances were the first justification, hence the decentralization with the Additional Act of 1834. However, when we read the periodicals and reports – from ministers and provincial presidents – what stands out are the criticisms of the teachers' unpreparedness, especially those men, almost all of them. The 1835 Speech by the President of the province to the Provincial Assembly of Alagoas was symptomatic and, with few exceptions, it could be generalized to the Empire:

The Individual Method, the most followed in Primary Schools, and which is more within the reach of average abilities, cannot even satisfy the most limited expectations: **such is the state of shyness and the almost total failure of teachers' own knowledge**. They care little about the advancement of their students, and the credit they earn from this art through their classes; and as they have the soft conviction that they will not lack their salaries, they rest in indolence and do not take care of their most restricted duties (ALAGOAS, Fala AP, 1835, p. 3, emphasis added).

The Provincial Councils paid little attention to the subject of Public Instruction until their transformation into Provincial Assemblies. After 1834, with the assumption of the Assemblies, Public Instruction, its reform and modernization became the subject of immediate discussion with the approval of plans and regulations. With the enactment of the First Letters Schools law, we would look to sources for budget forecasts and execution as a way of observing growth. Prepared in 1829, the Empire's budget prevision for the fiscal year 1830-1831 was taken to the General Assembly by the Marquis of Barbacena on May 15, 1830. The proposal pointed to a deficit corresponding to 25% (twenty-five percent) of the expected revenue. However, the minister believed that it was necessary “[...] to increase the allocations applied to roads and [public] education, which (after property security) are the main bases of the prosperity of nations” (BRASIL, ACD, 1830 (I), p. 149). Even with this observation, the amount allocated to Public Instruction teachers represented only 0.567% of revenue.

The budget proposal presented two years after the Law of First Letters bordered on the ridiculous in its quantities: 305 teachers paid by the National Treasury for the entire Empire with an estimated population of 5 million inhabitants, an average of one teacher for every 16 thousand inhabitants. If we estimate the free population at 50% it was still a very high average. As for salaries, according to the budget forecast, male and female teachers were within the limits stipulated by law – a minimum of 150\$000 (one hundred and fifty thousand *réis*) annually – in accordance with the Decree of July 26, 1827. The average salary met First Letters Schools Law, which ordered payment between 200\$000 and 500\$000 annually. However, a regionalization of the country was already visible in terms of salary inequality between the

southern and northern provinces of the Empire. The Court and the Province of Minas Gerais maintained an average of 230\$000 (two hundred and thirty thousand *réis*); the Province of Bahia, an average of 165\$000 (One hundred and sixty-five thousand *réis*); the Province of Pará, the prediction that the minimum provided by law would be paid: 150\$000 (One hundred and fifty thousand *réis*) annually.

Such a budget prevision would not give us a picture of the situation of the first bills in the First Reign, but only of what the National Treasury assumed for the following fiscal year. The National Treasury also took over the instruction of the first letters in the Army and Navy, but the amounts invested are not included in the proposal. The action of voluntary individuals or those grouped in societies and brotherhoods of the Catholic Church through its schools, convents and seminaries still continued to be quite significant.

In 1832, Bernardo Vasconcelos presented his Report as Minister of Finance of the Permanent Trina Regency (1831-1835), executor of that budget forecast for 1831-1832. We did not find a word about Public Instruction. The concerns generated by the April 7th Revolution in 1831 prevented any regular functioning and reliable writing on the part of the State. However, the Literary Subsidy, known as a tax on *cachaça* and green meats, deserves a mention from Bernardo Vasconcelos:

The imposition on green meat also seems to me to be abolished. Six *réis* on an object of basic necessity is really expensive: however, taxes on legacies, inheritances and fortuitous acquisitions can be increased, which do not cost the beneficiaries sweat and toil. The field for reflection was vast, but contenting myself with drawing your attention to these, I am sure that you will give a judicious review of all the others (BRASIL, Ministério do Império - MI, 1832, p. 67).

In this way, Bernardo Vasconcelos had already given indications for the end of the Literary Subsidy, indicating another source of income. In a session on August 20, 1832, a reform of the National Treasury was put to a vote, in the chapter on public income and, among other things, it was foreseen in its “§12: The literary subsidy and the tax of 5 rs [*réis*] of green meat are reduced to a single tax of 6 rs [*réis*] per pound and would be extended to pork and sheep for sale to the public, in the same way that beef has been paid until now” (BRASIL, ACD, 1832 (II), p. 188). It is possible to infer that there was an intention by the legislator to increase revenue by including other meats in the tax, in addition to other sources of revenue, which meant better financing of education in Brazil. Still in that session, deputy Mr. Martim Francisco severely criticized Bernardo Vasconcelos' management when he headed the Ministry of Finance. In the session of August 28, 1832, Bernardo Vasconcelos responded to the criticism by clarifying – with many Supported! – the construction of budgets, their supervision by the Assembly and amends its analysis of that reform of the National Treasury: “[...] I would, yes, want to cut expenses and better collection” (SOUSA, O. 2015, p. 76). He stated that he would not say so much, but something in particular about paragraph 12 of the proposal:

It seems to me to be inconvenient that when we try to reduce taxes, we should reduce the tax on *cachaça*, a luxury item, the use of which generally causes more harm than good, the tax on tobacco and tobacco, and we will impose it on basic necessities; this will certainly cause admiration. Furthermore, the product of this oppressive imposition is very insignificant, because there are few towns in Brazil where this meat is cut in abundance; perhaps it is only Rio de Janeiro where such new income arises (BRASIL, ACD, 1832 (II), p. 212).

Despite the lack of confidence that information about the public treasury generated in the General Assembly itself, the Ministry of Finance in its budget proposals – not very well organized before 1831 – set out the values predicted for expenditure on education in the Empire for 1834- 1835. It is important to clarify that, at that time, the Imperial Budgets were voted up to eighteen months in advance, that is, in mid-1832 the 1833-1834 budget was voted on, which should begin in July 1833 and end in June 1834; in 1833 the 1834-1835 budget was voted on, which should begin in July 1834 and end in June 1835; and so on. The Law of October 24, 1832, an initiative of Bernardo Vasconcelos as Minister of Finance, ordered in its article 9º §2º, the president of the National Treasury “[...] to sign and present annually, by May 8th to the General Legislative Assembly, together with its Report, the general account of revenue and expenditure of the National Treasury, belonging to the year just ended and the revenue and expenditure budget for the future year” (BRASIL, CL, 1831, p. 106).

Presented to the General Assembly on June 15, 1833 as a budget proposal for 1833-1834, we see a total progressive increase of 93% (ninety-three percent) for the entire Empire. Some provinces stand out: after a drop in previous years, which meant an increase of 280% (two hundred and eighty percent) over the immediately previous year; the province of Bahia had a general increase in the period of 135% (one hundred and thirty-five percent); Mato Grosso had an increase of 133% (one hundred and thirty-three percent); Paraíba, had an increase of 122% (one hundred and twenty-two percent); and, Rio de Janeiro had an increase of 108% (one hundred and eight percent). The province of Rio Grande do Sul had an increase of 720% (seven hundred and twenty percent).

The lowest rates were in the province of Espírito Santo, which had a drop of 5% (five percent) in investments, while the provinces of Alagoas and Maranhão had an increase of 1% (one percent) and 5% (five percent), respectively. The others had their investments in public education increased between 24% (twenty-four percent) and 92% (ninety-two percent). The others followed – a little more, a little less – the general index. We found no explanation in the sources regarding these disparities among the provinces, possibly resulting from provincial pressure, through their deputies, on the General Assembly.

A very optimistic picture, because at this rate, in a very short time the Empire would no longer have illiterates. However, the requests from the provinces generated criticism – and even jokes – from deputies in the General Assembly. The deputy Mr. Miguel Calmon Du Pin e Almeida (1796-1865), member of the Budget Committee and in a separate vote, stated “[...] that the fast increase in expenditure in some branches of the national service is frightening” (BRASIL, ACD, 1833 (I), p. 268) citing that projected increase of 93% (ninety-three percent) for Public Instruction and, referring to the province of Goiás, “[...] for teachers, masters or mostly without disciples, and for classes or chairs mostly without masters” (BRASIL, ACD, 1833 (I), p. 268). And he adds:

I must, however, not only notice, but even be scandalized that the commendable concern of the general assembly has been abused so much in promoting the teaching of our youth and the great social interest of arming the population against the illusions, hoaxes and deceptions of harm of ignorance and ambition. [...] **The constitution guarantees useful and necessary primary education, but it is far from wanting so much superfluity and luxury in public education** (BRASIL, ACD, 1833 (I), p. 268 (emphasis added).

The General Assembly meeting on August 30, 1833 approved the increase in expenditure for public instruction by 159,000\$000 (one hundred and fifty-nine *contos de réis*)

(BRASIL, ACD, 1833 (II), p. 204), resulting from some adjustments made. The warnings from Mr. Calmon were not taken into consideration, as from the budget proposal to the Budget Law 1834-1835, most of the nominations from the provinces were approved.

The debate about the efficiency of primary schools would continue for a long time in the General Assembly, mainly in relation to cost *versus* benefit. At the General Assembly of 1836, during the discussion of the budget of the Ministry of the Empire, responsible for primary schools, Bernardo Vasconcelos pointed out to the minister the regency government's lack of enthusiasm in making anything work in the Empire, as the government "[. . .] slave of instinct, wants nothing but routines, and routines cannot satisfy public needs" (BRASIL, ACD, 1836 (I), p. 236). In other words, no matter how good and necessary the planning was, it was necessary to provide solutions to chance. And chance is only perceived as governing. It was also necessary to promote inspection and surveillance of any and all schools, public or private, with the government taking the initiative to point out defects, request changes to laws, regulations and statutes so that schools could make "[...] the benefits that the country should expect" (BRASIL, ACD, 1836 (I), p. 237) from them. "None of this looked at the government" (BRASIL, ACD, 1836 (I), p. 237).

In order to guide his reasoning, Bernardo Vasconcelos reproduced the minister's speech and, in this way, informed us what the government thought at that time about the law of October 15, 1827: the quality of schools did not depend on the inspection carried out by the government; the law allowed the excessive creation of schools, which meant an increase in expenses; the excessive creation of primary schools, without a sufficient number of students to justify it, did not meet the needs of the Empire (BRASIL, ACD, 1836 (I), p. 237).

Bernardo Vasconcelos also reminded the minister that the government's poor relation with these schools consisted of "[...] suspending the teacher when he acts badly or is not sufficiently instructed" (BRASIL, ACD, 1836 (I), p. 237), therefore demonstrating a more punitive than formative relation with teachers. And amendment:

The illustrious speaker notes that, despite this and other defects, and despite the fact that a state minister confessed that **mutual education is a plant that cannot be transplanted in Brazil**, no minister has presented a measure to improve primary education. It was only deemed appropriate to create a director with a bonus of 600\$ [six hundred thousand *réis*] (BRASIL, ACD, 1836 (I), p. 237).

He also criticized the minister's proposal to create a faculty of theology, for the training of teachers, insofar as "[...] religious ideas have such a powerful influence on human affairs, that the legislator cannot be indifferent to the education of ministers of religion" (BRASIL, ACD, 1836 (I), p. 237) justifying it with the argument that the clergy has "[...] the high mission of teaching morals to the people" (BRASIL, ACD, 1836 (I), p. 237) enabling the government, when it has to hire the Indians for catechesis, to look for the necessary religious people there.

The following year, even with the change of the Empire's minister – we would already be under the management of Manuel Alves Branco – Bernardo Vasconcelos continued with his criticisms of the administration of primary schools. In a long speech, made again during the discussion of the budget for the year 1838-1839, he reflected about three points: "[...] 1<sup>st</sup>, about public instruction; 2<sup>nd</sup>, about public works; and 3<sup>rd</sup>, about the administration of the provinces" (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 154). We will only have the 1<sup>st</sup> point. Bernardo Vasconcelos spent a good part of his time with public primary and secondary education, leaving aside, for now, higher education courses, since, in his opinion, "[...] the government does not cure even the schools of the first letters" (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 117). He pointed out an almost total lack of knowledge in schools and once again the lack of initiative from the government.



The statistics failed to show the government's inactivity or to show the government the problems with public education.

The first problem highlighted was the preventions “[...] cemented in the population against public schools” (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 117), something that Bernardo Vasconcelos accused “[...] the government of allow so many private schools without any guarantee of the teachers’ moral capacity and intellectual capacity” (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 117). It was necessary to create an inspection, as there was a clear need to monitor and inspect private schools as well as public schools, creating protection for citizens in the acquisition of such services and as a result “[...] establishing the most accurate examination in schools “ (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 117). A serious and responsible government was needed that took care of its citizens so that “[...] principles and maxims that destroy morals, opposing the social order, are not disseminated” (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 117).

The second problem highlighted was the foreign teachers who were opening schools throughout the Empire. Bernardo does not see this as a flaw, insofar as he wants them “[...] to communicate their lights to us” (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 117), but he asks for strict supervision on them from the government. Even so, he considers the handing over of early literacy education to foreign teachers to be inadmissible and accuses the government of “[...] a negligence that the administration can never justify” (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 117). Care for the new generations could not be entrusted to foreigners, carriers of another culture, without severe supervision and authorization on the part of public authorities “[...] because I understand that bad children bring shame to their parents, demean and they dishonor the country” (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 117).

The third problem highlighted was the government's failure to create and install schools that could and should stand up to those private schools. Bernardo accused the government of, by not being interested in public education, making up for its lack with authorizations for individuals so that they could establish schools, allowing all sorts of establishments and teachers. In his speech, he points out the biggest pedagogical flaw in private schools, which he calls “[...] charlatans who don’t keep their word” (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 117) referring to the promise of magic solutions in terms of learning such as “[...] teaching to read in 48 hours” (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 117) or a foreign language in 15 or 20 lessons: rapid education that privileges only memorization of the content by renouncing the other body faculties. In addition to pedagogical fads, there were problems of ideological fads that prioritized certain teaching subjects to the detriment of others. In his opinion, this greatly compromised the formation of youth. And he accuses: “[...] Private schools are industrial establishments. (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 117 (emphasis added). The solution for Bernardo Vasconcelos was:

**establish public schools, schools that are not solely aimed at speculating and making money.** In well-ordered public schools there is no question, there is no question whether parents will send their children to attend them; if the number of students will be considerable: what an enlightened government seeks is to establish trust, to improve them when experience and reasoning have shown that they are susceptible at this or that point to some improvement (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 117, emphasis added).

Therefore, he made clear his option for public schools, despite understanding the need and freedom of private schools, as he had already done in Minas Gerais. And this topic concludes by posing, once again, the question to the government: “[...] But, what does the government do? The government tells us – we take comfort in the loneliness of public schools,

because schools are very popular! We will have fulfilled the obligation imposed by the constitution, of free primary education for all citizens” (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 118). More authority was needed on the part of the government to estimate, install and supervise public schools in order to enforce constitutional rights. Bernardo Vasconcelos' question was also a criticism of the way in which the government and the General Assembly had been failing to comply with the Constitution. In a tone of relief and request, he states:

I would also like **this instruction to be mandatory**, and for the government to also request authorization from the general assembly to force young people to learn the first letters.

If we want a free and independent homeland; if the government asks us every day for money and large armies to defend the country, **citizens must be educated**, to whom such important functions must be entrusted (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 118, emphasis added).

In other words: for Bernardo Vasconcelos, the first education must be mandatory, a duty of the citizen towards his country, insofar as he must always be in a position to serve it. This was the necessary condition for the country to become free and independent since it would not depend on seeking any level of education outside its borders. Bernardo Vasconcelos placed instruction as a condition for sovereignty.

The fourth problem that was posed by Bernardo Vasconcelos was still linked to the school's ultimate objective: to civilize. For him, a true civilization should have among its citizens good readers of Latin and Greek. Since private schools were not dedicated to teaching these languages – a proliferation of English and French can be seen in the advertisements – and the government did not take care to create schools for their teaching, we were heading directly towards barbarism. In his opinion, Latin and Greek would be fundamental in the formation of citizens “[...] to develop the spirit of order, clarity, precision in youth” (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 118). But, not only that: “[...] it is because of the generous and patriotic feelings that inspire the reading of orators, philosophers, poets of antiquity” (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 118). And here, Bernardo Vasconcelos asks:

What man is so insensitive to liberal ideas and generous feelings that he does not adopt the great ideas that we read about the **love of the country** in the orators of antiquity; on **the mans' duties** in philosophers; and about **great actions** in poets? **When these ideas are expressed in language**, allow me to say, **of God** (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 118, emphasis added)?

Bernardo Vasconcelos made us think about his background in his family circle. It was this formation that formed the *Colégio de Pedro II*. This criticism of the lack of language teaching, a humanist training, followed the teaching model that the government had contracted at the time, bringing - a technical school for cobblers and farmers - merely manual and agricultural teaching that Bernardo Vasconcelos said was a mistake on the part of the ministers, due to ignorance of its origin, method and purpose.

Bernardo Vasconcelos would continue his presentation about other subjects. Regarding education in the Empire, he highlighted the four main problems: public schools were without credibility, the obligation to nationalize the teaching of first letters, there was a lack of public competitiveness with private schools and, finally, schools did not fulfill their civilizing role. For all the problems highlighted by Bernardo Vasconcelos there was only one cause: the

government's lack of action in relation to Public Instruction. The government did not accept this constitutional precept as one of the most important for the country. Then,

We hope that the government will make proposals to improve public education: but it is said that the government has no initiative. I could tell the noble ex-minister what initiative is meant in politics – the right to propose -; but, let's suppose that the government has no initiative, it has the right to make proposals (support and laughter): make proposals (BRASIL, ACD, 1837 (II), p. 156).

In this way, as minister of the Empire, Bernardo Vasconcelos presented his 1837 report highlighting the various problems found in public education at various levels. He announced the creation of the *Colégio de Pedro II* and as for the primary schools, despite all being provided at the Court, there remained some necessary changes for their best use. One of these criticisms was the Lancaster System, or mutual teaching whose results “[...] do not correspond to public expectations, either in time or in perfection” (BRASIL, MI, 1838, p. 18) both here and in Europe. He went on to demonstrate that

It is known that **the Lancaster's method is limited to a crude instruction**, so to speak, suitable for the last classes of society and does not extend to the refinement, delicacy, correction and calculation that in Grammar, Religion and other knowledge Civilization today demands primary education from all classes superior to those, which, contrary to what happens in Europe, encompass our entire population. **In any case, the Government is willing not to establish any Mutual Education School**, unless it has a building with all the necessary proportions for it to be set up rigorously within the System's plan, thus closing the door to the excuses, which its enthusiasts defend themselves against the arguments of their antagonists (BRASIL, MI, 1838, p. 18 (emphasis added)).

For this reason, the Minister of the Empire Bernardo Vasconcelos decreed the end of the Lancasters System in the Court and proposed to put it back into practice if the Assembly voted on the necessary conditions for its reestablishment: allocation of funds for school buildings suitable for that system of teaching. He also asked the General Assembly to vote on a pension for a teacher to travel around Europe, instructing himself “[...] in the best methods of primary education used there” (BRASIL, MI, 1838, p. 19), as he had legislated in Minas Gerais. In any case, at that time, the Government would no longer set up mutual education schools without, however – we did not find this in our sources – revoking the article of the First Language Schools law that made the Lancaster's system official. Given provincial autonomy for the study of first letters, the system could continue in that province that so desired.

### **The School, 200 years later**

Previous to Brazil's Independence process, the need for comprehensive education was always present in legislative debates and was always proposed by government officials and deputies. As we have seen, no government understood or understands education as something unimportant or little need to a Society. Despite this, liberal thought has always dared to propose limits to the School.

As a public object, the school was part of Bernardo Vasconcelos' legislative projects since his arrival at the General Council of the Province. We saw that, from an embryo that

was his Study Plan, the Law of Schools of First Letters emerged on October 15, 1827 for the entire Empire. Despite accusing the First Letters Schools Law of being unconstitutional, as it did not guarantee what the Constitution of 1824 in terms of the right to education, Bernardo Vasconcelos set out to improve it in his practice as a parliamentarian and executor, giving it a place in the public budget. His Study Plan was in force in Minas Gerais until the advent of Law no. 13 and its Regulation no. 3 – also proposed by Bernardo Vasconcelos –, which organized and redefined the school institution in the Province, becoming exemplary for the rest of the Empire.

Starting from a liberal Constitution that understood education as a right and, therefore, should be the civilization engine and the salvation of these brute people, provincial laws were created that regulated and organized the school at the local level, therefore initiating a school machinery and bureaucracy that should comply with the constitutional precept, ensuring that all citizens achieve happiness. The criticism that Bernardo Vasconcelos made of the Minister of the Empire, his predecessor, would become his government plan, executed when he held the position of Minister of the Empire and Justice. The enlightenment dream in its liberal-utilitarian format needed to bear fruit, especially in primary education. However, the discussion on an education plan was postponed and the country began to reform something that did not exist.

In the 20th century, after intense debates we were able to construct general laws for education in Brazil and Minas Gerais, however the criticisms and difficulties highlighted 200 years ago continue to require society and its representatives to take a deeper look. We could make an extensive list, but we will only focus on what Bernardo Vasconcelos pointed out: mandatory education with guarantees of access and permanence in school as the only way to educate for citizenship; free school for boys and girls with public funding; freedom of professorship for professors serving the State and not governments.

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