

# Local councils and royal education in Portuguese America<sup>1</sup>

*As Câmaras e o ensino régio na América portuguesa*

Thais Nivia de Lima e Fonseca\*

## RESUMO

O artigo tem o objetivo de discutir a atuação das Câmaras municipais de diferentes regiões da América portuguesa, analisando seu papel como porta-vozes dos súditos e como instrumentos de controle sobre o ensino régio, criado na segunda metade do século XVIII, e as relações de poder estabelecidas no processo. O estudo privilegiou documentos produzidos pelas Câmaras municipais, pelos professores e pela administração central, resultantes das relações políticas e administrativas entre eles. Esses documentos permitem perceber os mecanismos que organizavam essas relações e que tinham impacto direto sobre as reformas educacionais realizadas pela Coroa portuguesa naquela época.

Palavras-chave: reformas da educação; América portuguesa; poder local.

## ABSTRACT

The paper aims to discuss the role of local councils in different regions of Portuguese America, analyzing their roles as spokespersons for the colonial population and also as instruments of control of the royal classes created in the second half of the eighteenth century, and the power relations established in the process. The study focuses on documents produced by municipal councils, teachers and the central government, arising out the administrative and political relations between them. These documents allow an understanding of the mechanisms that organized these relationships and which impacted directly on the educational reforms undertaken by the Portuguese Crown at that time.

Keywords: educational reforms; Portuguese America; local powers.

The Pombaline education reforms have been the preferential subject of studies about the history of education in the Luso-American world in the second half of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth. Portuguese and Brazilian historiography have constructed different approaches to the problem of education within the administrative reforms implemented during the reign of d. José I, under the command of Minister Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, future Marquis of Pombal. Throughout the twentieth century authors from the two countries have focused on the period in which the

\*Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), Faculdade de Educação. thais@fae.ufmg.br

influences of Enlightenment thought in Portugal have been identified and how these materialized in the actions known as the 'Pombaline reforms' of education.<sup>2</sup> Analyses are polarized in a significant part of this historiography. Some praise the reforms and the person leading them, the Marquis of Pombal, seen as a skilled administrator and responsible for the practice of Enlightenment ideas in Portugal, while others reject the policies implemented in that period, especially the despotism and anti-clericalism of d. José's minister. Polarized visions cloud the understandings of historic processes and hinder the comprehension of aspects which can bring greater objectivity and clarity to the study of the realities of the past, understanding by this the most plausible preparation which historians can provide based on the documentary evidence.

In this specific field of the history of education it was no different – or better said it has not been –, since many still cling to dualist and biased, not to mention romantic, interpretations. Pombal against the Jesuits, the destruction of Portuguese education, an educational vacuum in the Pombaline period and afterwards, are some of the ideas present in Luso-Brazilian historiography which attribute to the reforms responsibility for the educational backwardness of Brazil and Portugal until the end of the nineteenth century. Other voices magnify Pombal's reforms and initiatives in relation to the secularization of education, the concern with scientific development through the reform of the University of Coimbra, and the most direct actions for the imposition of Portuguese throughout the Empire.

The emergence of research which has sought to understand the meaning of the Pombaline educational reforms as more than the legal and administrative apparatus which guided them has been relatively recent, as well as the unravelling of their effects in the daily reality of the Portuguese territories until the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The most meticulous investment in documentation on the two sides of the Atlantic has showed that not only is it richer than was believed – considering other analytical perspectives outside the traditional limits of political-administrative history – but has also allowed access to individual and collective experiences of subjects who were directly or indirectly affected by the reforms in their daily lives.<sup>3</sup>

The opening of new analytical dimensions has presented the few Brazilian researchers who have been concerned with the study of education in the pre-independence period with provocative possibilities for approaching the problem of the Pombaline reforms in that field. It also allows the perception and the understanding of the multiplicity of educational situations present in society until then, as well as a more conventional dimension of an education that

was strictly school. In this article it is intended to explore one of the dimensions of the reform process implemented during the Pombaline administration and the reign of d. Maria I in relation to education: royal education and its relationship with local power in Portuguese America, using local councils as its mediators.<sup>4</sup>

Called from very early on by the population or by the central power to carry out actions in the educational field – even in regions where Jesuit schools flourished –, the Councils remained responsible for the payment of the wages of royal teachers until the first decade after the Decree of 28 June 1759, which ordered the end of all educational activities of the Company of Jesus in the entire Portuguese Empire. Many localities, aware of the measures taken by the Crown, presented petitions in which they asked for the creation of royal classes, seen as a necessity for the consolidation of a process of land occupation and control, and the strengthening of order and customs. Basing their arguments on the law, council officials in some towns in Minas Gerais, for example, alleged that they had the right to royal education as they were the heads of *comarcas*, and insinuated that without the intervention of the central power they would not manage by themselves to provide education. For example the Council of Vila do Príncipe actually stated in its request that even offering an advantageous payment, it could not find teachers, necessary in a region where there were already, in 1761, “with numerous and settled married population, with the multiplication of their children increasing each day; which experience has shown to have agility and speed for any employment in the service of God and Your Majesty.”<sup>5</sup>

Despite the absence of regular religious institutions in Minas Gerais, these demands also expressed the doubts caused by the ban on Jesuits teaching, even if only for the use of their methods by lay teachers or those from the secular clergy. In the regions where the Jesuits were established, such as the coastal areas, the vacuum left by their expulsion was more clearly felt, and Councils had to assume the tasks of mobilizing themselves to request and fill these positions and to meet the demands for education, especially literary class (‘first letters’) and Latin grammar. More than ten years after the prohibition of Jesuits from teaching by the Decree of 28 June 1759, the Council of the city of Paraíba complained to the crown about the lack of teachers, since few felt attracted by the wages, so young people were getting no education. The Council then proposed that they take advantage of clergy from the Benedictine, Franciscan, and Carmelite orders to fill these places, as they were available in the city and had educational experience.<sup>6</sup> It can be perceived that in these regions where the

presence of the Jesuits was stronger, the distrust of the recently created royal education was greater, while the competence of the religious congregations was recognized by the communities. As well as being capable of teaching 'first letters' and Latin grammar, they were legitimated as being the most suited to teaching catechism and Christian doctrine, as dictated by custom and by the legal prescriptions of the reforms. It has to be taken into account that the Pombaline reforms, although they sought some form of secularization in the administration of education in the Empire, were far from a proposal for laicization.

More than a few problems were involved in managing reforms which commenced vague, with many erroneous administrative and pedagogical determinations, and which was certainly not the result of solid planning. Between 1771 and 1772 a new stage would help shape the process with the creation of the Literary Subsidy, the expansion of royal education to include 'early letters', and the reform of Coimbra University. The creation of the Literary Subsidy – a tax which in Brazil was levied principally on fresh meat and brandy –, somewhat improved the conditions of royal education by providing funds to pay teachers, notwithstanding the problems experienced in relation to this, especially long delays in the receipt of the wages owed.

Effectively the reforms created a new career in the state administration – that of royal teacher –, attracting to it a significant number of individuals whose abilities were considered sufficient to teach especially literacy, Latin grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy. The attraction was not so much the wages offered – low in relation to other public positions – but advantages such as the granting of the privileges of the petite nobility to part of the teachers and the possibility of a retirement pension. Not to mention the status which could result from being a teacher, as they were distinguished as people with a level of literacy in a society which, despite having a majority of illiterates, lived immersed in a world of written culture and depended on it in public and private spheres (Magalhães, 1994; 2002).

Over time the Crown sought to resolve problems based on necessity, and many orders were sent to Brazil with the purpose of tightening control over teachers and guaranteeing the payment of the Literary Subsidy, as well as answering many of the requests sent by local populations through Councils, asking for the creation of classes and the appointment of teachers. Having begun in the reign of d. José I, this process was more intense under d. Maria I and during the regency of d. João.

Although in the Americas the governors of captaincies and bishops were the supreme authorities in relation to royal education and the teachers, Councils were given responsibility for a closer control, although they remained almost stripped of autonomy in these matters. Limits were imposed on them by direct administrative acts in Lisbon or local authorities, such as governors, judges, and bishops. This meant that the holding of exams to fill teaching positions, the concessions of provisions, and 'letters of ownership' with the equivalent appointment of teachers and their designation to specific places, as well as the granting of authorization to unallocated teachers to fill empty positions in cases of emergency, and authorizations of private teachers, were all the responsibility of these superior agencies and not Councils.

For this reason contrary actions resulted in vehement reactions, as shown by the case in which Antônio José Coelho Fortes, a resident of Vila de São Bento do Tamanduá, in the Captaincy of Minas Gerais, requested authorization from the Council to open a Latin grammar class in the town. Authorization was granted with the argument that it was for the 'public good' and because there was no other school open in the region. Since Fortes needed a formal appointment to receive his wages, he appealing to the Crown, asking Queen d. Maria I to approve and ratify the authorization granted by the Council of São Bento do Tamanduá. The case ended up in the hands of the governor Bernardo José de Lorena, who in a letter in 1799 to Minister d. Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho, expressed his opposition, stating that he did not know "with what authority the Council in question gave this order." Nevertheless, since it appeared that the case of Antônio José Coelho Fortes had the sympathy of the Queen, the governor left the decision in the minister's hands, though not without presenting arguments against the suppliant for the position of royal teacher: he had enlisted in the Company of *Caçadores* (*Tirailleurs* or Light Infantry), but was arrested and charged with the theft of money from the Royal Treasury, and accused in the *devassa* (inquiry) which followed. It is possible that d. Maria I took into account the arguments of the governor and annulled the authorization of the Council of São Bento do Tamanduá, since no official records of Antônio Fortes as a royal teacher were found.<sup>7</sup>

The functioning of Council as local agencies of control over royal education placed them in a direct relationship with the *Juntas da Fazenda* (Treasuries) of the Captaincies, since they were supposed to certify the functioning of the classes and the work of the teachers, in documents sent regularly to the regional treasuries, so that the wages could be paid. In addition, the Councils operated as mediators between the population and the central

administration institutions in relation to the requests and complaints about the public state education.

The organization established by the Law dated 6 November 1772, which expanded the number of positions throughout the Empire and implemented the course of 'Early Letters,'<sup>8</sup> defined the criteria of geographic location and population density as determinant for the creation of royal classes. Cities and towns, including those which were the heads of *comarcas*, had to have royal classes and serve as centers which would attract students to their regions. However, for many of these places royal classes were established as the result of requests sent by Councils to the central administration, using arguments inspired by the Law, such as the distances that would have to be covered by students to reach the towns where classes would be held, or alleging that their towns were sufficiently important and had a large enough population to have their own classes. They also noted that they had not been given classes, despite contributing to the funds raised through the Literary Subsidy. Nor did they forget to highlight the advantages resulting from investing in the education of the youth:

Your Majesty wrote to the Officials of the Council of Vila de Pitangui on 31 December 1773; Your Majesty being served by the Law dated 6 November 1772, and 17 October 1773 established a literary subsidy to support Teachers, who can instruct the Youth in the necessary principles of letters; with which they become capable of the politics and civility required for human intercourse, and although the residents of that Town are contributing to this purpose, they do not yet enjoy the healthy effect of such a wise measure as until the present none of the above mentioned teachers have yet been appointed: that it being known that the distance from that town to the next, which is Sabará, in the *comarca* of Rio das Velhas is thirty leagues, and from its border close to sixty, and since in this settlement there are more than 12,000 souls who are convinced that it is not the pious intention of Your Majesty that their children be deprived of such a worthy good as that of letters, that Your Majesty may seek to notify all your Vassals, and to ask Your Majesty to grant them the above mentioned Teachers, as is being practiced in all the other Towns of that Captaincy.<sup>9</sup>

As can be seen, the Council of Pitangui, in the Captaincy de Minas Gerais, responded quickly to the new situation, demonstrating its knowledge of the recently created legislation and presenting arguments based on its principal elements: the contribution of the population through taxation which should

be reverted through the provision of classes; the advantages of education for the good of the state and society; geographic and population criteria. It was not due to a lack of need or the non-coherence of the request and legislation, but the slowness of the bureaucratic process that Vila de Pitanguí waited ten years for the Latin Grammar class and 14 for the one in literacy.

The same argumentative strategies were used by Councils in other parts of Portuguese America, such as the Vila de Cuiabá, in the Captaincy of Mato Grosso, which in 1782 expressed its concern with the lack of classes of Latin and philosophy for the children of families of white men, ever more numerous in that settlement. The Council of Cuiabá offered its own funding to complement the payment of teachers, if the tax collected for the literary subsidy of the town was not enough for this. The presence of royal education served the civilization and organizational purposes of local social life, an subject of concern to council officials, since it was the way that was “most efficient to achieve temporal and eternal happiness, and it is the foundation of all true knowledge, and with this principle the prosperity of the Church, the security of the Empire, and generally the good of all Christian and civil society will be strengthened.”<sup>10</sup>

The development of economic activities accompanied by population growth presented for many regions the need to introduce some elements indicative of material prosperity and the increase of their political importance. Administrative and judicial structures and the existence of royal schools appeared as demands related to the transformations which some these settlements were undergoing. This situation was remembered by the Council of Vila de Campos dos Goitacazes, in the Captaincy do Rio de Janeiro, in 1797, when it wrote to the Overseas Council (*Conselho Ultramarino*) asking for a vacant teacher’s position in Latin grammar to be filled in the town. The Council’s letter, speaking in the names of the “loyal people loving Your Majesty,” described the progress made in the region thanks to advances of sugar mill, and lists the improvements desired, including the non-interruption of the royal classes in Latin, necessary for the Queen to have “the glory to see a people of husbandmen, with honest customs, joyfully obey the orders of Your Majesty, and the satisfaction to rule over the people recognizing your sovereignty.”<sup>11</sup>

Councils also took action to resolve the problems of vacancies of royal teaching positions. Replacements of teachers were possible, but this did not always occur after teachers left. In other cases positions were created but they were not filled, due to the lack of candidates or the delay in appointments. In addition to resorting to the central administration in Lisbon – generally addressing themselves to the Overseas Council, the Secretary of State of the Navy

and Overseas Dominions, and the *Real Mesa Censória* (Royal Censorial Court) –, Councils also appealed to nearer structures, writing to Viceroys or Governors of Captaincies, speaking in the name of people, heads of families, and zeal for the public good.

In the daily administration of royal classes, Councils were given charge of the systematic control of their operations, notably the assiduity and commitment of the teachers, also providing general reports about the progress of students and the satisfaction of the families. In the Captaincy of Minas Gerais, where the implementation of royal education – together with the opening of Mariana Seminary in 1750 – was the most concrete experience of school education,<sup>12</sup> the action of the state was extensive, while relations with local power structures and royal teachers were intensive. For this reason there is substantial documentation indicative of the control and administrative processes of that education, even though this was not satisfactorily efficient.

In this Captaincy the action of the Councils was intensified when, following the denunciations of the Royal Treasury about the abuses of some teachers, the government of d. Maria I sought to establish great order and control over them. The Royal Treasury reported classes were not being given properly due to teacher absences, the use of unauthorized substitutes – or without the required qualities –, the emptying of classes, and the flight of many students to private teachers. In 1792 the governor of the Captaincy, Viscount Barbacena, and the council of the capital, Vila Rica, received a Notification ordering the latter to monitor royal teachers and give them certificates in which it was to be registered if they had

taught throughout the year successively and in person, as well as the intervals during which due to illness or other inconveniences it was necessary to appoint substitutes, and that these illnesses had to be justified in this council and mention of them be made in the said certifications; and it being understood that the said individuations would not be legitimated if they did not justify to the treasury their payments.<sup>13</sup>

Actually the measure signified the application in the Americas of the procedures which were also being implemented in Portugal at the same time (Adão, 1997, p.292-295). The linking of certificates and the declarations registered in them to the payment of teachers reinforced the role of Councils as mediators between the latter and the *Juntas da Fazenda* in the Captaincies. Along the already consolidated tax collection functions, Councils began to



increase their participation in the control of the activities of royal teachers, coming to occupy a central position in the intermediation between them and the state. Depending on the certifications to receive their wages, teachers had to tighten their relations with the Councils, including the pragmatic use of personal relationships in the preparation of networks of influences which could guarantee favorable declarations.

All teachers, whether they held positions or were substitutes, had to ask Council to issue certifications for each term they worked. Apparently limited in relation to the information they provided, these documents are nevertheless precious, especially when treated in a 'continuous' form and compared with other administrative documents and with sources of various natures and origins, including notarial and ecclesiastical. The certificates help to construct chronologies of the activities of individual teachers over various years; noting events related to the teaching position, such as unauthorized absences, leave, problems related to professional performance or personal conduct, difficulties in relation to the administration of studies, delays in payments, those who abandoned or resigned their positions, those who died while holding the office; indicating the strategies used, both by teachers and Council to produce the information, as well as the networks of personal relations put into effect to guarantee benefits, wages, and good assessments, or even the direct or veiled exposure of conflicts in those relations.

The certificates presented a standard formulation mostly containing the same type of information necessary to prove the work of the royal teachers each term:

The Presiding Judge, Councilors, and Attorney General of the Council of Vila do in this year of election in accordance with the Law.

We hereby certify that the Rev. Teodoro Pereira de Queiroz Royal Teacher of Latin Grammar has in this Town his open class, and in it taught personally and effectively all the fourth quarter of the past year to all those who wanted it. This being true we issued this upon request, which is written by our Clerk, sealed with the seal of this Senate and signed by us in this Vila do Príncipe in the Council on 30 December 1795 and I, Marcelino José de Queirós, Clerk of the Council wrote it. José Simões Guimarães. José da Costa Figueiredo. Francisco José Seixas. Domingos Pereira Guimarães. Ângelo Alvarez de...<sup>14</sup>

In many cases it was necessary to annex to the certificates sent to the *Juntas da Fazenda* other documents, such as powers of attorney for other

people to receive the wages when the teacher lived far from the *Junta*, declarations of suitability from the parish priest of the place of residence and where the classes were held, or certificates proving illnesses which prevented the teacher from exercising his office temporarily, such as the one sent by Marcelo da Silveira Lobato, from Arraial do Curral del Rei, in the Captaincy of Minas Gerais, due to his health problems:

Manuel da Costa Bacellar, surgeon of the Regiment of Militia of the Comarca do Sabará, and approved in my profession: I testify that Marcelo da Silveira Lobato is suffering from a serious dilation in the vertebrae and ... for some time dilations which have befallen him from various accidents for this cause ... he also suffers from ... gout in the joints which when it affects him leaves him for a long time inhibited from any corporal action, complaints which threaten greater risk and thus I have given him on certain times help: I state the truth and I swear this: Sabará, 1 August 1803. Manuel da Costa Bacellar. – Endorsement– The above certification and signature were made by the Surgeon General Manuel da Costa Bacellar mentioned in it for having... and in good faith I signed in public and clearly. Sabará 1 August 1803. Publish this as it is true. Joaquim José da Silva Ribeiro.<sup>15</sup>

In this case the Council of Sabará acted as a mere intermediary, since the requirements of the teacher asking authorization to indicate a substitute due to his illness were sent to the governor of the Captaincy and the Bishop of Mariana, which granted authorization after verifying the qualities of the indicated substitute.

Although all certificates had to state the time spent exercising the office of teacher, some presented this data in greater detail, combined with other information. In other certificates the class times were stated, as in the documents of the teacher of philosophy in Vila Rica, Rev. Manoel Joaquim Ribeiro, who “taught the youth in the morning and in the afternoon carried out his ministry.”<sup>16</sup> In some cases, although these were rare and always at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Councils indicated the number of students present in some classes. According to the Council of Vila Nova da Rainha do Caeté, in 1825 the teacher Francisco de Paula Rocha had twenty students in his Latin Grammar class, which he maintained “with the exemplary and praiseworthy performance of his duties.”<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting to note that when the Council indicated the number of students, it generally added to the text favorable and sometimes glowing

comments about the work of the teacher, as we can find in the document about Antônio Gomes Chaves, from Vila do Príncipe who had in its first letters class in 1802, “the number of 85 boys teaching them with personal assistance, and a praiseworthy zeal for all the disciplines.”<sup>18</sup> The presence of a significant number of students was associated with an image of seriousness and competence of the teacher. The complimentary comments could at times refer to possible results achieved by the teacher through his work, at the same time that it certified his conduct and that he proceeded properly. In 1795, the Council of Vila de Queluz declared the frequency of the teacher of first letters, Fr. José Crisóstomo de Mendonça, stating that he acted “with laudable zeal and care,” resulting in the “advancing of his disciples and the contentment of their Parents,” without their having been “any complaint against him and his exemplary behavior.”<sup>19</sup>

Not only praise constituted the judgment of Councils of royal teachers’ work. Although, they appear to have been less abundant in the documentation, criticisms and exceptions could express not only a real situation of professional performance, but also conflicts involving teachers and Council members, such as the case of the Latin grammar teacher in Vila de Caeté, in the Captaincy de Minas Gerais, Antônio Gonçalves Gomide. Caeté Council gave an unfavorable certificate of the work of Gomide on more than one occasion, accusing him of a lack of commitment to his classes, and even recommended the suspension of his payment. To judge by the certificates, his work as a teacher was punctuated by incidents, such as the interruption of his classes for two months in 1794, when Gomide responded to an accusation of attempted poisoning. The Council’s unfavourable comments about Antônio Gonçalves Gomide could be related to his political activities, which involved conflicts with authorities of the Captaincy of Minas Gerais. In 1793 he complained to the Overseas Council denouncing the excesses of the Judge of Sabará *Comarca*, accusing him and his protégés and relatives, of abusing power and illegally enriching themselves.<sup>20</sup> His interest in public activities led him to the Council of Vila Nova da Rainha do Caeté, where he was *almotacé* (inspector), councilor and ordinary judge, in the first years of the nineteenth century, when he no longer worked as a teacher. Ironically, he ended up strengthening his ties with the same authorities who had been hostile to him when he held the position of royal teacher of Latin grammar. Gomide ended up abandoning it in 1798 to study Medicine in Edinburgh. Back in Brazil, he concentrated on a political career and ended up as a Senator of the Empire in 1835.

The occurrence of other cases reinforces the hypothesis of the influence of local conflicts in the assessment process of royal teachers and the construction of strategies to fill the position for public state teachers. Two cases from Ceará indicate the varied nature of the questions raised between teachers and local authorities. In 1788 the Overseas Council received a request from the Council of Vila de Aracati asking for the replacement of the royal teacher of Latin grammar Teodósio Luís da Costa Moreira, considered unsuitable for the position and according to the Council the subject of complaints from the people. They told the Queen that the employment of that teacher was a waste of the funding allocated to the education of youth and that he did not achieve his noble objectives. According to the Council, the teacher was “a subject from this land and of humble birth”, and for this reason was a person of bad behavior and doubtful conduct, inexperienced, lacking in education, and because of this capable of “torpid and scandalous actions.” The best persons of the town refused to bring their sons to class, sending them instead to other more distant locations where there were better qualified teachers, which was a source of shame for the residents. Only the poorest people, of mixed blood, kept their sons in Teodósio’s classes.<sup>21</sup> What is striking in this document is an almost direct relationship between the social origin of the teacher and their alleged bad qualities, and the refusal of the “best persons of the town” to submit their children to his influence. This does not seem to have been a rare occurrence, since the presence of teachers of ‘humble birth’ or of mixed ethnic origin was relatively common, especially in the most urbanized areas.

The possibility that misunderstandings between Council – representing local groups of power holders – and royal teachers were caused by the personal relations between them also appears in the conflicts between the Council of Fortaleza and the Latin grammar teacher João da Silva Tavares, conflicts which were registered in 1803. Believing itself to be responsible for the maintenance of the peace and the tranquility of its people, the Council of Fortaleza sent a letter to the prince regent d. João denouncing the bad behavior of the teacher, the cause of uncountable turbulence. A man of mixed blood, João da Silva Tavares was accused of disgraceful behavior, which had led him to attack the reputation of the most dignified persons in the town, to commit adultery and concubinage, to spy on his neighbors, and not to fulfill his obligations to the education of the youth, causing the total emptying of his class. The Council obliged him to sign a document notifying him of these accusations and in which he bound himself to live as a good vassal and neighbor, under the penalty of being sent to exile in Africa. A few months later João da Silva Tavares

sent a request to the prince regent in which he asked that measures be taken in regard to his complaints about the officials of the Council of Fortaleza. He reported that he had been a royal teacher for more than 10 years, having been duly examined and given a teaching post, and that he regularly renewed his position, by presenting certificate and testimonies from ecclesiastic authorities and even from the Council of Fortaleza. According to him, believing in the complaints presents by the current Council, moved by hate, vengeance, and private interest, meant accepting that so many men of probity had abused the truth to certify his honest behavior. The conflicts had been caused by the desire of the recently appointed captain general to replace the teacher with his brother-in-law, taking advantage of the fact that his son and protégé had become councilors in the town. As well as refusing to give him the certificates of his teaching to receive his wages, they falsely accused him and arrested him, in clear disrespect of his privileges as a royal teacher, conceded to this type of public servant in 1759.

In their compliance with the royal orders to certify the work of teachers, Councils did this at the request of the latter, the principal interested parties, since as has been seen, the release of pay depended on these documents. The texts of the certificates demonstrate this, as in practice in almost all of them it is stated that “we were asked to present this”, or “this is true and we present it because we were asked”, or “and this being requested of us, we ordered it presented.” At least in part the rigor of the Councils in the fulfillment of the royal orders can be questioned, in the sense of making the certificates an effective instrument of controlling teaching and not a mere bureaucratic formality. While on the one hand, the certificates provided objective data, on the other a high level of subjectivity was involved in the description of teachers’ work, expressing the interference of the different social relations activated in the production of these documents, whether favorable or not. For this reason, once they were given the task of sharing control of royal education, the Councils sought to divide responsibilities, stating that they were providing them in the name of other authorities or what was of public knowledge. An example of this can be found in the certificate given to the drawing teacher in Ouro Preto in 1825, in which the councilors stated that he had fulfilled his duty “according to information from the attorney general of this Senate.”<sup>22</sup> In other cases confirmation was given because it was “public and well known.”

Some Councils produced even more cautious texts, producing certificates stating that the teacher had fulfilled his obligations, but without guaranteeing their competence or abilities, leaving this responsibility to the central

authorities who had examined and approved them. In this way they left clear the division of responsibilities which organized the public education system in its beginnings. This was the procedure adopted in a certificate given to the same teacher from Fortaleza who found himself at the center of a conflict of local interests:

We certify that João da Silva Tavares, Royal Teacher of Latin Grammar in this town, has fulfilled his teaching duties in all the time he has exercised them, always having an open class, and if he is worthy or not to hold his position, as I am informed his petition asks, we cannot confirm this as we are not educated in this areas, though we know that to for him to hold the position he was examined and approved by the relevant Tribunal; and thus appears to be worthy to continue holding the same position and to obtain the Grace he asks for. We state this with the oath of our position, and we issue the following certificate asked of us. Vila da Fortaleza in Council on 4 February 1801, I Antônio Rodrigues Paiva wrote this.<sup>23</sup>

Most of the historiography related to the Pombaline education reforms which deals with the functioning of royal teaching in Brazil emphasizes the organizational structure of this teaching from a more centralized perspective, highlighting the action of the central bodies, from the General Director of Studies in the middle of the eighteenth century, to the changes made following the creation of the *Real Mesa Censória*, and afterwards the reform of the University of Coimbra, two of the bodies which administered education in the Portuguese Empire. The delegation to the governors of the Captaincies and to bishops of the authority to carry out exams, the provisioning and inspection of teachers, and the responsibility to the treasuries of the Captaincies in the Americas for the payment of wages helped to emphasize the centralizing characteristics of the administration. All the Councils were left with was the task of certifying the functioning of classes, registering the assiduity and sometimes the skills of royal teachers. Analyzing the documents produced by the Council in some of the main towns of Portuguese America, it can be seen that these institutions of local power bureaucratically fulfilled their function, issuing certificates marked by a formatting which was repeated in practically all of them, and which at first sight does not allow more findings than this. Even considering the propriety of this affirmation, it is only part of the analytical possibility of the certificates given to royal teachers to allow them receive their wages.

The differences existing in the drafting of these documents are important indications of the peculiarities in the lives and professional activity of these

public servants, and help the comprehension of various aspects involved in the holding of teaching positions in the ambit of post-Pombaline public teaching. Cross-checked with data from other sources, related to the individuals involved – in this case principally the royal teachers themselves –, the certificates issued by the Council allow, at least in part, the reconstruction of the networks of sociability, the personal exchanges, political interests, and professional affinities which intervene in the mediation which the Councils interposed between the royal teachers and the state. Although apparently ‘lesser,’ their tasks gave the Councils – and of course their officials – an evident power which has not yet been satisfactorily studied in the historiography of education. In this article I have sought to analyze some of the aspects which can contribute to the verticalization of the study of the role of Councils and local power in the administration of royal education in Portuguese America, privileging a relational analysis of the documents related to their involvement in this process, also using some of the trajectories of the individuals involved as a manner of recreating some of the networks of social relations, understanding the place of royal education and its teachers in the life of colonial society in Brazil.

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## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> AZEVEDO, 1943; CARVALHO, 1978; GOMES, 1982; ANDRADE, 1981-1984; CARVALHO, 1986.

<sup>3</sup> ADÃO, 1997; CARDOSO, 2002; SILVA, 2008; FONSECA, 2009; FONSECA, 2010.



<sup>4</sup> In relation to the role of the councils, see: RUSSELL-WOOD, 1977; BICALHO, 2001; HESPANHA, 1998; SOUZA, 2006; SOUZA; FURTADO; BICALHO (Org.), 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. AHU-ACL-N-Minas Gerais, nº 6362. Available at: [www.cmd.unb.br](http://www.cmd.unb.br). This document is also transcribed, with some differences, in CONSULTA, 1910.

<sup>6</sup> Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. AHU-ACL-N-Paraíba, nº 1925. Available at: [www.cmd.unb.br](http://www.cmd.unb.br).

<sup>7</sup> Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. AHU/ACL-N-Minas Gerais, nº 11151. Available at: [www.cmd.unb.br](http://www.cmd.unb.br).

<sup>8</sup> 44 chairs were created for Brazil, 17 for 'first letters' (Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, Pernambuco, Minas Gerais, São Paulo, Pará and Maranhão), 15 for Latin grammar (Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, Pernambuco, Minas Gerais, Pará e Maranhão), 3 for Greek (Rio de Janeiro, Bahia and Pernambuco), 6 for rhetoric (Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, Pernambuco, Pará, Minas Gerais and São Paulo) and three for Philosophy (Rio de Janeiro, Bahia and Pernambuco). Cf. *Mapa dos Professores e Mestres das escolas menores e das terras em que se acham estabelecidas as suas aulas e escolas, neste Reino de Portugal e seus Dominios*. Mapa anexo à Lei de 6 de novembro de 1772. Arquivo Público Mineiro/Secretaria de Governo da Captaincy. SC-394, fls. 47-53. Also reproduced in: GOMES, 1982.

<sup>9</sup> Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. AHU-ACL-N-Minas Gerais, nº 8875. Available at: [www.cmd.unb.br](http://www.cmd.unb.br). To compensate the distances between the localities, one league was taken to be equivalent to 6.6 km.

<sup>10</sup> Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. AHU-ACL-N-Mato Grosso nº 1385. Available at: [www.cmd.unb.br](http://www.cmd.unb.br).

<sup>11</sup> Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. AHU-ACL-N-Rio de Janeiro, nº 12141. Available at: [www.cmd.unb.br](http://www.cmd.unb.br).

<sup>12</sup> In this Captaincy there was no previous experience of schools run by religious orders, including the Company of Jesus, as they had been forbidden from establishing themselves in this region since 1711.

<sup>13</sup> Arquivo Público Mineiro/CC-Cx.10 – 10219, rolo 503.

<sup>14</sup> Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro /Manuscritos. I-26,01,003 n. 007.

<sup>15</sup> Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro/Manuscritos. I-26, 029, 109.

<sup>16</sup> Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro/Manuscritos. I-27, 10, 002.

<sup>17</sup> Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro/Manuscritos. I-25, 8, 23. It is worth noting that the 'system' of royal education remained in force after independence, and only really ended in 1834, due to the Additional Act. Aimed at decentralization, the provinces were granted autonomy to freely organize their teaching systems, which ended the source of resources available until then, the literary subsidy, on which the royal classes depended.

<sup>18</sup> Arquivo Público Mineiro/Casa dos Contos. CC-Cx. 117 – 20792, rolo 536.

<sup>19</sup> Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro/Manuscritos. I-26, 01, 003, n. 005.

<sup>20</sup> Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. AHU/ACL-N-Minas Gerais, nº 10649. Available at: [www.cmd.unb.br](http://www.cmd.unb.br).

<sup>21</sup> Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. AHU-ACL-N-Ceara, n. 657. Available at: [www.cmd.unb.br](http://www.cmd.unb.br).

<sup>22</sup> Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro/Manuscritos. I-27, 12, 004.

<sup>23</sup> Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. AHU-ACL-N-Ceará, nº 831. Available at: [www.cmd.unb.br](http://www.cmd.unb.br).