Education as an instrument of civilizational progress: analysis of Vicente de Carvalho's proposals for educational modernization in Santos (1889)

A educação como instrumento de progresso civilizacional: análise das propostas de modernização educacional de Vicente de Carvalho em Santos (1889)

La educación como instrumento de progreso civilizatorio: análisis de las propuestas de modernización educativa de Vicente de Carvalho en Santos (1889)

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ABSTRACT
The article examines Vicente de Carvalho's proposals for educational modernization in Santos at the end of the nineteenth century. Carvalho, influenced by Auguste Comte's positivism, argued that education was fundamental for civilizational and economic progress. He proposed the creation of a Municipal Academy of Commerce and a Public Library, arguing that the teaching of exact and natural sciences was essential for Brazil's industrial and economic development. The article contextualizes these proposals in the political and social scenario of the time, highlighting that education was considered a tool for modernization and progress. Carvalho believed that public education should go beyond classical education, providing technical and scientific knowledge to train the poor population to work in commerce and industry. His ideas reflect an effort to align Brazil with the educational practices considered advanced, which were observed in European and North American countries, aiming to transform Santos into a so-called modern city.

Keywords: Education, Civilizational Progress, Capitalist Modernity, Intellectuals of Education in Santos.

RESUMO
O artigo examina as propostas de Vicente de Carvalho para a modernização educacional em Santos no final do século XIX. Carvalho, influenciado pelo positivismo de Auguste...
Comte, defendia que a educação era fundamental para o progresso civilizacional e econômico. Ele propôs a criação de uma Academia Municipal de Comércio e de uma Biblioteca Pública, argumentando que o ensino das ciências exatas e naturais era essencial para o desenvolvimento industrial e econômico do Brasil. O artigo contextualiza essas propostas no cenário político e social da época, destacando que a educação era considerada uma ferramenta de modernização e progresso. Carvalho acreditava que a educação pública deveria ir além do ensino clássico, fornecendo conhecimento técnico e científico para formar a população pobre para trabalhar no comércio e na indústria. Suas ideias refletem um esforço para alinhar o Brasil às práticas educacionais consideradas avançadas, observadas em países europeus e norte-americanos, visando transformar Santos em uma cidade dita moderna.


1 INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

In recent years, the historiography of Santos\(^1\) has benefited from valuable contributions related to regional educational history. This is mainly due to the efforts of

\(^1\) Santos is a port city of relative importance located on the coast of São Paulo state, Brazil. Known for hosting the largest port in Latin America, the city plays a crucial role in international trade and the Brazilian economy. Besides its economic significance, Santos has a rich cultural history and was a central point for
research groups focused on examining how different actors interact with and influence the urban environment. These studies maintain a careful respect for the "classical" works that underlie local historiography (Santos, 1937; Silva Sobrinho, 1957; Araújo Filho, 1969; Rodrigues, 1975, 1976, 1979, 1981; Pereira, 1980; Andrade, 1989), without losing sight of the new approaches, based on different sources that broaden the historiographical discussions on the subject (Vieira, 2012; Carreira, 2012; Caleffi, 2014; Carmo, Vieira, 2014; Pereira, 2016, Faria & Pereira, 2019).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Santos emerged as a highly competitive social scene, thanks to its important export port and its location close to São Paulo. During this period, ideological clashes involving republican, liberal, abolitionist, and anarchist ideals were vividly captured by newspapers, which documented varied plans for modernization. In this scenario, education stood out as a crucial tool for the advancement of civilizational progress from a capitalist perspective, strongly associated with the contributions of intellectuals.

Vicente Augusto de Carvalho, throughout his life, worked as a jurist, writer, politician and poet. Born in Santos in 1866, he graduated in Law from the Faculty of Law of São Paulo in 1887, when he adopted the positivist doctrine of Auguste Comte (LINS, 1967). After graduation, he returned to Santos, where he joined the Republican Center and began writing columns in local newspapers.

This article is part of a doctoral research that explores the sociability practices of intellectuals in Santos during the First Republic, who established "networks of sociability", a term discussed by Sirinelli (2003). Among these intellectuals is Vicente de Carvalho, whose column "Cousas Municipais" in the Diário de Santos newspaper advocates for public education as a means of economic renewal in the country. Carvalho argues in favor of investing in schools that provide access to scientific knowledge, such as chemistry and physics, which are essential for industrial development and, consequently, for economic advancement. Thus, this essay seeks to analyze Carvalho's political and social development in Brazil during the First Republic (1889-1930). The city is also famous for its beaches, architectural heritage, and the Santos FC football club, which gained international prominence with players such as Pelé.
discourse in the aforementioned column to understand his view on the interconnection between education and modernity.

For the analysis of the sources, we will seek a theoretical foundation in Kuhlmann Júnior (2001), who, when dealing with international exhibitions and their relationship with education, argues that they were symbols of capitalist progress. The exhibitions offered a perspective of modernity that could be achieved when nations took the necessary steps, that is, to become "civilized", there was a path of conquests to be climbed, following the example of European countries. Education, in this process, gained great prominence, for it was not an end, but the means by which progress could be achieved.

With respect to the press, it is assumed that it is an "active force of capitalism and not [...] a mere depository of events in the various processes and conjunctures", as stated by Cruz and Peixoto (2007). In other words, the press is an instrument of manipulation of interests, which needs to be analyzed from the point of view of dialogue with multiple historical sources, in order to try to understand the subjects who acted through it.

The proposal defended by Vicente de Carvalho – published in the last editorial of the "Cousas Municipais" (on February 5, 1889) – was the creation of a Municipal Academy of Commerce, an institution that in later years would come into existence.

A significant part of the historiography of education points out that, for the intellectuals active in the First Republic, education was the primordial field for the construction of a democratic society (Reis Filho, 1981; Nagle, 2001; Carvalho, 2003). Also, in this sense, the discourse present in the Santos newspaper *The Tribune* corroborates this perspective:

Education is the basis of all progress and aggrandizement, it makes necessary an energetic action not only on the part of the municipal authorities, but also of all those who occupy prominent positions in this city, so that they may have an end to this shameful state of things.

Because the City Council and big business do not join their efforts to achieve the collimated end! Because it is not organized, with these elements and others who want to be part of it, a large commission to come to an understanding directly with the state government and with the state congressmen. This commission, while seeking to obtain from the government the creation of the school, would also try to raise the necessary means for it to be offered to the state powers. We see our population increasing in an astonishing way, we cannot continue with the same number of schools as 10 or 15 years ago.
It is necessary to act and act with enthusiasm, for will and energy are the two great weapons that obtain victory.
For our part, we are willing to fight for the public education of Santos and, although modest, our efforts will be joined to those of those who take upon themselves this noble campaign of equipping our city for the bright future that fate and the natural evolution of events fatally reserve for it (A TRIBUNA, 10/04/1913, translated by the autor).

This news refers to the proposal to create a specific municipal tax to raise funds for education. Education played a preponderant role in the development of the civilizing project in Brazil in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both for the intellectuals – who were the propagators (and some of them, elaborators) of this idea – and for the institutions to which they belonged or represented.

Brazil was part of a broader movement, in which, since the second half of the nineteenth century, the Western nations that possessed big capital favored a "pedagogy of progress", offering, in the International Pedagogical Exhibitions, a perspective of progress made possible through education, which would bring the social and cultural values of capitalist modernity. With the holding of congresses during the fairs (national or international) there was the implementation and diffusion of standards, providing an ideological and material uniformity in the most diverse aspects of society. Thus, little by little, Brazil incorporated, among many others, the educational aspects present in an international sphere (Kuhlmann Júnior, 2001).

This pedagogy of progress instituted the notion that countries needed to evolve by modernizing and, for this, education was a preponderant factor. It was necessary to multiply institutions to serve public education. A modern country was one that valued the education and instruction of the masses.

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2 Capitalist modernity is understood as what Alves (2011) conceptualizes as the second modernity of capital, that is, the period between the First and Second Industrial Revolutions, when the capitalist mode of production was established and disseminated in the West. According to him: "The second modernity of capital is the machine-modernity, a historical temporality in which a style of thought, politics and aesthetic sensibility was constituted that we could characterize as modernist. It was at this stage of the development of Western capitalism, in the midst of which the process of modernization developed, that the social class (bourgeoisie and proletariat) and the national state were constituted around which the territory of the Nation and the City itself was consolidated. It is these essential determinations that will compose the social identity of men and women of the second modernity. In short, the second modernity is modernity itself." This historical moment coincides with the period in which historian Eric Hobsbawm (2012) calls the "Age of Empires".
Kuhlmann Junior (2001) points out that for Brazil’s leaders in the period called the First Republic, the nation was still "adolescent" and, therefore, would be able to justify its high illiteracy rates, as well as the high number of its population absent from educational institutions. At the regional level, referring to the province of São Paulo, Vicente de Carvalho wrote:

It is in everyone's consciousness the deplorable lack of intellectual development among us. We are an ignorant people. Statistics in themselves are staggering, but they do not yet give the exact measure of our intellectual poverty. The proportion of illiterates in the population of the province is seventy-seven per cent. It's a lot, it's disheartening — but that's not all. There are twenty-three people in the province who can read out of every hundred inhabitants. Whereas, however, knowing how to read is not a science, nor is it even knowledge in the particle sense of the word; but only a means of instruction, a weapon, an instrument placed at the disposal of the mind, and not always used; we will suddenly see that percentage in itself so unfavorable descend, become almost null (Diário de Santos, 20/01/1889, Editorial Cousas Municipais, translated by the autor).

For Vicente de Carvalho, civilization developed from the mastery of science and the intervention in nature that it provided. He, as a man of his time, also considered the evolutionary scale that Brazil needed to go through in order to leave its provincial garb and clothe itself with modernity: to become a prosperous nation, Brazil needed to expand its educational establishments and offer its people the study of the exact sciences, such as, according to him, The United States, the Netherlands and Switzerland did. Therefore, just reading, writing and counting would not be enough to bring economic progress to Brazil. Public education establishments should go beyond classical education and offer the teaching of exact sciences to their entire population.

What we call civilization is nothing more than a combination of man's conquests over nature. To harness the forces of nature, to adapt them to their use, to give them direction, to control them—this is the great human work of history. **Science is the tool in this gigantic enterprise;** it was she who transformed the flint axe of Miocene man into so many powerful instruments of modern industry, (...) slave to the rigidity of iron; who made the indomitable ocean the

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3 Vicente de Carvalho was a follower of Comte's positivist doctrine (LINS, 1967). When referring to "science", he includes disciplines of an empirical nature, which provided the expansion of industrial work, such as chemistry and physics.
conciliator of peoples; who opened in the bosom of the earth, arteries vitaes, the tunnel of Mont Cenis and the Suez Canal.

**Under the names of chemistry and physica, it produced industry, which revolutionized the world;** It was called political economy when it transformed the narrow molds of primitive social relations into the broad freedom of modern international trade.

**Rich people! But a country is not rich because the land is fertile, but because of what man produces:** Holland is a swamp — and from this swamp science has made one of the first countries in the world.

In many peoples—in the United States, in Holland, in Switzerland—**popular education is the great national cause, the supreme care.**

Other countries, such as France, Germany, England, Italy, because of the necessity of this armed peace that is ruining Europe, give the introduction the second place, just below the primacy that the armaments have for an ever imminent war (Diário de Santos, 20/01/1889, Editorial *Cousas Municipais*, emphasis added, translated by the autor).

Vicente de Carvalho, in addition to criticizing the small number of educational institutions, will also make fierce considerations about those that exist, mentioning, in relation to primary schools, that they are poorly distributed geographically and poorly managed. With respect to higher education institutions, in particular, the São Paulo Law School, according to him, does a disservice to the nation by privileging metaphysics to the detriment of the natural and exact sciences.

The Faculty of Law, absorbing the best skills of the country, diverting them from the study of the exact sciences, from useful knowledge, to deliver them to the yoke of a wordy metaphysic, of a sterile rhetoric, is rather a negative force, a harmful element.

(...) The Normal School, created under a vaster plan, comprising in the orbit of its attributions the teaching of the physical and natural sciences, is an incontestably purer source. But its influence in a narrow circle is felt, chiefly no doubt by the unjust abandonment in which the career for which it was initially served — the public teaching — lies. We almost completely lack the means of instruction. Everyone recognizes it. We all agree that it is the difference in the intellectual level that places us incomparably below other peoples less favored in terms of natural conditions (Diário de Santos, 20/01/1889, Editorial *Cousas Municipais*, translated by the autor).

Because the Province of São Paulo has such an unfavorable situation with respect to education, it would be, according to Vicente de Carvalho, up to the municipality to intervene. Thus, moving on to local policies, it would be up to the City Council of Santos...
to demonstrate its love for the homeland and proceed with the "intellectual regeneration of the country" (Diário de Santos, 1889, Editorial Municipal Matters) with their share of contribution.

In 1889, the city had six public elementary schools and one meritorious school – the Auxiliadora da Instrucción. This limited number of institutions would be very far from being able to serve the eighteen thousand people who made up the population of Santos at the time.

There is no college, founded on broad foundations, putting into practice the triumphant processes of modern education, capable of forming the spirit of children, of strengthening them, of stiffening their muscles, of developing their special aptitudes, of preparing with technical studies those who intend to have any career; there are no particular courses of knowledge that more directly affect the interests of the population; There is not a museum, there is not a cabinet of natural history, nor of physics, nor of astronomy, nor a bibliotheca — nothing, in short, that can influence our intelligence, giving scope to the development of special talents and opening up to the mass of the population wider horizons.

Under these conditions, it is indisputable that Santos urgently needs to turn his sights on that side. (...) And it seems to us that no one is responsible for the glorious initiative of our intellectual regeneration as much as the municipality (Diário de Santos, 25/01/1889, Editorial Cousas Municipais, translated by the autor).

It should be noted that Vicente de Carvalho conceived education in a double aspect: on the one hand, teaching focused on physical education, development of human motor skills and physical skills; on the other hand, technical education, focused on the study of natural and exact sciences. The physical development of the students was linked to the representation of physical health, an extremely important concept for the time. The health issue, especially in Santos, which had a lot of repercussions due to the high mortality rate resulting from epidemics, shaped many aspects of social life. According to Neves (1986), in 1922 the "constitutive triad of the modern" was work, education and hygiene (apud Kuhlmann, 2001, p. 62). Kuhlmann Júnior also points out that research in the field of medicine and hygiene has provided physicians and hygienists with an incontestable social authority.
The hygienists discussed the projects for the construction of schools, the implementation of medical-school inspection services, and presented suggestions for all branches of education, especially in relation to primary and early childhood education (Kuhlmann, 2001, p. 110).

Vicente de Carvalho understood that the beautification of the city and the issue of hygiene were priority issues, but just as important was the development of school education in the city:

We agree that his immediate duty is to look after the interests of municipal hygiene, the welfare and health of the people, and that the first duty of a man is to be a solid animal with good muscles and good blood.

That is the first duty. But there is another that the City Councils of Santos have forgotten to fulfill: to favor the elevation of the intellectual level, to promote and direct the spiritual culture of the population, as it promotes and directs the general elements of their well-being and health (Diário de Santos, 25/01/1889, Editorial Cousas Municipais, translated by the autor).

Throughout the public notices entitled Municipal Matters, Vicente de Carvalho defends his proposal, initiating, as previously seen, a report on the deplorable situation of public education in the Province of São Paulo and, in a second moment, makes similar criticisms concerning the city of Santos. In the third and last editorial, he puts his proposal, which is the creation of the Academy of Commerce and a Public Library of the municipality.

But now we are left with the thorniest part of the task. To set up an educational establishment is a vague idea, without much practical significance, we admit it.

(...) A lycée in which three or four common languages were taught free of charge, arithmetic and algebra, commercial writing, commercial and industrial geography, native history, commercial law, and political economy, all being a regular course, should have a decisive effect on our commerce.

It is possible that in the early years its influence was almost null and void, because of the reluctance of our youth, because of all that is intellectual effort.

(...) But we are sure that at some point the incontestable superiority of the few who had profited from that education would draw the mass of the employees of the commerce to the studies of the lyceum.

As for the need to create a public library, we consider it to be equally indisputable. It is of great interest, not only to the municipality, but to the whole country. A bibliotheca is not only a means of common instruction, it is also a repository
of documents, which without it are expected to be the priceless treasurer of national history (Diário de Santos, 05/02/1889, Editorial Municipal Matters, translated by the autor).

The Municipal Academy of Commerce and the Municipal Public Library are the first steps towards educational progress in the city. But the ambiguities manifest themselves as soon as Vicente de Carvalho's proposals are presented: the intention to create a trade academy is to offer the population the necessary tools to work in Porto. In his first speeches, Vicente de Carvalho defended the learning of the natural and exact sciences, but in his conclusion, all the training suggested in his proposal is for the technical training of people working in the trade of the port movement. For this purpose, it would be necessary to learn other languages (since the port had personnel of different nationalities), as well as commercial law, commercial bookkeeping, etc.

The creation of the municipal library would benefit a minority portion of the population, since the great mass could barely read and write; and the few who knew, would not have the conditions or time to benefit from the Library. It would certainly be a boon to the city's well-to-do.

2 FINAL THOUGHTS

Only educated peoples live in the honorable sense of modern civilized life. However the produce of our crops may increase, however the material wealth of our commerce may develop, we shall not cease to be what we are today, an obscure people begging for the crumbs of civilization, without prestige and without glory, as long as we do not utter a new word in science, industry or art! (Diário de Santos, 25/01/1889, Editorial Municipal Things, translated by the autor).

In this essay, we tried to offer a reading about Vicente de Carvalho's representation of education as an instrument for the progress of the Brazilian nation. In his proposal, published through the Editorial Municipal Matters Between January and February 1889, there was the creation of a public library and the Municipal Academy of Commerce, an institution that would come into existence in later years.
Vicente de Carvalho became involved in a public career and made use of periodicals as an instrument to propagate his ideas, representing the traditional families of Santos in their interests.

Education was on the list of interests of the ruling class, above all, an education aimed at the masses, the workers, who would be destined for work in commerce, port and industry. At the same time, there would be institutions for the education of leaders, with very high requirements for entry.

These social issues, emerging in this context in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, allowed the Santos elite to offer a representation of the idea of progress, and to act to build a new way of living and thinking, which were transmitted through "civilized" practices, bringing the European way of living as a model of what is "modern" (Lanna, 1996).
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