



## The municipality and the organization of public instruction: an analysis based on the educational action of the City Council of Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, 1889-1915<sup>1</sup>

O município e a organização da instrução pública: uma análise a partir da ação educativa da Câmara Municipal de Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, 1889-1915

El municipio y la organización de la instrucción pública: un análisis a partir de la acción educativa del Concejo Municipal de Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, 1889-1915

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### Abstract

This article deals with the process of organizing public instruction observed in the municipality of Juiz de Fora, at the beginning of the First Republic (1889-1915). By analyzing local specificities, it was possible to identify educational actions taken by the municipality, enabling an understanding of the schooling process that occurred. To this end, we resorted to the following sources: Minutes and Resolutions of the City Council; Exam minutes; Correspondence; Enrollment Maps; Payment Receipts; and Inspection Reports. These documents made it possible to identify that the Juiz de Fora City Council was directly involved with education, allowing us to affirm the existence of its own schooling within the municipality. However, the educational action resulting from these initiatives was marked by contradictions inherent to the dynamics of organizing instruction in the city of Juiz de Fora, that is: the local government acted in matters of education; but faced limits in its educational action, due to the existing municipal deficiencies at the time.

**Keywords:** Organization of instruction; City Council; Pedagogical municipality.

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## Resumo

Este artigo aborda o processo de organização da instrução pública observado, no município de Juiz de Fora, no início da Primeira República (1889-1915). Pela análise das especificidades locais, foi possível identificar ações educativas da municipalidade, possibilitando a compreensão acerca do processo de escolarização ocorrido. Para tanto, recorreremos às seguintes fontes: Atas e Resoluções da Câmara; Atas de Exames; Correspondências; Mapas de Matrícula; Recibos de Pagamento; e Relatórios de Inspeção. Tais documentos possibilitaram identificar que a Câmara Municipal de Juiz de Fora se envolveu diretamente com a educação, nos permitindo afirmar a existência de uma escolarização própria no âmbito do município. No entanto, a ação educativa resultante dessas iniciativas foi marcada pelas contradições da própria dinâmica da organização da instrução na cidade de Juiz de Fora, ou seja, o poder local atuou em matéria de educação; mas enfrentou limites na sua ação educativa, devido às carências municipais existentes à época.

**Palavras-chave:** Organização da instrução; Câmara Municipal; Município pedagógico.

## Resumen

Este artículo aborda el proceso de organización de la instrucción pública observado en el municipio de Juiz de Fora, a principios de la Primera República (1889-1915). A través del análisis de las especificidades locales, fue posible identificar acciones educativas llevadas a cabo por la municipalidad, lo que permite comprender el proceso de escolarización ocurrido. Para ello, recurrimos a las siguientes fuentes: Actas y Resoluciones del Concejo Municipal; Actas de Exámenes; Correspondencias; Mapas de Matrícula; Recibos de Pago; e Informes de Inspección. Estos documentos permitieron identificar que el Concejo Municipal de Juiz de Fora se involucró directamente con la educación, lo que nos permite afirmar la existencia de una escolarización propia en el ámbito del municipio. Sin embargo, la acción educativa resultante de estas iniciativas estuvo marcada por las contradicciones inherentes a la dinámica de la organización de la instrucción en el municipio de Juiz de Fora, es decir: el poder local actuó en materia de educación, pero enfrentó limitaciones en su acción educativa debido a las deficiencias municipales existentes en ese momento.

**Palabras-clave:** Organización de la instrucción; Concejo Municipal; Municipio pedagógico.

## Introduction

Studies dedicated to the analysis of local instances as decision-making and implementation centers in educational matters have emerged as a promising and necessary historiographical approach, providing valuable alternatives to the generalizing tendencies often found in History and Education (GONÇALVES NETO; CARVALHO, 2012; 2015; CARVALHO; GONÇALVES NETO, 2023). Within this perspective, we start from the principle that historical and educational realities should not be analyzed exclusively from a broad perspective and from large contexts. It is essential to direct meticulous attention to the singularities that manifest themselves in smaller spaces, particularly at the local and municipal level. The adoption of a more specific and localized approach, such as that centered on municipalities, allows the development of a historiography that takes these nuances and variations into account.

The analysis of local spaces as “territories” of decision-making and practice in education not only enriches our understanding of educational history, but also allows us to better understand the dynamics and challenges faced at levels closer to everyday reality. This implies recognizing the diversity of educational contexts and experiences that occur in different communities and municipalities, and how these experiences are shaped by social, cultural, political and economic factors specific to each location. By highlighting the importance of these smaller contexts, we can construct a more complete and nuanced historical narrative that reflects the education complexity and diversity in its practical and localized manifestation.

In the early years of the republican period, especially in the state of Minas Gerais, made possible by a context of decentralization that allowed them to play a leading role, municipalities, through proposals and actions by the Municipal Councils, ended up configuring educational realities with their own contours, assuming themselves as educational territories and promoting education in various ways.

In this context, the municipality of Juiz de Fora was established not only as a political-administrative territory, but also as a pedagogical instance: idealizing and acting in matters of public education, shaping its own educational offering, thus configuring itself as a “pedagogical municipality”. This is a concept specific to the historiography of education. The “pedagogical municipality”, as proposed by Justino Magalhães, can be understood as a meta-history (MAGALHÃES, 2014; 2019; 2020) – a unit of observation that gives meaning and coherence to the historical and educational phenomena locally observed. It is important to emphasize, as the author himself did, that this is a concept created specifically for the historiographical operation:

No historical source uses this expression, but in the long run, the municipalities aspired to make decisions and guide the populations’ lives; to be able to establish schools wherever they wanted; to hire teachers of their choice; to open schools (professional or not); to open trade schools. In short, municipalities have taken on an ideation and an organic structure of school knowledge that we can translate by the term pedagogical municipality. [...] Education, Pedagogy, School are part of a chain, but they have distinct semantic fields and meanings. The pedagogical is what best symbolizes and brings closer the municipality dynamic. It translates a metahistory, with repercussions on the theoretical plane and in the hermeneutic perspective. (MAGALHÃES, 2020, p.12)

The “pedagogical municipality” is constituted as a unit of meaning, which adopts the local/municipal point of view as an observation scale of historical and educational phenomena. Therefore, we postulate that the analysis of the local reality contributes to the understanding of the general picture, leading us to rethink the issue, directing our attention to the role played by municipalities and City Councils in the public education organization.

This article will discuss the public education organization in Brazil, and in particular the situation of Juiz de Fora in Minas Gerais, and this movement occurred in two directions: on the one hand, the “municipalization” of education, in which, in a trend towards decentralization, local authorities were made responsible for matters of public education. On the other hand, this movement made it possible for this decentralization and the resulting autonomy to be appropriated by local elites who, in different ways, sought to use education to modernize and give identity to the local territory.

Regarding to the time frame, we emphasize that the processes analyzed in this research, as it is characteristic of historical movements, do not have a specific start and end date. Therefore, as a methodological choice, we did not establish any political and/or economic delimitation as a criterion for defining the temporal boundaries. The scope of this investigation (1889-1915) was delimited based on the documentary sources to which we had access. The period analyzed covers the first years of the republican regime in Brazil and allows us to follow the repercussions of political, administrative and educational decentralization in the municipal context.

### **Decentralization: political, administrative and educational**

First, it is necessary to analyze how the process of political-administrative decentralization occurred, which also enabled educational decentralization that reached the municipal level, influencing the organization of public education locally. In Brazil, and especially in the state of Minas Gerais, the historical municipality gradually became configured as a “pedagogical municipality”. Gradually, through accountability and also through appropriation, local authorities began to assume educational responsibilities which were transferred to them by higher authorities (state and federal), while at the same time taking on other educational functions, configuring themselves as a pedagogical entity and not just a political-administrative one.

The municipality and the Municipal Chambers were historical realities present in the Brazilian reality since colonization, lasting during the Empire, and gaining new momentum in the early years of the republican period. Alternating between cycles of centralization and decentralization, with greater or lesser autonomy of local authorities, what stands out is the constant presence of municipal institutions in the Brazilian legal system (LEAL, 2012).

Decentralization gained new momentum at the dawn of the republican period, even having a significant impact on the educational reality of the period. A first point to be analyzed concerns the peculiar type of federalism which was established in Brazil after the Proclamation of the Republic. *A priori*, the term federation presupposes the idea of union, association of separate and/or independent parts. At first glance, the movement is centripetal, since it involves entities which were previously separate and autonomous and they become centralized. In Brazil, the federation was created centrifugally, in a movement of decentralization, in order to guarantee greater autonomy for the former provinces, transformed into federated states, in relation to a central power established since the Empire times. Maintaining a decentralizing tendency that has its origins linked to the Additional Act of 1834, in the Brazilian case, the change in the political system occurred in a very specific way, forming a “Brazilian-style federalism” (FERREIRA; CARVALHO; GONÇALVES NETO, 2016).

The federation was the label given to a concrete and objective aspiration: the management of local affairs. What was being demanded was essentially decentralization. Resende (2003) understands the process of implementation of the Republic in Brazil as a movement of “statehood”, but with repercussions also in the sphere of municipalities. The federalism implemented “[...] gives the states an enormous amount of power, which is distributed between the state and the municipalities. [...] If the power of the state is great, so is the power of the municipalities.” (RESENDE, 2003, p.93-95).

Given that Brazilian federalism is based on decentralization, it would be logical and natural for this to also be extended to the municipal sphere. As regards municipalities, as defined in the 1891 Constitution, the States should transfer autonomy to the municipalities in everything that related to their “peculiar interests”. Thus, the autonomy granted by the States to the municipalities varied according to the interests of the former. Each Brazilian State ended up giving its own contours to its municipal organization.

One of the first things the State of Minas Gerais did was to reorganize its municipalities. Reproducing the content of the federal text, the Constitution of the State of Minas Gerais (1891) determined in its art. 8: “The State institutes the autonomous and free Government of the municipalities in everything that concerns their peculiar interests, under the terms prescribed by this Constitution.” (MINAS GERAIS, 1891). Further on, in Title II (art. 74 to 80), it established the administrative division of the state territory into municipalities and districts. According to an analysis by Gonçalves Neto (2012), the Constitution of Minas Gerais was quite liberal in terms of municipal rights: “The state Constitution grants broad autonomy to the Municipal Chambers, decentralizing power to the point of providing for another administrative entity within the municipalities: the district.” (GONÇALVES NETO, 2012, p.32)

In order to complete the work begun by the state Constitution, State Law No. 2 of 1891 aimed to establish the new municipal organization. Minas Gerais advanced in the federalism instituted at the national level, establishing a decentralized organization also at the state level, a type of federation of municipalities. In the words of João Camilo de Oliveira Torres (2017), it was “the federation reaching the homes doorsteps” (2017, p.180).

With regard to education, this provision granted municipal councils broad freedom of action. The new law, in its § 2 of article 37, provided that the councils could freely deliberate, among other things, on primary education: create schools; hire teachers and set their salaries; inspect and monitor education; and allocate funds in their budgets for educational services (MINAS GERAIS, 1892). Thus, municipal councils became sufficiently legitimate institutions with regard to the promotion and organization of public education.

Approved the following year, the first educational law of the State of Minas Gerais, Law No. 41 of 1892, also known as the Afonso Pena Reform, aimed to regulate the educational principles briefly defined in the text of the State Constitution. Although it was a general law, which reorganized education throughout the state, it contained essentially decentralizing provisions. Among other provisions, it created the so-called Municipal School Councils and District School Councils, thus enabling a “useful decentralization of education” (MOURÃO, 1962). Although it did not establish municipal autonomy in matters of education, it contained provisions in this sense, reinforcing the freedom of action of local authorities with regard to public education. The law left much of the bureaucratic organization and oversight of state education to local agencies and agents, directing the focus to the municipal sphere.

Analyzing some excerpts of the state regulation, even if indirectly, we can see that municipal participation in the provision of public education was already provided for, with the possibility of municipal schools being recognized by the State Government. See this passage from Law No. 41 of 1892, when the legislator deals with the duties of the municipal inspector: “Art. 34 The municipal inspector is also responsible for: [...] § 6º Forwarding to the Secretary of State, with his approval, the quarterly maps of public teachers and the half-yearly summary

of attendance *at private and municipal schools.*” [our emphasis] (MINAS GERAIS, 1893, p.49). Or when dealing with compulsory schooling in the State of Minas Gerais: “Art. 55. The following are exempt from this obligation: [...] IV. Attendance at *municipal or private schools*, or effective learning within the family;” [our emphasis] (MINAS GERAIS, 1893, p.53).

According to Gonçalves Neto (2013, p.144): “[...] the participation of local governments in the area of popular education was not only encouraged, but required by the state government.” In this regard, let us see what was stated in § 2 of article 331 of the aforementioned Law No. 41 of 1892: “The designation of the cities, towns and districts where these constructions must be carried out shall precede an agreement with the respective municipal chamber, which shall contribute half of the expenses to be incurred with this service and the acquisition of the necessary furniture for each school [...]” (MINAS GERAIS, 1893, p. 96). Through this provision, the state of Minas Gerais made the municipalities jointly responsible for the implementation of public education, making local authorities responsible for part of the costs of construction and furnishing of school buildings. According to an analysis by Carvalho and Gonçalves Neto (2019):

The budgetary limitations of the state government reinforced its willingness to share, or even transfer, the responsibilities and burdens of public education. The concern of the Minas Gerais government was that schooling would advance, but at costs that would not overly burden the state's resources [...] The participation of municipalities in the education business was perfectly suited to these purposes. (CARVALHO; GONÇALVES NETO, 2019, p.6)

There was a peculiar situation in Minas Gerais: not an educational decentralization *per se*, since the State Government enacted its own law to organize public education in its domains. However, at the same time, the legal system tacitly approved transferred a large part of the educational responsibilities to the municipalities. In this scenario, the municipality “[...] having no one to pass on the obligation to and dealing directly with the demands of citizens, ends up taking on education and organizing it within its own limits.” (GONÇALVES NETO; CARVALHO, 2015, p.13)

It was precisely the framework outlined above, of decentralization and broad powers granted to municipalities, that made it possible to configure the “pedagogical municipality” in Minas Gerais. In short, we can say that in the early years of the republican period, the legal apparatus established in Minas Gerais shaped an educational decentralization, in which a large part of the educational action began to be conceived and carried out at the local level, from the municipalities themselves and their Municipal Councils. The participation of municipalities in the education business was not only supported by legislation, but also served the interests of the state government, which sought to share the responsibility and burdens of public education. Enabled or conditioned by this scenario, the municipalities of Minas Gerais were configured not only as political-administrative territories, but also as educational territories – as “pedagogical municipalities”. In this context, “[...] the municipal reality appears as a privileged locus of the effort to organize public education and its study acquires relevance for the history of education.” (GONÇALVES NETO; CARVALHO, 2019, p.4).

### **Juiz de Fora and its City Council**

Juiz de Fora is located in the Zona da Mata region, southeast of the state of Minas Gerais. In the context of gold mining, the region became part of the route taken by troops that took gold from the mines to the Rio de Janeiro port. Initially, it was a region that was merely a place of

passage, but from a supply economy, of small ranches, farms and stops, the first urban centers of the region developed. The territorial portion that currently corresponds to the municipality had its development linked to the opening of paths, roads and railways that crossed the region: *Caminho Novo das Minas*, *Estrada Nova do Paraibuna*, *Estrada União e Indústria* and the *Dom Pedro II* and *Leopoldina* Railways (BARBOSA, 2017; DUQUE, 2019).

In 1850, the settlement got to the category of town, being separated from the municipality of Barbacena, under the name of *Vila de Santo Antônio do Parahybuna*. A few years later, due to Provincial Law No. 759, of May 2, 1856, the town was elevated to the category of city, becoming known as *Cidade do Parahybuna*. The name was changed in the following decade, by Provincial Law No. 1,262, of December 19, 1865, by which it became known as the City of *Juiz de Fora* (MINAS GERAIS, 1850; 1856; 1865).

From the 1840s onwards, the *Zona Mata* region began to benefit from the effects of the expansion of coffee plantations. In this context, “[...] the municipality of Juiz de Fora, a few years after its administrative status was elevated, it had already presented a relative degree of regional polarization, becoming the most important city in the region in the 19th century.” (CORDOVIL, 2013, p.30). The old town of *Santo Antônio do Paraibuna* quickly became the main urban center of the region, where diverse interests converged.

The urban dynamics observed in Juiz de Fora were the result of a confluence of factors: the accumulation of agrarian capital; the existence of an efficient transportation system that placed the city in the position of the region's main commercial hub; the inversion of capital and economic diversification into the commerce, industry and services sectors; urban attraction and demographic growth; and the emergence of a regional financial-banking system that, in addition to financing the agricultural sector, stimulated the opening of urban enterprises. Directly or indirectly, in a dynamic of circular causation, these factors made Juiz de Fora the commercial, financial and road center that of Minas Gerais, which was decisive for its urban development (PAULA, 2006).

In general terms, the historical development of Juiz de Fora shows us that this location had prestige and relevance, regionally and nationally, since the mid-19th century, and especially in the period analyzed by us (1889-1915). First, it emerged as the main urban center to flourish on the *Caminho Novo*, which connected the mining region of the Province of Minas Gerais to the coast of Rio de Janeiro and the Court. Later, it stood out as a commercial hub through which practically the bulk of the coffee production of *Zona Mata* was transported. It is also noteworthy that this city, in a short period of time and due to a series of factors, emerged from a rural way of life and an agrarian economy, to an urban-city dynamic, figuring as an important commercial and industrial hub. This gave it a rhythm of growth and its own identity.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that this is a location that, due to its spatial proximity and established commercial relations, even though it was politically and administratively linked to Minas Gerais, culturally and economically, orbited the country's capital. As highlighted by Raquel Francisco, geographically, Juiz de Fora is closer to Rio de Janeiro than to the state capital, Belo Horizonte: “This proximity contributed to a greater identification of the city and its population with the Rio de Janeiro sea breeze than with the mountains and beautiful horizons of Minas.” (FRANCISCO, 2015, p.56). Raquel Francisco (2015, p.54) also points out that “The dominant groups took pleasure in highlighting the progress and modernity of this municipality [...]”. This discourse was partly incorporated by local historiography, becoming confused with the history of the municipality itself. Over time, the most diverse and boastful nicknames were attributed to it: *Princesa de Minas*, *Manchester Mineira* and *Atenas Mineira*<sup>2</sup>. All of them extolled the municipality and praised its status as the

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<sup>2</sup> The city of Juiz de Fora also stood out in educational terms. Since the beginning of its settlement and densification, there have been several schools, colleges, day schools, private teachers, secondary education institutions and even colleges in the municipality. According to Kappel (2019): “[...] this name is due to the

leading city in the *Zona da Mata* region, its industrial and hard-working vocation, and its status as a cultural and intellectual center.

Although the municipality became independent in 1850, it was only in 1853 that the first legislature of the Municipal Council was established (GENOVEZ, 2002). If the political-administrative municipality had already been outlined since 1853, with the installation of the Municipal Council, the conditions for the configuration of the “pedagogical municipality” would be given after 1889, in the context of the republican regime and the aforementioned autonomy granted to the municipalities. With the advent of the Republic and the new state constitution (1891), new powers were granted (among them primary education) to the municipal power, which began to manage matters of interest to it with greater autonomy. In 1890, the Municipal Council was dissolved and the Intendancy Council<sup>3</sup> was appointed. The period of the Intendancy lasted from 1890 to 1892, when, by force of state legislation, the Municipal Chambers were reestablished.

Reflecting the new state legislation, the local government also approved a new regulation for the municipality: Municipal Resolution No. 1 of April 25, 1892, which contained the Municipal Statute of Juiz de Fora and organized the local government. The Municipal Statute reflected the decentralization guaranteed at the federal and state levels, granting the districts a good portion of autonomy. At that time, the municipality of Juiz de Fora was composed of 12 districts, in addition to the City Headquarters district. In order of distance from the headquarters: “1st Mathias Barbosa; 2nd Chacara; 3rd São Pedro de Alcantara; 4th Sarandy; 5th Agua Limpa; 6th Chapéu D’Uvas; 7th São Francisco de Paula; 8th Vargem Grande; 9th Sant’Anna do Deserto; 10th São José do Rio Preto; 11th Rosario; 12th Porto das Flores.” (AHJF, Resolutions, 1892). It is important to highlight that the municipal dimensions of that time differed from what we currently understand as equivalent to the territorial space of a municipality. They were quite expanded in relation to today, resembling more a constellation of territories (districts), which orbited around a central nucleus, in this case, the district headquarters of the city.<sup>4</sup>

From 1889 to 1891, the majority of the responsibilities for education in the municipality were the responsibility of the State Government, maintaining the situation that prevailed during the Empire, in which the responsibility for primary education fell to regional political bodies. In terms of public education, the Municipal Intendancy (1890-1892) did not appear as an instance of decision-making and educational action, and was not constituted according to the terms of the concept of “pedagogical municipality”. This may be explained by the provisional nature of the Intendances, which would soon be replaced by the Municipal Chambers. As temporary as it was, the Intendant Council did little to promote municipal education.<sup>5</sup>

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considerable cultural relevance of the city in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, whether due to the shows it hosted, the number of periodicals that circulated at the time, or the number of schools.” (KAPPEL, 2019, p.59).

<sup>3</sup> With the proclamation of the Republic, in Minas Gerais, the municipal chambers were suppressed by the provisional government and replaced by the Intendancy Councils. According to Gonçalves Neto (2013): “In Minas Gerais, the chambers were closed in early 1890 and municipal administration began to be carried out by councils of intendants appointed by the state government, a system that continued into 1891, when elections were held at the end of the year, as provided for in the state Constitution” (GONÇALVES NETO, 2013, p.148).

<sup>4</sup> According to Orlando Carvalho, this type of municipal organization was the rule in Minas Gerais: “[...] the municipalities of Minas Gerais are in the form of small population agglomerations, scattered here and there, dispersed, sometimes, over immense territories of tens of thousands of square kilometers, there is a more advanced nucleus – the headquarters – and the districts, villages and farms.” (CARVALHO, O., 1946, p.79)

<sup>5</sup> Gonçalves Neto (2010) interprets the existence and performance of the Intendancy Councils as a phase of political-administrative reorganization resulting from the proclamation of the Republic: “In March 1892, the Municipal Chambers were reopened in the state of Minas Gerais, after a two-year interruption caused by the proclamation of the Republic and the consequent political-administrative reorganization. Managed in the meantime by the Intendancy Councils, appointed directly by the state government, the cities prepared for the new rules that would be delimited at the federal and state levels.” (GONÇALVES NETO, 2010, p.190)



At least in the early years of the republican period (1889-1891), the State Government, not the municipality, was the main educational agent in Juiz de Fora. The local government did little to organize public education at this early stage. The few municipal actions in this first period that dealt in some way with primary education were aimed at sharing the costs of education with the State Government or with private individuals.

In a sort of “pass the buck”<sup>6</sup>, both the local and state governments seemed to want to avoid spending money on education. On the one hand, the municipal administration wanted to free itself from the heavy burdens demanded by public education. On the other hand, the state government also sought to share this obligation and seemed to count on the collaboration of the municipalities in organizing public education. So much that state authorities sought to find out, on different occasions, whether the City Council maintained educational establishments at its own expense, as demonstrated in the transcription of one of the documents found by this research:

Secretariat of the Interior of the State of Minas Gerais. Ouro Preto, September 20, 1902. Mr. President of the Municipal Chamber of Juiz de Fora. [...] I ask you to inform me if there are schools created by the municipality in this municipality and, if so, what is the number and frequency of their students, and also if there are municipal educational institutes and what subsidies are given to them by the Chamber. [...] The Secretary of the Interior, Defim Moreira. (AHJF, Correspondences, 1902)

In addition to shaping decentralizing legislation in terms of education, the state power not only made it possible, but also sought for municipalities to act in the dissemination and organization of education. Hence the importance of extending the analysis of the organizing public education process to the municipalities, since, in this specific period, the local government was in a position “[...] to assume an attitude that we characterize as a pedagogical municipality, even being encouraged by the state government, which was unable to positively fulfill its educational responsibility towards the people of Minas Gerais.” (GONÇALVES NETO, 2012, p.41).

### **Municipal proposals for the organization of public education**

From 1892 onwards, the documentation we have worked on reports about several educational proposals and actions that had the Municipal Council of Juiz de Fora as the protagonist: creation of specific committees to deal with matters of public education; municipal commitment to secondary education; creation and maintenance of schools; hiring and remuneration of teachers; granting of aid and subsidies; supply of furniture and school supplies; and supervision of municipal education.

In order to undertake the analysis of our object, we considered some categories that help us in the criticism of the sources, in the interpretation and in the narrative construction of the “pedagogical municipality”, through which we understand it is possible to identify and qualify the educational action of the municipality. The first of these categories concerns the municipal proposals for the organization of public education or, in other words, the different ways in

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<sup>6</sup> Expression by Gonçalves Neto and Oliveira (2019) who define the educational decentralization that characterizes the first years of the republican period in Brazil as: “[...] a “pass the buck”, with the Union referring the obligation to the states and these passing it on to the municipalities [...]” (GONÇALVES NETO; OLIVEIRA, 2019, p.77). To which we add that, at times, the municipality itself also sought to free itself from the burdens of public education, pushing back the obligation or sharing it with private individuals and religious congregations.

which education was thought by local leaders; the legislative proposals for the organization of public education and the measures idealized by the councilors (implemented or not) in favor of municipal education.

Regarding this pedagogical facet of the Juiz de Fora City Council, a first point to be highlighted is the fact that the Municipal Statute (1892) determined that the permanent committees were to be elected at the first regular meeting of each year. The committees were internal collegiate bodies, composed of the councilors themselves, elected among themselves. Their purpose was to discuss and vote on the proposals presented by local leaders and the requests received by the Council. They acted by issuing opinions on the topics within their jurisdiction, before the matter was put to vote. As provided for in the municipal regulations: “Art. 139. There shall be seven permanent committees, namely: Laws and Drafting; Police and Hygiene; Budget and Finance; Accounts; Commerce, Agriculture and Industry; *Education and Statistics*; Public Works.” [our emphasis] (AHJF, Resolutions, 1892).

Thus, it can be said that, since the reestablishment of the City Council, public education has been one of the concerns of the local government. However, despite the creation of committees dedicated to education issues, organizing municipal public education and giving it its own structure does not seem to have been one of the priorities of local leaders. Instead of being provided with its own organization, municipal education remained linked to the laws and regulations issued by the State Government, as defined in Resolution No. 134 of 1893:

The President of the City Council of the city of Juiz de F6ra. I hereby inform all residents of the municipality that the City Council has voted and I have promulgated the following resolution: Art. 1. Until the Council establishes its own organization for public education in the municipality, the laws and regulations of the State governing the matter will be applied, to the extent that they are compatible with municipal needs. (AHJF, Resolutions, 1893)

Despite the initially provisional nature of the measure, we can state that it was a reality that lasted throughout the period analyzed, since we did not find any local regulations in the records that would provide a specific organization for municipal education. We even found a complaint from the municipal education inspector, complaining about the lack of legislation that would provide organization and regulation for municipal education. According to the inspector, one of the problems identified in local public education was the lack of uniformity in teaching methods. This deficiency, in his understanding, could only be overcome by regulating municipal education:

However, the standardization of education could only be achieved through special legislation, common in other countries and which is still lacking in ours. However, we hope that the enlightenment and patriotism of this Chamber will order the competent authorities to examine the matter and make decisions in accordance with the needs of education and the convenience of the people. (AHJF, Inspection Reports, 1900)

Perhaps as a result of this complaint, in 1901, there is a record of an attempt by the government to provide municipal schools with their own regulations, and a special commission was even appointed for this purpose (ACMJJF, 1901, page 78). However, despite the commission having been established, we did not find any record that the regulations had in fact been drawn up, and municipal education remained without its own regulations throughout the period we analyzed (1889-1915).

Another aspect that caught our attention in the municipal proposals for the organization of education was the priority given by local leaders to secondary education. Since the municipality was well served by the state in terms of primary education, the municipal corporation directed its actions towards the creation of secondary schools. At different times, the City Council made efforts to facilitate the installation of secondary education institutions in the city: *Lyceu de Artes e Ofícios*, *Escola Normal estadual*, *Escola Agrônômica e Veterinária*, and even a proposal to create the *Escola Normal* to be maintained in a consortium by the municipalities of the Zona da Mata region (AHJF, Correspondences, 1892). Although quite innovative for the period, this proposal for a consortium among the city councils does not seem to have prospered, since we have not found any records of the creation and operation of this *Escola Normal* maintained by the municipalities.

The City Council even got involved in the creation of a *Faculdade de Medicina*. In 1908, a committee was appointed to promote the establishment of the institution, and a subsidy was granted in the amount of “ten thousand réis (10,000\$000)” to build up the College’s assets, with the expenses covered by the “Public Instruction” budget (AHJF, Resolutions, 1908). As with other municipal proposals, we found no records attesting to the functioning of this institution. In any case, based on the various cases identified, it was possible to note that secondary education occupied a prominent place in the ideology and discourse of local leaders, being held in higher regard than primary education, and receiving more esteem and attention from politicians and public authorities. While elementary education was seen as a burden from which the local authorities sought to free themselves in different ways, secondary education was a metaphor as a “public utility” and “a fair and noble aspiration of the city of Juiz de Fora”.

However, if local leaders demonstrated greater interest and commitment in favor of secondary education, we can say that, for the population of Juiz de Fora, it was primary education that was among the priorities. From the examination of the minutes it was possible to perceive that the requests of residents asking local leaders to create schools, subsidies for private teachers or aid for schools maintained by the community itself were recurring requests in the “Order of the Day” and in the “Proceedings” of the City Council. The recurrence of petitions and representations from residents, as Gonçalves Neto (2013, p.152) rightly points out, “[...] allows us to see that the debate did not occur only within the Council, but that there were citizens attentive to what was being decided there.” Below we highlight a copy of these documents that we found among the correspondence received by the City Council, and which shows us how such requests were justified:

Dear and Honorable Mr. Dr. President and Executive Agent of the City Council of Juiz de Fora and distinguished Councilors. The undersigned residents of Linhares; one league away from this city, come before Excellencies to request the opening of a primary school in that place, since there are approximately forty-five children ready for school; and knowing the undersigned the solicitude which Excellencies know how to welcome the just requests of their citizens, they trust that they will be met as soon as possible. Juiz de Fora, January 31, 1910. (AHJF, Correspondence, 1910)

It is noted that the local government not only had autonomy and/or was responsible for acting in matters of education, but was also urged to act in this area by the citizens themselves, who demanded initiatives to ensure greater and better educational opportunities than those previously offered by the government. In this scenario, “[...] the municipalities, last in the decision-making chain and directly involved with the problems of the population, had to develop mechanisms that responded to the popular demand for education.” (GONÇALVES NETO; OLIVEIRA, 2019, p.112)

Another interesting aspect, still regarding the way primary education was thought of by local leaders, can be seen in the process of creating schools by the City Council. Whether by popular initiative, through representations sent by residents to the City Council, or based on a bill proposed by one of the councilors, the fact is that proposals for creating schools were first submitted for analysis by the Finance Committee, and sometimes the public education committee did not even comment about the requests. The creation of schools was first a question of budget availability and, only after that, the need and convenience of the measure were assessed. The process was bureaucratic, requiring several legislative sessions and depended, first and foremost, on the availability of funds. It was not uncommon for requests to be rejected, or for projects in which the Council advised that the discussion should be postponed, or that it should await convenience and opportunity.

In general terms, from what was possible to identify about the municipal proposals for the organization of public education, one statement can be made: education was a topic that was on the agenda for local leaders. The municipal concern with education issues is evident, but some contradictions do not escape our eyes. For example, there were specific committees to deal with public education, which may be an indication of the importance attributed to the topic by the City Council. At the same time, there was no specific regulation for municipal education. Another aspect refers to the local leaders' appreciation and preference for secondary education, which contrasted with the aspirations of the local population itself, who were more interested in primary education.

Nevertheless, even with such contradictions, the truth is that the local government thought, idealized and planned education. We are now interested in demonstrating that the municipality was also capable of carrying out, of transforming plans, proposals and projects into concrete actions to promote and organize education. Supported or even encouraged by decentralizing legislation, which transferred a large part of the burden of promoting, organizing and administering public education to municipalities, we will see that, in Juiz de Fora, local authorities acted in different ways in the education area: creating schools, paying teachers, providing material supplies to educational establishments, supervising municipal education, and allocating funds to cover the cost of public education.

### **Municipal actions to finance education**

Gradually, the educational action of the Juiz de Fora City Council intensified, gaining greater prominence from 1895 onwards, when it was possible to identify specific expenditures on public education, as well as records of schools created and maintained by the Council itself, in addition to teachers paid at its expense. In that year, for example, we have the first record in the minutes referring to the creation of a school by the municipality: "Minutes of the Ordinary Session on July 5, 1895. 2nd part of the agenda. [...] authorizes the creation of a primary school in the vicinity of the Barão de Cotegipe Station" (ACMJF, 1895, page 10). As can be seen, the City Council had the autonomy to create or close schools, without needing any type of authorization from higher authorities.

According to necessity and convenience, the City Council would close down a school in a given location and reopen it in another location, without having to resort to any higher authority. This was also true of the District Councils, which, during their brief existence (1892-1903), could operate freely in the field of public education, creating and maintaining schools, and hiring and paying teachers. The creation of schools by the municipal government was a recurring and relatively common measure during the period studied. We identified records authorizing the creation of schools in the years 1897 (1), 1898 (4), 1905 (1), 1908 (3), 1909 (2), 1912 (2) and 1913 (2), totaling at least 15 schools created by the local government, not counting reopen ones and the transfers.

In addition to creating the schools, the local government was also responsible for paying the teachers. Among the sources analyzed in this research are receipts for payments of expenses related to education, several of which correspond to the salaries of municipal teachers. Recurring expressions in these documents, such as “municipal teacher”, “municipal school”, “district school”, “on behalf of the respective council”, “school created by the Council”, are indications that allow us to state that these are records of payments made to teachers of schools created and maintained by the local government. In addition, they indicate that not only the Municipal Council, but also the District Councils, could operate freely in the field of public education, creating schools and paying their teachers.

The local government also financed primary education in the form of subsidies. These were financial incentives granted by the District Councils or by the Council itself to private teachers or teachers of teaching chairs maintained by the State Government, as a form of aid for expenses or as a supplement to remuneration. Private schools were required to teach a certain number of poor students. For state teachers, the subsidy served as a way to encourage teachers to remain in the locality, preventing them from requesting transfers to schools in other regions, in the municipality or in the state, with better living conditions.

Analyzing the amounts paid as subsidies, we found that this modality represented a cheaper alternative for municipal coffers. For a cost lower than the salary of a single municipal teacher, it was possible to subsidize more than one private or state teacher, or to maintain the subsidy of a private school for several months. Furthermore, by adopting the subsidy alternative, the local government was relieved of other costs involved in maintaining schools, such as expenses with school buildings. In the context of the meager municipal revenues, when it was unable to avoid spending on education, the local government sought alternatives to offer primary education without compromising the already weakened finances of the municipality<sup>7</sup>.

Municipal aid was also frequently granted to educational institutions maintained by private individuals, which occurred throughout the period analyzed. Quite frequently, this type of assistance was provided through exemption from municipal taxes and/or the granting of free “*penas d’água*”. In 1910, the City Council even approved a general measure, granting tax exemption to all institutions that offered free education to at least two students:

Minutes of the ordinary meeting on January 28, 1910. 2nd part. [...] Councilman Dr. Souza Brandão presented this amendment: “Educational establishments are exempt from the industry and professions tax provided they provide free education to two internal or external students. Session room, January 28, 1910. Souza Brandão. Put to the vote, it was approved. (ACMJF, 1910, fl. 140)

The exemptions were another way for local authorities to assist in the operation of educational institutions and consequently to expand the educational opportunities available in the municipality, without compromising a large amount of scarce municipal resources.

Another way found by the City Council to promote local education was to take responsibility for the costs of building and renovating school buildings. Sometimes, to make it possible for more schools to operate, the local government also agreed to rent buildings, regardless of whether they were municipal, state or private schools. It was in the interest of local leaders to provide schools in the various locations in the municipality at the lowest possible cost. Below is a transcript of one of the documents found, which proves that payments of this nature were made:

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<sup>7</sup> Anyone who undertakes to read the Minutes of the Municipal Chamber of Juiz de Fora will notice that, in the period privileged by this research (1889-1915), the local government always dealt with financial difficulties, resorting several times to bank loans, aid from the State Government and cuts in public spending.

District Council of S. Pedro de Alcantara. Hon. Dr. President of the City Council of Juiz de Fora. Hon. Mrs. Maria da Rocha Vaz may order payment of the sum of one hundred and sixty thousand *réis*, from the rent of the house where the girls' school operated during the year 1901. São Pedro de Alcantara, March 14, 1903. President Antonio Cerqueira Goulart. (AHJF, Payment receipts, 1903)

The City Council also covered the expenses related to the supply of school materials, both for the schools created and maintained by the municipality, and for the state public education departments. Among the municipal documents, some requisitions and numerous receipts of payments for expenses of this nature were found. The schools demanded all types of materials from the municipal government, from the most basic – such as paper, ink, pens, chalk – to lamps and kerosene for lighting the night school that was maintained by the Council. The requests for materials were made by the teachers themselves, or in some cases by the municipal inspector, and paid by the City Council with resources from the budget allocated for public education. The municipal coffers also paid for school books, as attested by several records found in the documentation.

The local government also covered the costs of furniture to supply the schools maintained by the municipality. The list of items below, sent by a teacher to the Municipal School Inspector, gives us a good idea of what was provided by the Council to the municipal schools in terms of materials and furniture:

Dear Hon.Mr. Heitor Guimarães, Municipal School Inspector. List of utensils provided to the mixed school of Botánágua by the Municipal Council on September 5 of this year. 9 desks; 1 blackboard with its respective easel; 1 table; 12 pens; 1 box of chalk; 1 pot of ink; 4 books for: student registration, daily attendance, visit records and exam minutes; 1 ream of paper. Juiz de Fora, November 21, 1905. Darcilia Teixeira. (AHJF, Correspondences, 1905)

In addition to demonstrating that the local government was responsible for the material support of the schools created on its initiative, the documents mentioned above allow us to perceive the simplicity (or precariousness) of the such schools' existence conditions: furniture was scarce, and teaching materials were also scarce. This aspect will be discussed in greater detail in the following section, when we will address the characteristics of the local educational offer.

The City Council also spent resources from its budget on the inspection of municipal schools. From 1899 onwards, the presence of a new figure began to be noted in the documentation: the “Inspector of Municipal Schools”, later called “Inspector of Municipal Schools”. Several payment receipts were found for the period between 1909 and 1915, when the position of school inspector was held by Albino Esteves, documents that attest the costs of inspecting municipal education were the Council responsibility. We can state, based on the documentation analyzed, that the local government maintained, regularly and at its own expense, a municipal education inspection service, the first record of which dates back to 1899, and which continued until at least 1915. In this way, in addition to creating and maintaining schools, paying teachers, providing school buildings and providing schools with books, materials and furniture, the City Council also inspected the education provided there.

In order to cover the various expenses for financing public education, the local government voted annually on the amount of public funds that would be allocated to education. After being discussed and approved, the budget for the following year was enacted in the form of a Resolution and recorded in a specific book. Analyzing this documentation, it was possible to identify the amount of funds allocated by the local government for the promotion and maintenance of education, in comparison with the total available revenue:

**Table 1** – Municipal Budget of Juiz de Fora, amount allocated to education (1896-1915)

Year	Total Revenue*	Public Education**	Total Percentage
1896	550.000	21.040	3,83%
1897	550.000	47.400	8,62%
1898	572.000	22.100	3,86%
<b>1899</b>	<b>602.000</b>	<b>60.140</b>	<b>9,99%</b>
1900	582.000	40.840	7,02%
1901	564.800	41.780	7,40%
1902	455.000	23.300	5,12%
1903	448.000	13.200	2,95%
1904	443.000	14.850	3,35%
<b>1905</b>	<b>405.610</b>	<b>10.650</b>	<b>2,63%</b>
1906	448.710	25.000	5,57%
1907	448.710	19.580	4,36%
1908	454.489	19.580	4,31%
1909	466.999	32.560	6,97%
1910	454.180	13.356	2,94%
1911	449.190	13.356	2,97%
1912	482.890	14.356	2,97%
1913	503.618	16.356	3,25%
1914	540.340	18.340	3,39%
1915	561.800	14.244	2,54%
<b>Média</b>	<b>499.167</b>	<b>24.101</b>	<b>4,70%</b>

Values in *Contos de Réis* (550,000 = 550:000\$000 = Five hundred and fifty *contos de réis*).

**Source:** Prepared by the authors based on municipal Resolutions (AHJF).

The first point to be highlighted is that the amounts formally allocated to education were present in all years, from 1896 to 1915, being increased or reduced, depending on the budget availability of each year. In our understanding, this is a clear indication of the existence of an educational offer specific to the municipality, promoted and maintained at the expense of the municipal budget, in a regular and consolidated manner. When it had more financial resources available, the local government was able to do more for education. On the other hand, when the City Council suffered from budgetary restrictions, as did other branches of the municipal public service, public education was also harmed by the lack of funds (years highlighted in the table).

However, it is important to note that such issues inherent to the municipal budget need to be viewed with some caution. We are only dealing with budgetary legal provision, so we cannot state that such expenditures were actually used to promote and maintain local education. Furthermore, despite the portion of public funds allocated each year by local authorities to promote and maintain education, budgetary restrictions were perhaps the factor that most limited the municipality's educational activities during that period. The incompatibility between limited municipal revenues and the increasingly responsibilities that fell to municipalities was

a constant complaint among local leaders. It was not uncommon for the Municipal Council to fail to act in favor of public education due to budgetary restrictions and, consequently, was unable to meet the municipality's educational demands.

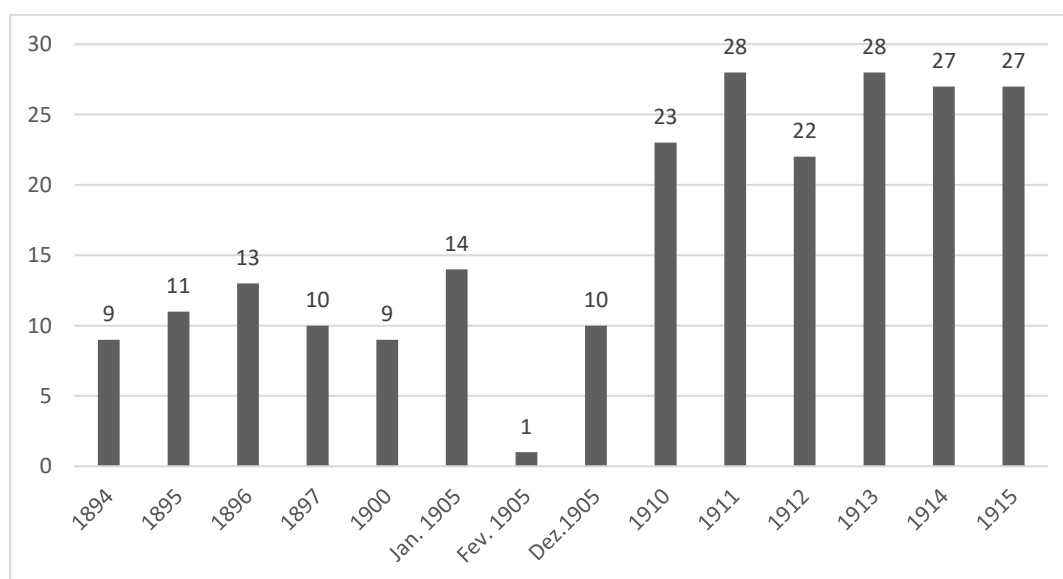
While the municipality had legislative and administrative autonomy, the financial resources available were few compared to the City Council's greatly expanded prerogatives and responsibilities. As stated by Gonçalves Neto (2010): “The responsibility passed on to municipalities to complement the education offered by the state exceeded their financial capacity [...]” (GONÇALVES NETO, 2010, p.206). This limitation on income had repercussions on the organization of municipal education, and it can even be said that, at certain times, it resulted in the complete disorganization of local public education.

### The provision of municipal education: dimensions and characteristics

From what has been explained so far, we understand that it has been demonstrated that, in Juiz de Fora, the local government was actively involved in the organization of public education. Through the analysis of municipal proposals, it was possible to perceive that local leaders were concerned with education, so they devised various measures to promote education. Furthermore, through the different ways in which the municipal government acted in financing local education – creating and maintaining schools, paying teachers, providing establishments and supervising municipal education – it was demonstrated that the local government was also capable of various educational achievements.

It is also important to analyze the dimensions of this educational offer specific to the municipality, as well as to identify the main characteristics that gave municipal education its own contours. In this sense, the Inspection Reports, School Maps and Examination Minutes make up important sets of documents, as they provide us with a necessary counterpoint regarding the municipal educational offer. By consolidating data extracted from the School Maps (1894-1897) and the Inspection Reports (1900; 1905; 1910-1915), it was possible to create a graph to visualize the dimensions of the municipal educational offer in Juiz de Fora:

**Figure 1** – Number of schools maintained by the Juiz de Fora City Council



**Source:** Prepared by the authors based on School Maps (AHJF, 1894-1897) and Inspection Reports (AHJF, 1900; 1905; 1910-1911).



The figures we were able to gather from the documentation confirm the existence of a specific educational offer, with schools maintained (created or subsidized) by the municipality, in addition to the system of schools maintained by the state government. As we can see in the graph (Figure 1), since the early years of the Republic, the local government has maintained schools in Juiz de Fora, on its own account and initiative. If budgetary restrictions limited and even almost completely disorganized municipal education (as in 1905), what we cannot deny is the existence of a school system specific to the municipality: designed, implemented, financed and inspected by the City Council.

Thus, at the end of 1900, José Horta, the municipal schools' inspector, presented the Mayor with a "detailed report on the general movement of the schools maintained by the Council", in which he highlighted the importance of local government in the provision of primary education:

As you will see, the services provided by these schools, not only to the poor but also to others, have been of the utmost importance, considering the large number of students who receive instruction there and the results obtained by the majority of the worthy teachers, which have just been amply demonstrated in the exams recently held. [...] This is the most notable information that we had to present to Your Excellency and we believe that it is of such a nature that we can congratulate Your Excellency, the Council of this advanced city and the people for the results that the municipal administration has been able to obtain in the difficult area of public education. (AHJF, Inspection Reports, 1900).

However, despite the flattering news given by the inspector, from the analysis of other documents it was possible to identify contradictions in this speech, as well as some deficiencies and problems in the educational offer maintained by the Juiz de Fora City Council. One point that deserves to be highlighted is the fact that the demand for primary education was greater than the educational opportunities available in the municipality. In this sense, we can highlight that the petitions received by the Council containing requests from the population to create more schools were recurrent. There were even cases in which the residents themselves, acting in the vacuum left by the government, organized themselves to create and maintain schools, as in the excerpt:

Dear. Hon. Dr. President and other members of the Juiz de Fora City Council. We, the undersigned, family men living in the vicinity of *Fazenda dos Coqueiros* (Colônia de Lima) and approximately six kilometers from Capella de S. Pedro, where there is a municipal school. To overcome the difficulty of distance, which is detrimental to the education of our children, *we have created and, with great sacrifice, subsidized a primary school for boys* [...]. [our emphasis]. (AHJF, Correspondences, 1906)

The insufficiency of the municipal educational offer led part of the population to request the creation and reopening of schools, or even to create and maintain primary education establishments on their own initiative.

An analysis of municipal documents, especially school maps and education inspection reports, also allowed us to identify other characteristics of the municipal educational offer. The first point to be highlighted is that most municipal schools were mixed (or "*mixta*", according to the original spelling of the documents). Thus, we can see a preference of the

local government for schools that served students of both sexes. With coeducation of the sexes, it was possible to educate a greater number of children, spending less financial resources. Given the limited municipal income, this point was certainly taken into account by local leaders when creating schools.

Another striking characteristic concerns the clientele served by municipal schools. The classes provided by the City Council were not attended by the local elite. For the more privileged classes of Juiz de Fora society, there were several well-regarded private educational establishments in the city – primary and secondary. The public served by municipal schools was predominantly from the lower and less privileged classes. This aspect can be seen in the various records of students who missed classes, or stopped attending school due to the need to help their parents with work, with domestic services or even to find employment (even before reaching the age of majority). Another type of record that corroborates this understanding is found in the “Map of students enrolled in the subsidized primary school in the Cachoeira district of S. Anna do Dezerto”, in which, in the field of observations, the teacher noted: “All students are poor.” (AHJF, School Maps, 1909).

In addition to these aspects, based on the data presented by the education inspectors, it was possible to note another characteristic of the local educational offer: a greater presence of municipal educational action in rural education. This can be justified by the good supply of primary education chairs maintained by the State Government in the urban area of the municipality. With the state power concentrating its actions on urban education, it is understandable that the Chamber has focused its attention on promoting rural education. According to Gonçalves Neto (2010), in Minas Gerais, the state government “[...] left the municipal responsibility for responding to the complaints of the rural population, allowing the chambers ample freedom in carrying out this responsibility, as long as it did not depend directly on resources from the state treasury.” (GONÇALVES NETO, 2010, p.206).

### **Conditions of existence of schools and municipal education configurations**

Having confirmed this educational offer specific to the municipality, we cannot, however, fail to recognize its problems and contradictions. In this sense, the analysis of municipal documents allowed us to identify the conditions of existence of the schools maintained by the Municipal Council of Juiz de Fora. In this regard, we found that local education was marked by deficiencies of various kinds, denounced by different parties: education inspectors, literary delegates, the municipal government itself, as well as the state government, in addition to the local population itself.

At that time, from what we were able to ascertain from the documentation, school buildings were, for the most part, houses rented by the teachers themselves, and not buildings built specifically for that purpose. In addition to deficiencies in school buildings, other recurring problems in municipal schools were the lack of furniture, and shortages of school materials and textbooks. Despite the various actions to finance education promoted by the Municipal Council, some of the schools still lacked the most basic requirements. This can be inferred, for example, from the report made by the Municipal Inspector in 1905, who warned about such deficiencies: “During my inspection visits I noticed that all the schools were completely deficient, as I had the opportunity to bring to Your Excellency’s attention in my partial reports.” (AHJF, Inspection Reports, 1905)

If the material conditions of the municipal schools were precarious, the situation of the municipal teachers was not much different. There was no standard for salaries, which varied according to the location of the school (urban, district or rural), or even according to the budget availability in each administrative year. As a general rule, what we can say is that municipal teachers were poorly paid. Based on the documents found in this research, it was found that the

remuneration of a municipal teacher was never higher than 2,000\$000 (two thousand *réis*) per year, which would correspond to a monthly amount of 166\$666 (one hundred and sixty-six thousand, six hundred and sixty-six *réis*). Furthermore, municipal teachers were paid less than other public functions, even some less specialized ones<sup>8</sup>. This leads us to consider the recurring requests for salary increases received by the Municipal Council as justified.

The problems and shortcomings of municipal education were diverse and allow us to understand the tone of the assessment made by the school inspector Albino Esteves, who in 1915 warned the Mayor about the “precarious state of public education in the municipality” (AHJF, Inspection Reports, 1905). According to the inspector's report, there was an urgent need to “remodel the foundations of municipal public education, given that it is, in fact, the first stone of the social edifice” (AHJF, Inspection Reports, 1905).

In the municipal documents we analyzed, in addition to the issues mentioned so far, it was also possible to see some questions about what municipal education itself was like. In this sense, the historical sources allowed us to identify, among other things, the school format of the educational establishments maintained by the City Council, as well as some elements and characteristics of the educational program of municipal schools.

The educational establishments maintained by the local government were multi-grade schools. They were taught by a single teacher, bringing together students of different ages and levels of advancement in the same class. They were called, among other names, “school chairs” or “isolated schools”. As Faria Filho (2014) characterized it:

In terms of organization, the chair materialized in a group of students, generally of quite varied ages. This group, in turn, could be subdivided into classes according to the advancement of those who attended it. According to this last criterion, the students could belong to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th year of primary school. The teacher could, then, teach in the same class, to different grades. (FARIA FILHO, 2014, p.36)

The term “isolated schools” refers to the same type of school and emerged in the educational context of Minas Gerais after 1906, with the approval of the João Pinheiro Reform, which instituted the serial school in Minas Gerais, implementing the school group model in the state. In general, we can say that it is a type of school in which the same teacher teaches students of different ages and at different levels of advancement.

Returning to some data contained in school maps, specifically the records of the “*Escola do sexo masculino da Estação de Cotegipe*” (1895), we note that the age of enrolled students varied from 7 to 14 years old (AHJF, School Maps, 1895). Similarly, according to the “Map of students of the public school of the district of Porto das Flores, Municipality of Juiz de Fora, district of the same name, governed by teacher João Alvim Carrijo”: the total number of students enrolled in the 4th quarter of 1896 was 14, divided into 1st class (05 students) and 2nd class (09 students); and the ages of the children enrolled ranged from 06 to 13 years old (AHJF, School Maps, 1896). Therefore, different ages and levels of advancement, aspects that refer us to multi-grade education.

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<sup>8</sup> A similar situation was identified by Faria Filho (2014), when the author analyzed the salary conditions of teachers in Belo Horizonte (1906-1918). According to the author's survey, comparing the teachers' salaries with those of other categories, it is possible to see how much the teaching profession was undervalued in terms of salary: “[...] the effective teacher's salary in a school in the capital [2:000\$000], the one among all who receives the highest salary, is still lower than that received, in theory, by a bricklayer [2:160\$000] or a carpenter [2:500\$000], and is still very close to that received by a cart driver [1:800\$000].” [Author's data] (FARIA FILHO, 2014, p.180).

The Exam Minutes correspond to another set of documents worked by us and also provided us with important information about municipal education. From these documents, or rather, from what it has been preserved to this day, we were able to extract some information. The exam records allow us, for example, to identify how classes were divided and what was taught in the schools maintained by the City Council. In this regard, what we can say is that there was no unified criterion, perhaps due to the lack of municipal regulations. Each school had a different teaching program and class division, which varied according to the criteria of each teacher, a fact confirmed by the various records that mention the following:

Exam records of students at the mixed municipal school at Estação de Bemfica, in the district of Juiz de Fora, directed by teacher Mrs. Maria Lizardo Ferreira Leite. [...] the final exams of the aforementioned school began, *following the program and classification previously presented by the teacher of the subject*. [our emphasis] (AHJF, Exam Minutes, 1911)

In summary, to conclude the reflections about this topic, based on what was possible to extract from the documentation, we can say that, although the municipal educational offer was significant and regular, as we saw in the previous section, municipal education still left something to be desired in some aspects. The City Council created and maintained schools on its own initiative, but did not provide municipal education with its own regulations, nor did it define the teaching program for such schools. It limited itself to following state regulations. Given this lack of definition, as we saw in the documentation, each school had its own teaching program, defined by each teacher, as well as the classification of students and the division of classes. In addition, we also saw that, even with the school group and graded school model had already implemented in Minas Gerais, municipal educational establishments continued to be multi-grade schools, with a single teacher teaching students of different ages and different levels of advancement.

### **Final considerations**

At the end of this reflection, two concepts emerge that, although apparently contradictory, they are in fact complementary. First, we must emphasize that, in various ways, the local government, represented by the City Council, conceived and implemented education: it created and maintained primary schools; it paid teachers; it provided all sorts of material supplies for such schools (furniture, books, etc.); it allocated part of the municipal budget to the promotion and maintenance of education; in addition to inspecting the schools maintained and the education provided. The concept of “pedagogical municipality” is the one that most closely reflects this historical process.

Based on the analysis undertaken, we can state that the municipality of Juiz de Fora, in the early years of the Republic, also wanted (ideation, projection) to be and became (realization, materialization) an educational territory. If the role of the municipality in the process of organizing public education is presented in the documentation in a contradictory and problematic manner, and if the municipal educational provision was marked by deficiencies of various kinds, it is very likely because this is what happened. The vast amount of historical sources presented here confirm the initial hypothesis that in the period under consideration (1889-1915), the municipality of Juiz de Fora, through proposals and actions of its City Council, shaped its own educational provision and established itself as a “pedagogical municipality”, that is, it conceived and acted in the area of public education.

However, the municipality shaped a schooling system that was still precarious and limited, with problems and contradictions. One statement does not invalidate the other, that is, in Juiz de Fora the local government was actively involved in the organization of public education, being capable not only of conceiving (propositions), but also of carrying out (actions) in the area of education. Municipal documents have informed us about the dimensions and characteristics of the municipal educational offer, about the conditions of existence of municipal schools and about some aspects of municipal education. If some contradictions were found, such as the insufficiency of this educational offer, what cannot be denied is the existence of a schooling system specific to the municipality: designed, implemented, financed and even inspected by the City Council.

In this sense, based on the specific case of Juiz de Fora, we believe that it has been demonstrated that the municipality is a historiographical object with its own life, with a specific identity and temporality, but that it relates (confirming and/or contradicting) to broader historical and educational processes, both at the regional and national levels. It is possible to write the educational history of a municipality, highlighting what is original and unrepeatable about the local space, without losing sight of the determinants and conditioning factors (political, economic, historical and cultural) that influence this reality. The epistemological richness of a history of education with an emphasis on the local lies precisely in the variation and interrelation of approaches. Intense study and detailed description of a location can be a safe and fertile path to generalizations and understanding broader contexts. As if putting together pieces of a puzzle, the more I describe a particular case, the more elements I gather to construct the general picture.

The investigative exercise undertaken here confirms the importance of new angles of analysis for understanding the history of Brazilian education, especially with regard to the role played by local authorities in the process of organizing public education. There is broad and diverse historical documentation that consecrates the municipality not only as a political-administrative authority, but also and decisively as an educational authority: as a “pedagogical municipality”. The case in question, the municipality of Juiz de Fora, confirms a trend that has been pointed out by us and other authors: in order to understand the History of Education in Minas Gerais and in Brazil, especially in the early years of the First Republic, it is necessary to pay close attention to the municipal realities.

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