

## As representações dos símbolos pátrios nas escolas do Rio Grande Do Sul na Primeira República

*Alessandro Carvalho BICA<sup>1</sup>*

*Maria Augusta Martiarena de OLIVEIRA<sup>2</sup>*

### Resumo

Este artigo tem como proposta discutir às diretrizes educacionais pensadas pelos positivistas para a educação na Primeira República no estado do Rio Grande do Sul, nesta lógica, é compreensível que a escola sempre teve um papel fundamental na formação da nação brasileira, os positivistas gaúchos imprimiram aos seus discursos, práticas e preceitos republicanos consonantes ao seu tempo histórico. Na composição deste trabalho foram utilizados documentos-Sources como Relatórios Intendenciais, fotografias e notícias de jornais, os quais circulavam nas localidades de Pelotas e Bagé nas primeiras décadas do século XX. Estes são analisados pelo prisma da História Cultural, notadamente no que se refere às interlocuções entre História e Teoria Social, pautando-se em Burke (2002), levou-se em consideração, também, os estudos sobre arquitetura e espaços escolares de Frago (2001), Escolano (2000), assim como de Bencostta (2009) e Vidal (2006). Compreende-se que os símbolos patrióticos foram amplamente utilizados no espaço educacional, estes corroboraram para o fortalecimento do regime republicano. Para tanto, tais símbolos estiveram presentes como elementos do espaço escolar, das práticas educativas, das ações curricularizadas, das proposições disciplinares, mas também nos trabalhos manuais e/ou em comemorações cívicas, condutas que foram amplamente realizadas no período da Primeira República nos municípios do estado do Rio Grande do Sul.

**Palavras-Chaves:** Escola, História da Educação, Diretrizes Educacionais, Ícones Pátrios

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1 He holds a PhD in Education from the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (2014). Professor at the Federal University of Pampa (UNIPAMPA) in the field of Education; Faculty Member. Leader of PHERA - Research Group in the History of Education, Digital Repositories, and Historical Collections at Unipampa, Bagé Campus, and Coordinator of the Research-Extension Project: "Digital Repository TATU" (<http://sistemas.bage.unipampa.edu.br/tatu>). Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2532-5007> E-mail: [alessandro.bica@unipampa.edu.br](mailto:alessandro.bica@unipampa.edu.br)

2 She holds a PhD (2012) in Education - research line in Philosophy and History of Education from the Federal University of Pelotas and a Postdoctoral degree from the Graduate Program in Education at the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos - UNISINOS. She is currently a professor at the Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Rio Grande do Sul and a postdoctoral researcher at the Graduate Program in Education at the Fluminense Federal University. - UFF. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1118-3573> E-mail: [augusta.martiarena@osorio.ifrs.edu.br](mailto:augusta.martiarena@osorio.ifrs.edu.br)

## The representations of the country symbols in the schools of Rio Grande Do Sul in the First Republic

*Alessandro Carvalho BICA*

*Maria Augusta Martiarena de OLIVEIRA*

### Abstract

This article aims to discuss the educational guidelines thought by positivists for education in the First Republic in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in this logic, it is understandable that the school has always had a fundamental role in the formation of the Brazilian nation, the gaucho positivists imposed on their speeches, practices and republican precepts in line with their historical time. In the composition of this work, documents such as Intendential Reports, photographs and news from newspapers, which circulated in the localities of Pelotas and Bagé in the first decades of the 20th century, were used. These are analyzed through the prism of Cultural History, notably regarding the interlocutions between History and Social Theory, based on Burke (2002), the studies on architecture and school spaces by Frago (2001), Escolano (2000), as well as Bencostta (2009) and Vidal (2006) were also taken into account. It is understood that patriotic symbols were widely used in the educational space, they corroborated for the strengthening of the republican regime. Therefore, such symbols were present as elements of the school space, educational practices, curricular actions, disciplinary propositions, but also in manual work and/or in civic celebrations, behaviors that were widely carried out in the period of the Old Republic in the municipalities of state of Rio Grande do Sul.

**Keywords:** School, History of Education, Educational Guidelines, Patriotic Icons.

## **Las representaciones de los símbolos del país en las escuelas de Rio Grande do Sul en la Primera República**

*Alessandro Carvalho BICA*  
*Maria Augusta Martiarena de OLIVEIRA*

### **Resumen**

Este artículo tiene como objetivo discutir las directrices educativas pensadas por los positivistas para la educación en la Primera República en la provincia de Rio Grande do Sul. En esta lógica, se comprende que la escuela siempre tuvo un papel fundamental en la formación de la nación brasileña, los gauchos positivistas imprimieron en sus discursos y prácticas preceptos republicanos acordes a su época histórica. En la composición de este trabajo se utilizaron documentos fuente como Informes de Intendencia, fotografías y noticias de diarios, que circularon en las localidades de Pelotas y Bagé en las primeras décadas del siglo XX. Estos se analizan a través del prisma de la Historia Cultural, en particular en lo que se refiere a las interlocuciones entre Historia y Teoría Social, con base en Burke (2002), también se tuvieron en cuenta los estudios sobre arquitectura y espacios escolares de Frago (2001), Escolano (2000), así como de Bencostta (2009) y Vidal (2006). Se entiende que los símbolos patrios fueron ampliamente utilizados en el espacio educativo, estos corroborados para el fortalecimiento del régimen republicano. Por lo tanto, dichos símbolos estuvieron presentes como elementos del espacio escolar, prácticas educativas, acciones curriculares, propuestas disciplinarias, pero también en el trabajo manual y/o en las celebraciones cívicas, comportamientos que fueron ampliamente realizados en el período de la Antigua República en los municipios del estado de Rio Grande do Sul.

**Palabras clave:** Escuela. Historia de la Educación. Lineamientos Educativos. Íconos patrios.

## Introduction

Education is the product of a broader historical context that encompasses economic, political, social, and cultural spheres. Therefore, for educational transformations to truly take shape, a series of changes had to begin as early as the nineteenth century.

In his periodization of the history of public schooling in Brazil, Saviani (2004) identifies 1890 as the starting point of what he calls the “long twentieth century.” To justify this choice, the author cites several factors: economically, coffee growers had established themselves as the dominant group; politically, the monarchy had come to an end and the Republic was instituted; socially, new groups had emerged to challenge the agro-exporting class such as the middle class, urban wage workers, and established immigrant populations and the abolition of slavery had taken place; culturally, positivism, evolutionism, Darwinism, and Romanticism were all present in the academic landscape.

In this turbulent historical context, the school came to play a key role in shaping the citizens of the emerging republic. Whether with the aim of republicanizing, disciplining, and legitimizing the regime, or reducing the exceedingly high illiteracy rates, the school became one of the government’s main instruments particularly through the establishment of grupos escolares (graded schools), with age-graded classrooms housed in buildings designed to reflect specific curricular and pedagogical goals.

Such institutions came to be seen as temples of knowledge—not only civilizing their students but also the wider urban population. This was largely due to the fact that the school buildings often stood out in contrast to their surroundings. This article aims to discuss issues related to the educational guidelines envisioned for schooling during the First Republic (1889–1930) in the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

## Interfaces of Brazilian and Gaúcho Education

The state of Rio Grande do Sul experienced a unique political and administrative trajectory with the rise to power of the Partido Republicano Rio-Grandense (PRR) under the leadership and control of Júlio de Castilhos. This period was marked by the establishment of a distinct political philosophy, combined with a dictatorial governing style. As such, the First Republic in Rio Grande do Sul was characterized by the political hegemony of the PRR, which remained in control at both the state level and in key municipalities such as Bagé and Pelotas.

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The administration was notably influenced by the ideology of Positivism which, according to Tambara (1995), assumed specific characteristics due to the convergence of Auguste Comte's ideas with Júlio de Castilhos's ideological interpretation. This ideological synthesis became known as Castilhismo<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, in the process set in motion between the late nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century, the republicans implemented a modernizing project rooted in capitalism and centered on an authoritarian model of power. From this perspective, the republican leaders who guided the state's administration assigned to schools and public education the central role in advancing the republican political project for education that is, the formation of a "national consciousness" and the establishment of the conditions for citizenship (CORSETTI, 2008).

As part of this effort to structure public education as a means of social intervention, the republican state governments sought to conceptualize and improve educational public policies aimed at modernizing and renewing the state's educational system. Regarding this republican conception of education, Corsetti (1998, p. 154) offers the following observation:

In educational terms, the positivist-oriented government acted in pursuit of specific interests, which envisioned the use of education as a tool for modernization. In this sense, governmental action beyond employing its educational policy to raise the educational level of the Gaúcho population by reducing illiteracy, among other objectives reflected a clear understanding that morality and education were the main instruments for ensuring social order, mitigating conflicts, and promoting the accommodation of individuals within society. Thus, the school became one of the mechanisms for constructing bourgeois hegemony. To this end, the educational policy of Rio Grande do Sul during the First Republic combined governmental initiatives with significant support for private initiatives. It is important to emphasize, however, that actions in the educational field were part of a broader set of measures that, taken as a whole, constituted the positivist republican political project for the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

A organização do sistema educacional rio-grandense no período da Primeira República The organization of the educational system in Rio Grande do Sul during the First Republic constituted the necessary apparatus for the construction of the republican educational and political project. In this regard, it is essential to understand that during this period, the state government maintained

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3 Sobre este assunto, consultar: Rodríguez, Ricardo Vélez. *Castilhismo: Uma Filosofia da República*. Brasília: Senado Federal, Conselho Editorial, 2000. (Coleção 500 anos) e Rodríguez, Ricardo Vélez. *O castilhismo e as outras ideologias*: In: Golin, Tau; Boeira, Nelson (Org). História do Rio Grande do Sul. Passo Fundo: Méritos, 2007, v. 3, Tomo I.

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primary control over elementary education<sup>4</sup>, while secondary education remained largely under the supervision of private initiatives. These governmental initiatives thus brought about changes in the everyday order of urban life with respect to educational matters.

In this way, we can infer that public education acquired vital importance, as it was considered the only natural means to reveal individual aptitudes and to develop them appropriately. When reflecting on the trajectory of pedagogical ideas during the First Republic, this period may be characterized by the expansion of schooling as a key instrument for building political participation. On this period, Saviani (2008, p. 177) offers the following commentar:

In sum, the early decades of the twentieth century were marked by debates over liberal ideas, which served as the foundation for advocating the universal expansion through the State of the schooling process, viewed as the key instrument for political participation. This constitutes the central idea of the secular strand of the traditional conception: the transformation, through schooling, of ignorant individuals into enlightened citizens. This notion underpinned the movement referred to by Nagle (1974) as the “enthusiasm for education,” which reached its peak during the dynamic and fervent decade of the 1920s.

Therefore, in the process of reconstructing the history of educational public policies conceived and/or implemented by municipal intendentes during the first two decades of the twentieth century, our analyses are supported by Intendência Reports, Budget Reports, and news published in periodicals issued in the cities under study.

In this regard, we understand that the Intendência and Budget Reports<sup>5</sup> are research sources that were generally produced in the month of September. Their main objective was to present a mapping of the actions and programs carried out by the Municipal Intendente, covering all areas of

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4 Regarding the organization of the educational system in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, it is important to highlight the articles contained in the 1891 State Constitution, which specifically address the issue of education in the state. With regard to the responsibilities of the President of the state in the field of education, Article 25 states: “To provide for public primary education, free of charge and unrestricted, offered by the state.” As for the guarantees afforded to the state's inhabitants in relation to education, Article 71, §10, affirms: “Primary education provided in state institutions shall be secular, free, and open to all.” (ESTADO DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL. Constituições sul-rio-grandenses (1843–1947). Porto Alegre: Imprensa Oficial, 1963). Available at: <http://www2.al.rs.gov.br/memorial/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=frKwldvbn2g%3D&tabid=3456&language=pt-BR>.

Accessed on 06/02/2021). Regarding the role of the school for the Republicanos Rio-Grandenses, Carboni and Maestri (2000) state that it served two main functions: as a lever for development and as a private apparatus of hegemony. CARBONI, Florence; MAESTRI, Mário (eds.). Italian Roots in Rio Grande do Sul (1875–1987). Passo Fundo: UPF, 2000.

5 The drafting, presentation, and reading of the Intendência Reports by municipal Intendentes to the Municipal Councilors usually took place between the months of September and October. This process was part of a broader symbolic and ideological apparatus conceived by the republicans, aimed at portraying transparency, honesty, integrity, and good faith on the part of administrators in managing public affairs. This conception was a common practice among positivists throughout the First Republic in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, and can be summarized by the phrase: “To live for others, to live in the open.” For further discussion on this topic, see: Corsetti (1998) and Gutfreind (1998).

The representations of the country symbols in the schools of Rio Grande Do Sul in the First Republic public administration. In the composition of these reports, each domain of public administration was allocated a specific section for the Intendente and their secretaries to report on the year's activities.

The efforts undertaken by the state government to expand education since the establishment of the Republic in the state of Rio Grande do Sul were also mirrored by republican intendentes in the main cities of the state. The actions carried out by the municipalities supported by the state government's modernizing discourse were based on the premise of making public schools a key instrument in shaping the political agenda of the gaúcho state, which aimed to promote modernization, ensure stability, and exercise social control.

It is important to note that, despite the municipalities' discourse assigning schools the role of guiding the intellectual and moral development of individuals capable of creating a society where anarchy would be replaced by order and prosperity, and instilling a sense of duty, obedience, and republican modernity the difficulties encountered in the first decade of the twentieth century would lead to substantial changes in the following decades in the cities of Bagé and Pelotas.

According to Corsetti (1998), the republican educational project presented during the Brazilian First Republic in the state of Rio Grande do Sul much like in the rest of Brazil was anchored in the expansion of schooling, the eradication of illiteracy, the reform of curricula, the organization and planning of education, as well as the allocation of financial resources to the educational sector. As the author states: "The importance of public primary education was emphasized repeatedly, as it was a fundamental element of the modernization project implemented by the positivists in the state" (CORSETTI, 1998, p. 171). On this period, Damasceno affirms:

These transformations in the field of education materialized in the construction of new school buildings, the adoption of new teaching methods and instructional materials, as well as in the proliferation of initiatives such as the creation of educational periodicals and the promotion of nationally and regionally significant events referred to as conferences or congresses aimed at discussing and disseminating the educational and pedagogical trends of that period (DAMASCENO, 2021, p.7).

Within this republican context, a study was developed based on the Intendência Reports documents of significant relevance for investigating the early decades of the twentieth century.

## **The Intendência Reports as Research Sources**

The Intendência Reports are important research sources that must be analyzed within their historical period and with respect to their historicity, contributing to the understanding of both space-time and memory-time. A primary example of this assertion is the Regulation of Municipal Schools<sup>6</sup> of the municipality of Bagé, which was divided into seven chapters. The first chapter, composed of nine articles, was dedicated to presenting the objectives regarding the **Establishment and Operation of the municipal schools**:

Article 1 – As many schools shall be created as are necessary to promote the dissemination of education throughout the municipality.

Article 2 – In rural districts, a school shall be established wherever there is a verified school-age population of fifty children eligible to receive instruction. For this purpose, the sub-intendente of the district or local residents shall submit a request for the establishment of the school.

Article 3 – Schools with an enrollment of fewer than fifteen students shall be closed, and the teacher shall be transferred to another location where the school-age population is higher.

Article 4 – Schools shall operate in rented houses, either leased or offered by local property owners. The municipality shall provide all hygienic conditions for these facilities. [...] The necessary furniture and teaching materials shall be provided by the Intendência.

Article 5 – Schools shall be coeducational, with secular and free instruction, in accordance with the curriculum organized by the committee referred to in Article 10 of this regulation.

Article 6 – Enrollment shall be open to children of any gender, race, or nationality, between the ages of 7 and 14. Male students over the age of 14 shall not be admitted to coeducational schools. Sole paragraph – Enrollment shall be done verbally with the teacher, by the parents or guardians of the candidates, or by the candidates themselves. Candidates suffering from contagious diseases shall not be enrolled;

Article 7 – The academic year shall begin on the first working day of March and shall end after the final exams, which shall be held in the second half of December.

Article 8 – School hours shall be from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. and from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Article 9 – Each school shall keep three books: one for student enrollment, one for exam records, and one for the inventory of instructional materials (Regulation of the Municipal Schools, p. 03-04)

It is worth noting that the articles listed above reveal several concerns regarding the need to expand primary education within the municipality, including in rural districts with more than 50 children; concerns about school attendance, school infrastructure, the type of instruction provided, the age of the students, the health conditions required for school admission, and the period and schedule of classes. It can thus be assumed that this regulation was influenced by gaúcho republican

<sup>6</sup> In her doctoral study, Corsetti (1998) examines the principles of Educational Policy and Organization, as well as the characteristics of Public Schooling in Rio Grande do Sul during the First Republic. Therefore, in the analysis of the Regulation of the Municipal Schools of Bagé, one can observe the ideological influences of republican thought throughout all of its chapters.



The representations of the country symbols in the schools of Rio Grande Do Sul in the First Republic and liberal principles, since its very first chapter already reflects ideals advocated by these educators.

Regarding the establishment of such regulations, Corsetti (1998, pp. 284 and 286) states:

School regulations and internal rules, by virtue of the set of directives they contain, make it possible to observe governmental action at a very specific level namely, within the school itself. The positivist orientation that guided the actions of the gaúcho republicans ensured that these instruments became another key component in the educational machinery, [...]. It should be emphasized, first of all, that these regulations expressed through their various provisions the concrete realization of the elements that composed the educational policy of the state of Rio Grande do Sul (and, one could also say, of the municipalities) with regard to public schooling, clearly translating into practice the political and educational principles upheld by the republicans. (emphasis added).

In the second chapter of this Regulation, concerns regarding the Curriculum of primary schools are evident, particularly in Article 10: “The curriculum shall be organized by the school inspector and by a commission of teachers from the Collegio Elementar, invited by the Intendente.” The approval granted to the figure of the school inspector and the teachers of the Collegio Elementar in organizing the curriculum is clear indicating a technical and qualified approach to the selection of school programs. Once again, one can observe the republican principles related to administrative and pedagogical unity in the structure of this regulation.

The third chapter contains three articles and is intended to present the characteristics of Teachers and Their Duties, from which we highlight the following articles:

Article 12 – The following conditions are required to become a teacher:

a) Possess the necessary qualifications, as determined by an examining committee selected by the Intendente and presided over by the Inspector, during the examination to which the candidate shall be submitted.

Article 13 – All teachers shall have the following duties:

b) Strictly follow the prescribed curriculum;

c) Raise awareness among heads of families—through conversation or any other means of outreach—about the harms of illiteracy, encouraging them to keep their children in school;

d) Ensure that the national flag is raised on holidays recognized by the Republic and the state, assigning this task to the most dedicated student;

e) Be courteous and kind to students, treating them with care and helping them understand that their educator is a friend and protector;

g) Not apply corporal punishment; for any infractions committed, only assign written tasks that will benefit the students;

h) To present, on a monthly basis, an enrollment and attendance report of the students, in order to receive their salary from the municipal treasury (Regulations of the Municipal Schools, p. 05-06).

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The chapter reveals the municipality's concerns regarding the duties of its teachers. Those who would make up the municipal teaching staff were expected to be upstanding individuals, properly qualified to hold their positions, hired through public examinations, and capable of providing the best possible conditions for their students' education.

In item C of Article 13, the municipality's intention to address illiteracy through the teacher's discourse is clearly evident, thereby reinforcing the idea upheld by republicans in the 1920s that social ills stemmed from the lack of schooling and the neglect of children's education.

This chapter also emphasizes the concern with the republican imaginary and the internalization of the rituals and civic symbols of the new regime, positioning the public school as the primary and most effective locus for the assimilation of republican modernity's values.

In item F of the same article, the conduct expected of teachers is addressed. It can be inferred that teachers were to act with gentleness and treat their students with care, including in disciplinary matters. This interpretation is supported by the subsequent provision, which explicitly prohibits corporal punishment, permitting only written tasks of educational value as a form of discipline. These measures suggest an intent to foster a relationship of mutual respect between teacher and student.

Chapter IV – Inspectorate contains two main articles that address the importance of the educational role of the Inspector. This official was responsible for preparing both quantitative and qualitative reports on municipal education, as well as for serving as examiner on final evaluation boards, compiling enrollment reports for both urban and rural schools, and proposing the appointment and dismissal of teachers to the municipal Intendente.

As for Chapter VII, which refers to the Final Provisions, the following articles are particularly noteworthy:

Article 20 – The head of the household who has three children regularly attending school shall be exempt from municipal taxes, in accordance with the authorization that shall be duly requested from the Council.

Article 21º - Awards shall be granted, either by the Intendente or by other individuals pursuing the same objective, to students who demonstrate the highest achievement in the final examinations.

Article 22 – The municipality shall provide children who are officially recognized as poor with the materials necessary for their education.

Article 25 – The municipality shall subsidize any school that offers free education, provided that student attendance and academic performance are duly justified.

Art. 26 – In the municipal seat, whenever deemed necessary, school groups shall be established and managed by three teachers. Classes shall be held in the morning, afternoon, and evening (Regulations of the Municipal Schools, p. 08-09).

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It can be inferred that the municipality intended, through its Regulations, to ensure a financial framework aimed at keeping children enrolled in municipal schools. This is evident in its concern to grant tax exemptions to large families and to ensure that their children remained in school, thereby preventing dropout and absenteeism, and reducing illiteracy rates in the municipality of Bagé.

Another notable aspect present in the Regulations relates directly to the formalization of merit-based awards for students who excelled in the final examinations. In this regard, Dallabrida (2002, p. 06) affirms that this practice had been common in Brazilian education since colonial times:

Moreover, the process of encouraging student performance was driven by emulation, a Jesuit school tradition. “Worthy emulation” was subtly promoted in secondary school classes, fostering an atmosphere of constant self-improvement among all students, particularly between boarders and day students. Emulation was closely tied to the reward system, which solemnly granted prizes to the best-performing students at the end of the school year and at the close of each academic term. (emphasis added)

Specifically regarding the actions undertaken by municipal governments in the expansion of primary education and in the management of Municipal Public Instruction, there was also a clear effort to construct the social imaginary of the Republic among children and teachers during national patriotic celebrations an approach supported by the gaúcho republicans, as affirmed by Corsetti (1998, p. 231): the rituals, expressed through commemorations and civic festivities, served as effective propaganda for the values of republican modernity. Once again, the school played a key role in advancing this mission.

On the other hand, these same observations can also be found in the report of School Inspector Waldemar Amorety Machado, included in the Municipal Report of the city of Bagé for the year 1926:

*[...] The major issue of primary education, which has been resolutely and persistently addressed since the early days of Your Excellency's administration, experienced this year a degree of progress that amply rewards the efforts you have devoted to this cause.* The increase in the number of classrooms greatly contributed to this progress, especially in rural districts, where we now witness with great satisfaction the national flag fluttering to the sound of children's and patriotic hymns—awakening and strengthening in the hearts of our children an enthusiasm for the greatness of our nation and a profound sense of love for the homeland. [...] This demonstrates that the spread of education in this municipality is beginning to yield a rich harvest of benefits for our children, and that its cultivated population has responded appreciatively to Your Excellency's efforts on behalf of teaching and education. (emphasis added) (School Inspector's Report, 1926, p. 67)

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There is no doubt that the thesis of administrative organization and pedagogical unity was widely defended at the state level by the republicans throughout the First Republic (Corsetti, 1998). In this regard, it can be stated that, in envisioning the expansion of municipal primary education, Carlos Mangabeira recognized the urgent need to establish full control over the municipal primary education system.

Another concern observed in the process of expanding primary education was the issue of the internal infrastructure of municipal schools, particularly the provision of pedagogical materials and patriotic and civic symbols an initiative aligned with the maintenance of republican principles. As stated in the School Inspector's Report (1926, p. 70):

"The following school materials were distributed among various classrooms: 72 chairs, 20 national flags, 20 Rio Grande do Sul crests, and 16 blackboards."

Furthermore, the presence of medical-hygienic discourse was noted in the inspection of schools in the municipality of Bagé, as reported by the School Inspector (1926, p. 70):

"This service has been carried out by the Directorate of Hygiene, which has strongly contributed to education, both in the inspection of private schools and in the supervision of public school teachers and students."

Regarding the importance of medical discourse and the role of the hygiene-schooling process during the First Republic which aimed at promoting the civility so desired by republican leaders Stephanou (2005, p. 148) offers the following statement:

Medicine came to play a fundamentally preventive role. The diseases of modern civilization offered a vast field for sanitary action. Physicians positioned themselves as a kind of mediator those who, by proposing measures for spatial organization and environmental purification, would lead society toward health and positive civilization. Degeneration could be avoided. Bodily and societal illness would give way to health and vitality. It was essential, however, to ensure the space for medicine's educational and sanitizing intervention. [...] Education would thus emerge as a task aligned with the mission of preventive medicine. Yet social medicine prophylactic par excellence was also charged with corrective and orthopedic actions. (emphasis added)

In analyzing the sources examined in this study within the context of municipal reforms, it becomes evident that significant importance was attributed to the figure of the School Inspector, Waldemar Amorety Machado, in the implementation of the modernization project envisioned by the Municipal Intendancy. Regarding the role of the School Inspector, Corsetti (1998, p. 347) affirms:

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An unprecedented school inspection system characterized the educational experience of the republican leaders in Rio Grande do Sul, who succeeded in bringing together civil servants [...] to carry out the supervisory tasks of education.

In this process of expanding municipal primary education, the concerns and efforts of the municipality were strongly defended by the School Inspector, as can be observed in his Report.:

In continuing the execution of the administrative program to which Your Excellency's enlightened government is committed, every available resource has been employed to ensure the broadest possible dissemination of primary education in this municipality. With this goal in mind, the municipal teaching staff fully aware of the arduous mission entrusted to it does not limit itself to the passive role of waiting for students to enroll in order to teach them the rudiments they lack. Rather, by means of patriotic outreach, it actively visits the students' homes, emphasizing the importance of education and thereby contributing to increased school attendance.[...] This is further proof of the progress of education in this municipality and stands as one of the clearest testaments to the benefits that Bagé has reaped from the implementation of the educational system it has adopted. Nevertheless, if shortcomings still exist, it is certainly because not all the challenges involved in resolving such a vast and pressing issue can be addressed within the short time span of a single administrative term. These matters require thorough study and sustained efforts aimed, at the very least, at formulating the problem in such a way that the work of each year constitutes a continuation of the previous one thus advancing steadily and securely toward the intended goal. This not only prevents the dismantling of prior achievements in order to start anew but also facilitates the work of future administrations. To this fundamental objective, all efforts have been directed: the formation of an educational system capable of producing the greatest possible practical and immediate results. (emphasis added) (School Inspector's Report, 1928, p. 33-34).

According to Faria Filho (2000), School Inspectors recorded their observations of everyday events in school life, enabling both oversight and potential interventions in the activities carried out within the schools. In other words, the reports they produced provided the Municipal Intendancy with a means to monitor the work of professionals operating in educational institutions, thus ensuring that the interests of the municipality remained actively upheld.

With regard to the Intendancy Reports from the city of Pelotas, it was in 1909, during the administration of Barboza Gonçalves, that certain considerations regarding the "municipal classes" were published. According to the Intendente:

Aware of the advantages of spreading education—making it readily and easily accessible to all social classes, especially to those less favored by fortune—the Administration considered it its duty to establish several classrooms within the city. Maintained for the benefit of those who, eager for knowledge yet hindered by the pressing demands of daily life, are unable to attend State schools during regular

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hours and can only fulfill this civic duty at night, this initiative was neither a futile effort nor a seed sown among thorns. The municipal classes have been well received, enjoy strong attendance, and are fully accomplishing their intended purpose (RELATÓRIO INTENDENCIAL, 1909, p. 24).

Through Gonçalves's statements, it becomes clear that the municipal classes were intended to serve a less privileged segment of the population, particularly working students, and were aimed at providing basic education in the sense of literacy, rather than preparing students for entry into higher education. During the Republican period, education became a responsibility of both the state and the municipality. The former initially focused on expanding the public school network at the state level, but these efforts proved insufficient, which compelled municipalities to offer public classes.

In this way, the theme of education gradually began to permeate the official discourses of Pelotas's municipal leaders. Consider the words of José Barboza Gonçalves: "A people whose average level of education is notably higher also proves to be the strongest, most industrious, and most capable" (Municipal Report, 1910, p. 16), and those of Cypriano Corrêa Barcellos: "Education is not neglected among us: it is developing, progressing, and advancing with confidence, driven by the strong commitment of public authorities to disseminate it and make it easily accessible" (Municipal Report, 1913, p. 10). Barcellos further states:

At every turn, the persistent efforts of its capable principals and experienced teachers are evident through a convergence of fruitful labors, they have succeeded in upholding the distinguished reputation of the teaching profession in Pelotas. While, on the one hand, universities, secondary schools, and private classes are found in such commendable condition, on the other, elementary schools, state institutions, subsidized schools, and those maintained by the municipality are also fully fulfilling their intended purposes (RELATÓRIO INTENDENCIAL, 1916, p.19)

The words of Intendente Cypriano Corrêa Barcellos express the satisfaction and pride felt by the government regarding the development of educational institutions and the teaching profession itself. Moreover, the Intendente was clearly pleased with the way these institutions were fulfilling their intended purposes. From this expression of strong approval toward both public and private institutions, we turn to another point rooted in the ideological frameworks of the time, whether positivist or Masonic (as will be addressed below). During this period, there was no rivalry between the public and private sectors; rather, both were encouraged to develop. This was due, in particular, to the doctrines that influenced contemporary thought, which assigned responsibility for primary education to the municipality and the state, while suggesting that secondary and higher education should fall under the domain of private initiative. Support for private initiative was also evident in the speeches of the Intendentes, as illustrated in the words of Cypriano Corrêa Barcellos: "In turn,

The representations of the country symbols in the schools of Rio Grande Do Sul in the First Republic private initiative has also manifested itself powerfully, and its actions are eloquently evident” (Intendancy Report, 1913, p. 10). This view is echoed in the statement by José Barboza Gonçalves:

Aware of its mission, the public authority must support the development of education in all its forms, recognizing no academic privileges, disregarding formal diplomas, allowing free competition to unfold as a stimulus to talent, and assisting productive capability wherever it may be found. Rather than official instruction which has already passed through its era of dogmatic narrowness, marked by regulations and praises, by ostentatious competitions and tenures that often reward merely a momentary effort or a stroke of luck, and may, in their suffocating atmosphere, extinguish the very spark of motivation that should, in a system of free competition, serve as a guide for constant action full freedom must be established. Such freedom enables the unrestrained spirit to act autonomously in pursuit of greater development, leading to the consolidation of a position defined by its utility (RELATÓRIO INTENDENCIAL, 1910, p. 15).

Gonçalves’s words point to a characteristic feature of the First Republic: Positivist theory was favorable to private initiatives in the educational sphere something clearly reflected in the Intendente’s use of expressions such as “free competition,” “full freedom,” and “autonomous.” At the same time, it is important to recognize that, during the Republic as previously mentioned through references to Tambara (1995) and Corsetti (1997) the expansion of public primary education occurred within a process led by the state government. This process is evident in the Intendente’s remarks, which show that the diffusion of primary education in Pelotas by the municipal government was not an isolated phenomenon but part of a broader effort unfolding simultaneously at the state level and driven by state initiative.

In the years 1912 and 1913, the concerns of Intendente Cypriano Corrêa Barcellos remained focused on sanitation a theme that, during this period, was closely linked to education, as previously noted in the section “Education in the Early Decades of the Twentieth Century.” Precisely because there was a specific conception of education whose role was the holistic formation of the citizen grounded in the organized dissemination of scientific knowledge in 1912, the Intendente approved the Regulation of Municipal Public Instruction (Regulamento da Instrução Pública Municipal), through Act No. 642, dated January 24. One can observe a contemporaneity between the regulations enacted in Bagé and those in Pelotas. The regulation approved in Pelotas consisted of 18 articles, which addressed topics such as the secular and free nature of municipal education; the division into two tracks (primary and technical for elementary professions); the curriculum of these courses and their target audiences; the inspection of teaching; the school calendar; the roles and responsibilities of students and teachers, among other matters. The development of legislation to regulate municipal

instruction demonstrates that the operation of the existing municipal schools required a clear organizational structure.

Another equally important issue concerning the school was raised by Hilsdorf (2005) and relates to voting. According to the author, education through voting and schooling was instituted by the republicans as the primary tool for the evolutionary transformation of Brazilian society, offered as a guarantee of the progress promised by the republican regime. In this sense, the act of voting by the literate and school attendance were seen as essential to shaping the progressive individual, suited to modern times transforming the subject into an active citizen.

Such a transformation was crucial during a period of transition between two distinct forms of government: the Monarchy, grounded in tradition and heredity, and legitimized through its subjects; and the Republic, founded on the vote of the literate and the participation of citizens. It is important to note that a path had to be traversed between subject and citizen, and that this formation took place through institutions and symbols. Thus, the Republic did not refrain from turning the city into a stage for its own symbology.

It was crucial to possess one of these tools, since, as Hilsdorf (2005) argues, political forces sought to control educational institutions and their agents in order to impose the most appropriate and effective school structure to shape and conform society.

## **Photographs as National Representations of Civic-Mindedness**

Bencostta (2005) states that the discourse of those who established the new political regime in 1889 contained, in addition to the rational justification of power aimed at legitimizing the Republic, a strong interest in building a nation grounded in values aligned with the changes brought by the modern world. Thus, in an effort to oppose the diversity present in everyday social life, Veiga (1998) asserts that the role of the State was to take the lead in the processes of population standardization, with the objective of adapting individuals to the society in which they live. In this context, the school became one of the State's legitimizing institutions, as it is an institution with a fundamentally ideological function.

The notions of modernity and the modern are repeatedly referenced by the authors, given that the Republic asserted itself within the Brazilian political context as a modern proposal, rooted in Enlightenment ideals and positioned in opposition to the monarchical, traditional, and conservative past. In addition to the political transformations that marked Brazilian history at the end of the



The representations of the country symbols in the schools of Rio Grande Do Sul in the First Republic nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, modernity also made its presence felt in the field of education. A broad educational ideology began to take shape, introducing into pedagogical discourse a series of new concepts that had not previously belonged to its vocabulary, such as individual aptitude, activity, and mobility.

The assimilation of such concepts, combined with a break from traditional structures such as the Church and the family, would be, according to Veiga (1998), an expression of modernism in education. This is because it seeks to break with the traditional management of the school and the academicism of its practices, while also aiming to invent the individual and recreate the social.

According to Escolano (2000), the school building is a variant of what is known as institutional architecture, yet it carries a particular semantic force through the signs and symbols it displays. Isolated classrooms lacked a distinctive architectural design and, as such, did not bear identifying symbols. During the First Republic, however, the school came to acquire an imposing character, inspired by the principles of Positivism<sup>7</sup>, becoming a true temple of knowledge:

A dedicated building for the school: this was a significant issue that public authorities had to confront, given the discursive commitment that crowned school education as one of the main pillars supporting civilization. Thus, for public authorities, it became imperative to invest resources in the construction of school buildings suited to their function. However, this investment which undoubtedly contributed to the glorification of the Republic became, more than anything, a strategy of visibility rather than an action that would necessarily democratize education (BENCOSTTA, 2005, p.103-104).

Progress and civilization were incorporated into this space, and the school became one of the key environments for producing urbanity. Its new architecture, according to Veiga (2007), combined physical and moral hygiene in order to qualify it for the role of educating children. All elements that constituted the school environment came to be the subject of study and planning whether inside or outside the schools: their furniture, classrooms, dental offices, walls, and spatial organization.

In the case of Pelotas, a city located in the southern half of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, the municipal classes occupied a position between the old isolated classrooms and elementary schools or school groups. Although similar to isolated classes, they were subject to strict inspection by both

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<sup>7</sup> According to Rodríguez (2006, pp. 73–74): Gaúcho Castilism established itself as a version of Positivism distinct from Comtism or from positivism tout court. In short, Castilism differs from Comtism in that it emphatically underscores the dominant presence of the state across various spheres of social life, while simultaneously creating an entire economic, political, and legal infrastructure to perpetuate this state of affairs. Castilism proved to be more decidedly totalitarian than Comtism.

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municipal and state authorities, while also beginning to be established in buildings specifically constructed for educational purposes. Figures 01 and 02 show that the school of Professor José Francisco Duarte had classrooms with spaces properly suited to teaching practices. These images appeared on the same page of the Intendancy Report of the city of Pelotas (RS), dated 1915<sup>8</sup>, placed one above the other, as they belonged to the same context and were captioned “6th Municipal Class.” Both images depict the same classroom, but from different angles. When using photographs as documents subject to analysis for the understanding of historical contexts, it is important to consider that: “those who handle the lenses do not simply copy what they see: they select, crop, and impose a specific gaze on everything they capture with their machines” (SCHWARCZ, 2012, p. 10). In this sense, the emphasis given to the photographs of the 6th Municipal Class must be critically examined. It is understood that such images were intended to represent the elements that the Pelotas municipal administration sought to showcase: alignment with republican ideals of civility, order, and hygiene values widely promoted during that period.

**Figure 01 – 6th Municipal Class**



**Source:** Intendancy Report of the Municipality of Pelotas/RS – Year 1915

The photograph occupying the upper part of the page (Figure 01) depicted a group of female students seated at their desks, indicating that the school was already equipped with furniture—if not entirely appropriate, at least closer to what was expected of an educational institution during the First Republic. The photograph displays an asymmetrical balance, as the rows of students form a diagonal line that cuts across the image, starting from the lower right corner and extending toward

8 In 1915, engineer Cypriano Correia Barcellos held the position of municipal Intendente in the city of Pelotas. The photographs of the 6th Municipal Class were the first to be published in relation to the subject of education in the locality.

The representations of the country symbols in the schools of Rio Grande Do Sul in the First Republic the upper left. On the walls, one can observe various didactic instruments and national symbols intended to promote the civic and moral formation of the citizen: a map of Brazil and three flags, one of which is believed to be the Brazilian flag.

**Figure 02 – 6th Municipal Class**



**Source:** Intendancy Report of the Municipality of Pelotas/RS – Year 1915

Figure 02, which occupied the lower portion of the page in the Report, displays the same asymmetrical balance as the previous image. This photograph captures the left side of the classroom, where a group of male students is seated. At the back of the room, one can also observe several didactic materials, most likely maps. On the wall beside the students, there are coat hooks where the boys' hats have been hung. Hats, caps, and berets were distinctive elements of male attire during this period. Thus, beside the boys, we find material elements associated with social representations of masculinity.

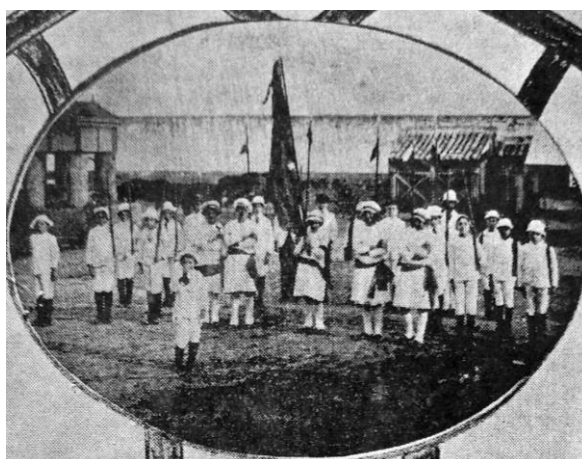
It is important to note that Figures 01 and 02 may suggest that the class was mixed. However, this practice can be questioned, given that the mere fact that students appear in the same room does not necessarily indicate that the lessons were shared. In the image, the girls are seated on one side of the classroom, while the boys sit on the other. This gender-based division may have been arranged solely for the purpose of the photograph or not since it is an official image. It is also noteworthy that all the children are positioned the same way: with their arms crossed on the desks, which highlights how staged the photograph was. These images must be understood as part of a “set of material and immaterial elements brought together by their authors; they are conceived, constructed, and encoded.” (KOSSOY, 2012, p.22).

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The use of uniforms was apparently not a daily practice in the 6th Municipal Class. Although the students appear to be wearing uniforms in *Figure 03*, it is noticeable that both among the girls and the boys there are students of varying heights, which may indicate differences in age. This could suggest that the municipal class was not organized by grade levels, similar to the previously mentioned isolated classes, or that students from different grades were grouped together specifically for the purpose of producing the photograph.

*Figures 03 and 04* were taken in the outdoor areas of the school. As with the previously discussed photographs, these figures belong to the same context and depict the students in the schoolyard.

**Figure 03 – Students of the 6th Municipal Class**



**Source:** Intendancy Report of the Municipality of Pelotas/RS – Year 1915

The photograph at the top of the Report page (Figure 03) shows students (both girls and boys) dressed in uniforms, holding flags and staffs (apparently the same type used by scouts for their exercises). This image reflects the previously mentioned concern with the moral and civic education of the students. The school uniform was white. The boys wore boots, while the girls wore three-quarter socks and ballet flats. Both wore hats, but the boys' hats were different from the girls', as the latter were adorned with a bow. Among the female students, one appears to be black. One of the girls was holding a flag, probably the national flag. The students were arranged in two rows, with only one student standing out, placed in the foreground. In the background, a type of shed or caretaker's house can be seen, and to the left, there is a hexagonal-shaped building with openings, resembling a well.

Civic education was a constant throughout the period under study. It is noteworthy that, at the national level, this concern was recurrent, integrating the republican project for the formation of a national identity. Damasceno's (2021) studies in Pará support this assertion, as the author points to

The representations of the country symbols in the schools of Rio Grande Do Sul in the First Republic directives present in legal documents that governed the structure and functioning of primary education and included the offering of a subject called "Civic Culture".

**Figure 04 – Students of the 6th Municipal Class**

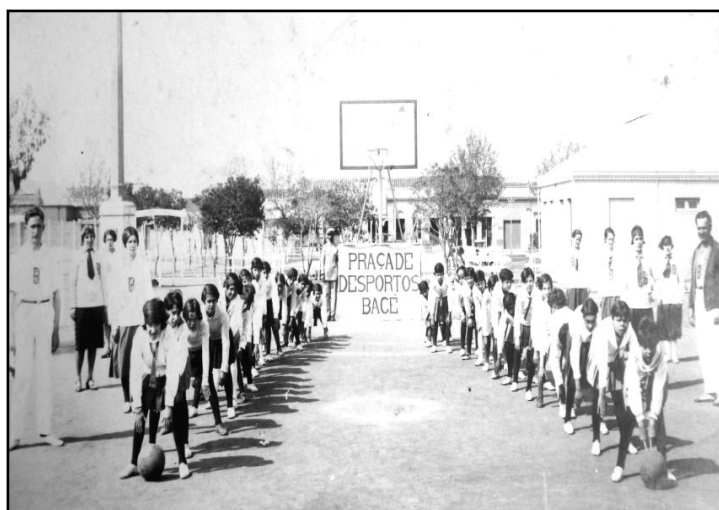


**Source:** Intendancy Report of the Municipality of Pelotas/RS – Year 1915

The students were positioned on the steps leading to the schoolyard, arranged in rows to form a figure in the shape of a triangle or trapezoid. The front row consisted of the shortest students. It can be observed that both uniformed and non-uniformed students were mixed together. In the background, the entrance door to the school is visible.

The municipal authorities' concerns with processing and maintaining administrative control routines can also be seen in the images displayed from the Sports Square of the municipality of Bagé, created in 1927.

**Figure 05 – Sports Square**



**Source:** Iconographic Collection – Dom Diogo de Souza Museum

From this image, we can infer the concern to highlight the classification of physical activities intended for female students. Another key aspect for our analysis regarding the supervision of the management of the Sports Square, particularly in relation to gender relations, personal moral conduct, and uniforms, is certainly tied to the sanitary policies of the First Republic. Stephanou (2005, p. 144) makes the following observation about medical discourse and sanitary education in Brazil:

This statement includes important declarations about education, present in the discourse of the medical field: educating from a young age, teaching through the pedagogy of example, disseminating rules for proper living, instructing to save from ignorance, forming virtues and intelligence, strengthening character, and restoring energy to produce. In the early decades of the 20th century, much credit was given to education for its contribution to the work of sanitation of both the environment and the individual.

The educational efforts in the process of expanding primary, secondary, and artistic education, coupled with the creation of the Sports Square in the municipality of Bagé, enabled the practice of physical exercises by all students of both municipal and private schools, thus promoting substantial changes in the Municipal Public Instruction. Regarding the inauguration of the Sports Square, we find the following news described in the Intendancy Report of 1927:

As part of public education, on the 7th of September last, with great solemnity and a large turnout of people, this sports center was inaugurated, destined for the physical education of our youth. There is no doubt that this is a major undertaking for Bagé, one that will foster strength, increase energy, and give vigor to the young people of Bagé, who will have, in the sports field, a place for the full development of their entire bodies. [...] The thanks I express here [...] It is also just that the thanks I extend to Dr. Santayana be directed to the Physical Culture Commission of Montevideo, which has always, with the best intentions, responded to the requests of this municipality. [...] Bagé was the first city in Brazil to have the fortune of possessing a physical education field equipped with everything necessary for the physical development of our youth. (emphasis added) (Intendancy Report, 192, p. 06-07) .

These notes reveal the importance attributed to the inaugural act of the Sports Square, demonstrating the significance of this educational and social space for the city, aimed at physical development, civic engagement, and educational practices, as well as its connection with the Physical Culture Commission of Uruguay. The photograph below, taken with the purpose of gifting it to the Physical Culture Commission of Uruguay, shows the arrival of Uruguayan students from the neighboring city of Melo:



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**Figure 06 – Football Team of Melo – Uruguay**



**Source:** Iconographic Collection – Dom Diogo de Souza Museum

Regarding the appreciation of Physical Education and the importance of the social rules embedded in the planning of the Sports Squares, researchers Cunha & Mazo (2011, p. 20 and 23) make the following observation:

Thus, the Sports Square came to be viewed as part of the appreciation of Physical Education, as a complement to the school, which was strongly connected, as it was transformed into a Physical Education Square. The school's Physical Education program and that of the square followed the same guidelines, and since they shared the same purpose, they were merged into one. The squares maintained an intimate connection with the school. They were spacious areas with a program and provided attendees with joy through the practice of games and outdoor activities. [...] The Sports Squares were seen as spaces for effective social control through the lifestyle change driven by modernity. Modern society reserved leisure as a means to satisfy the need individuals have to publicly experience intense emotions, without disturbing or jeopardizing the organization of social life. The routines of physical and sports practices in the squares ensured this high level of safety for individuals and institutions, enabling integration and forming a network of connections. (emphasis added).

In the end, education was the best means found by the republican positivists to promote the ideals, symbols, beliefs, rituals, and values of the Republic. Thus, it is clear that the actions taken by republican administrations revealed all these particularities through distinct educational practices throughout the course of the First Republic.

## Final considerations

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The formative role assigned to the school by the state, particularly regarding the formation of a national, civic, and republican identity, was consistently guided by the influences of the positivist ideals conceived by the signatories of the Rio-Grandense Republican Party during the First Republic.

In this sense, the sources researched indicate that, in the process of structuring Public Education and the establishment of schools in two cities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, there was a heightened focus on establishing norms, operational standards, and rules of control that determined the structure of the educational system during the First Republic. Thus, administrative actions and educational discourses were a driving force behind the economic, scientific, and political advancement of Rio Grande do Sul society, as well as the role of the public school as a fundamental element in spreading civic, moral, and republican ideals. The school and the processes of schooling integrated the ideals of positivism and the republican precepts of public education, demonstrating that education was the most viable and rapid path for civilizing the people and modernizing the nation.

This process promoted distinct actions in school activities, dedicating republican schools to becoming temples devoted to the unification of all republican discourses present in the First Republic of Rio Grande do Sul. Ultimately, education was the best form and/or path found by the positivists to promote the symbols, beliefs, rituals, and values of the Republic. In this context, it is worth remembering that the historian's role should prioritize a relationship with the sources based on intuition, creativity, inquiry, and sensitivity. In their work as researchers, historians must be aware that when working with sources, it is not enough to simply organize them chronologically; they must be interrogated critically. Therefore, in the process of using sources for the construction of historical knowledge, there must be theoretical and methodological rigor that prioritizes an atmosphere of objectivity and scientific accuracy. In this regard, Le Goff (1996, p. 55) warns that:

The document is not innocent; it does not merely result from the historian's choice. It is, in part, determined by its time and context. The document is produced, consciously or unconsciously, by past societies, both to impose an image of that past and to state the "truth" [...]. (emphasis added).

In the end, the construction of the historian's craft involves these theoretical and empirical dilemmas in the development of their writing and analysis processes of their research sources. Alongside these reasons, our greatest desire is to reveal, uncover, state, contradict, think, rethink, write, and rewrite with attentive eyes a portion of the history of Education in Rio Grande do Sul,



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and perhaps contribute to the understanding of the educational dimensions of both Rio Grande do Sul and Brazil.

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## Documents:

Fotografias do Relatório Intendencial de 1915

**Regulamento das Escolas Municipais.** Bagé: Typographia da Casa Maciel, 1925.

Relatório do Inspetor Escolar de 1928

**Relatório Intendencial de Carlos Cavalcanti Mangabeira apresentado ao Conselho Municipal em 20 de setembro de 1927.** Bagé: Typografia Casa Maciel, 1927.

**Relatório Intendencial de Carlos Cavalcanti Mangabeira apresentado ao Conselho Municipal em 20 de setembro de 1928.** Bagé: Typografia Casa Maciel, 1928.0



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