

Transposition of the Castilho method from Portugal to Brazil

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Abstract: This article aims to analyze the circulation of the Castilho method in Brazil, in two territories, pedagogical and educational. The first is understood as the one in which the idea about the educational proposal circulated; and the second, where it was adopted. For its writing, we used the press, reports from public education inspectors and, mainly, the letters exchanged between the Portuguese poet and Gonçalves Dias with Emperor Pedro II, dealing with Sudden Reading. One of the results of this study is that the Castilho Method was adopted in several educational territories, especially in the Province of Pernambuco and the Neutral Municipality, Rio de Janeiro, due to the number of teachers who taught classes and opened schools through this pedagogical proposal. We conclude that the debates about teaching processes in Brazil in the 19th century, the ways in which the transposition of pedagogical models from other countries occurred, in particular the Castilho Method, and the disputes between its defenders and critics are fertile fields of studies to be carried out by historians of education in Portugal and Brazil.

Keywords: Castilho Method; Pedagogical models; education in Brazil; History of Education.

1 Introduction

In 1854, Gonçalves Dias received from D. Pedro II the mission of collecting in Portuguese archives and libraries in Lisbon, Porto and Évora, “[...] manuscripts and documents relating to Brazil” (Leal, 1874, p. 392). In addition to this objective, the task of carrying out a broad “[...] study on teaching methods in the old continent” (Leal 1874, p.393) led him to travel through Portugal, France, Belgium and Germany. Among these methods, a special task would be to understand and evaluate the *Repentant Reading* [*Leitura Repentina*] created in Portugal by António Feliciano de Castilho. According to Sodré (1949, p. 86) “Gonçalves Dias, on a mission from the monarch to that country, to copy historical documents in the archives overseas, [...] and invite him [Castilho] for the desired visit” to Brazil.

The origin of this method occurred in the Azores, on the Island of São Miguel, where Castilho came to live in 1849 and from his involvement with the Sociedades Promotora da



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It was based on the mastery of a set of basic words, recited and sung in rhyming compositions (redondilhas); on an updated spelling and on the intersection of the recitation of those small rhymed mnemonics and organized in small texts, with graphic signs and images, consolidating the association between graphic and phonetic decoding. [...]. The set of teaching materials created specifically for this purpose, the organization of the class (with the use of monitors) and the gradation of learning made literacy soluble, for adults and children, organized in a learning collective, in school spaces and for schoolchildren (Magalhães, 2010, p. 185).

Castilho, based on his involvement with public education, with the creation of a reading method, places literature on a secondary plane, stating that:

My poems are schools, improved teaching methods, the instruction and civilization of workers, the alms of doctrine to poor childlike souls; because doctrine is the currency without which these poor little ones would never, at any time, be able to deserve happiness for themselves, nor for their wives, nor for their children, if God grants them, nor for their country (Castilho, 1853, p.117).

This method was rejected and criticized by Portuguese teachers, as portrayed by Castilho in his educational works¹. However, we emphasize that the criticisms of this literary teacher's educational proposals being more "virulent" in mainland Portugal originated in São Miguel, through objections to the activities of the Society of Friends of Letters and Arts², as it was the institution that adopted and operationalized the Method, as is clear in the following transcription:

It was a holy Institute, wasn't it? Because they declared war, gave it names, raised testimonies in whispers, entangled it with anonymous letters, which they had printed in other lands, printed other treachery right here, but with fake dates and from far away, because they were so shameful that, without a mask, not even they would dare to do so; they forced, underhand, helpless little children to desert our schools, to continue to rot in ignorance; they forbade those who were their servants to attend them. (Castilho, 1849, p. 145, emphasis added).

Castilho's Pedagogical Campaign, which began in São Miguel, was in line with the liberal movement known as Regeneration or Fontism (1851-1876), which aimed to align Portugal with the rest of Europe in terms of technological and social development – roads,

¹ Happiness through Instruction [*Felicidade pela Agricultura*] (1854); Sudden Reading [*Leitura Repentina*] to be taught in a Few Lessons (1850); Directory for Primary School Teachers Using the Portuguese Method (1854), among others.

² We believe that the rejection of the Society of Friends of Letters and Arts of São Miguel and the sudden reading method, both created by Castilho, came from members of the Cartist party, opposed to the Septembrists, with which the poet was more aligned.

bridges, ports, etc. – and to reconcile the interests of the upper bourgeoisie with those of the rural classes and middle bourgeoisie. This movement had in Marshal Conde de Saldanha and Minister Fontes Pereira de Melo, and in intellectuals such as Alexandre Herculano and Almeida Garrett the main “reformers” of politics and ideas. In this context, the modernization and expansion of public education at all levels was a condition for achieving its objectives, with the creation of high schools, commercial and industrial schools. In the agricultural field, in particular, associations and exhibitions were created, and production was improved with the introduction of fertilizers and machinery.

In this sense, Castilho, in *Happiness through Agriculture* (1849) [*Felicidade pela Agricultura*] brought the [...] principles and advantages of investing in this [agricultural] sector as one of the factors for growth and improvement in the quality of life of the Portuguese” (Castilho, 1849, p.125). Likewise, in *Happiness through Instruction* (1854) [*Felicidade pela Instrução*] he attributes to public and popular education the main vector for Portuguese social, cultural and educational regeneration. It was in this context that *Repentant Reading* [*Leitura Repentina*] emerged and found one of its main supporters in Duque de Saldanha, who opened regimental schools centered on his method and who would influence Brazilian military personnel and politicians to propose its adoption in military schools, like the deputy José Nogueira Jaguaribe, who “Requests the government [Minister of War] to carry out a trial for the adoption in Brazil of the Castilho Method, which [had] shown so many advantages in Portugal” [...] in “[...] favor of the civilization of the army” (Diário do Rio de Janeiro, 1853, p. 2), and continues:

I am not aware to date that this method has been used to train soldiers [...]. However, I continue to urge that the Castilho method be tested, especially in the training of the army [which was] ordinarily burdened with so many heavy duties, that little is left to apply to primary education, [...] and with the Castilho method, called easy and sudden, having over the old one the advantage of shortening the time [...] of a class that has little time and that is distracted by continuous obligations of another order.

This article aims to analyze the circulation of the Castilho Method in Brazil, in two territories, the pedagogical and the educational. The first is understood as the one in which the idea about the educational proposal circulated, but schools were not opened as in Maranhão, Paraíba and Mato Grosso. The second, where it was adopted, that is, where classrooms or schools were opened for teaching children and young people based on this method, such as Pará, Piauí (Oeiras), Ceará (Sobral) and Rio Grande do Norte (Apodi), as well as in Minas Gerais (Juiz de Fora, Ubá and Belo Horizonte) and Rio Grande do Sul (Pelotas) in addition to Goiás (Goiânia), and Alagoas (Maceió), and in the Provinces of Pernambuco, Bahia and in the Municipality of Corte (Rio de Janeiro, Niterói, Macaé, Vassouras), was

where there was a greater number of teachers and students teaching and learning based on *Leitura Repentina* [Sudden Reading]. Therefore, in this work, we focus on discussing the territories where the circulation and adoption of Castilho's educational proposal was most intense (educational territories).

To formulate it, we used the press of Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco and other territories, the *Revista da Instrução Pública para Portugal e Brasil*, published in 1857 and 1858, by Castilho and Luiz Felipe Leite, the report by Abílio de Cesar Borges, in Bahia and works by authors who have dedicated themselves to research on Antônio Feliciano de Castilho. Letters exchanged between the Portuguese poet and the poet from Maranhão with Emperor Pedro II constituted a privileged source in the weaving of this text.

2 Gonçalves Dias, an emissary of the Emperor to Castilho

Gonçalves Dias, upon disembarking in Lisbon on July 10 after completing the "[...] quarantine period" (Dias, 1864, p.158) is received by the Portuguese poet, who he considered a "[...] lasting name [along with Alexandre Herculano and Almeida Garrett] and whose brilliance and reflections radiated "the dazzling halo that surrounded them" as patriarchs of Portuguese romanticism (Dias, 1864, p. 279). Upon being received by Castilho and hearing him talk about his "pedagogical campaign" in favor of public education, he states that I "did not live, nor sustain myself, except from his 'sudden reading'" (Dias, 1864, p.159). From this meeting, Dias expressed an interest in visiting some schools in Lisbon in the company of a Portuguese poet and concluded that the method "seemed good" to him (Dias, 1864, p.160), despite considering it simple due to the lack of "rigor" in writing and pronunciation, since the proposal to simplify "[...] spelling was given to the physical conditions of its mentor" (Dias, 1864, p.160). These changes in the structure of the Portuguese language were criticized by the Association of Teachers of the Kingdom and Islands and the Lisbon Academy of Sciences.

Antônio Feliciano de Castilho, in his teaching method, conceived spelling as an essential part of the literacy process, and therefore, it should be taught systematically and integrated with the learning of reading and writing, since the child should learn to write correctly from a very young age, through playful and rhythmic methods, such as the use of songs and marches. In turn, he emphasized the importance of "mnemonization" through figures and stories, associating letters and sounds with images and narratives that facilitated memorization and understanding of spelling rules, highlighting the need for practical and repetitive exercises to fix spelling knowledge, in an attempt to make learning enjoyable and motivating for children. Thus, Castilho saw spelling not just as a set of rules to be memorized, but as an integral part of the development of children's linguistic competence and written communication skills.

Thus, in the opinion of the report presented at the Council of the Royal Academy of Sciences, session on October 6, 1853 on the reforms of the spelling of the Portuguese language, Castilho describes that:

These notions of general grammar, being common to all languages but more easily understood when adapted to the speech we have been accustomed to since the early days, these notions should be given with great care in being very clear, very [...] very simple when possible, free from technology, Greek nomenclature, abstract definitions, ridiculous divisions and subdivisions. Rules only the most indispensable, definitions so few in number because there is nothing more nebulous, repugnant and uncertain than the definitions invented by grammarians (Castilho, 1853, p.1).

Regarding these changes, the Teachers' Association argues that Castilho's proposal "[...] was a complete mistake [...] to correct pronunciation, to reform the terminology of the common people" (Association, 1856, p. 20); that it was "[...] unacceptable that through singing pronunciation defects could be corrected more quickly and better" (Association, 1856, p. 22) and that sudden reading did not "present better results" (Association, 1856, p. 23) than those taught by ancient methods. Criticisms that Castilho refutes by stating that:

The habit of carefully, precisely and repeatedly analyzing the letters with which words are written fixes spelling in the memory. The habit of characterizing the reading in chorus, the quantities and tones of the pauses in the periods, presents the correct punctuation, providing a quick and pleasant learning (Castilho, 1909, p.159).

In this regard, Boto (2012, p.187) states that:

The rejection of the new orthography was due to the fact that its use would contradict what is called the 'nature of the Portuguese language', which cannot deny those from which it is descended without becoming an intelligible gibberish. Such a modification of traditional linguistic codes would act to make the study of foreign languages more difficult, in addition to requiring the translation of all books published in Portuguese until then.

From his meeting with Castilho, with Gonçalves Dias, the Portuguese educator, he communicated that he was "ready [to travel] to Rio de Janeiro in December of this year [1854]" (Dias, 1854, p.158), with the purpose of promoting his teaching method. Dias, however, warned him of the objections "[...] that he will encounter there – more or less fruitful" (Dias, 1864, p.159). This observation by Dias à Castilho possibly refers to the time when criticisms of the method and its author were circulating in the press among teachers and school principals, believing that this pedagogical proposal did not serve the purpose for

which it was intended; that is, being able to offer fast and enjoyable learning and, therefore, more advantageous compared to other models in vogue in Portugal and which would transform schools into spaces where everyone would be interested in staying and living together, instead of the physical punishments that kept everyone and everything away from educational institutions. For Castilho, this was the difference between his method, called modern as opposed to the Ancient Method, taught by “orangutan teachers” and with sad students incapable of maintaining a taste and interest in studying and learning.

Dias, in order for Emperor Pedro II to have knowledge of Castilho’s method, sent the three editions of the compendium and reported that:

I visited some of Mr. Castilho’s classes, studied his method more or less, saw him practicing it under his supervision and I also send to His Excellency the three editions of the Compendium that have appeared, while I await some clarifications so that I can clarify my information. I also send to His Excellency two samples of glass paper intended for the writing exercises that Mr. Castilho seeks to introduce in Portugal. Perhaps there would be savings in admitting them to the schools supplied by the [Brazilian] government (Dias, 1864, p. 225, emphasis added).

In the book, *Directory for teachers of primary schools using the Portuguese Method* (1854), Castilho presents instructions on materials and techniques for implementing his proposal, including glass paper, which Dias recommends for adoption in Brazilian schools. “Glass paper is a pink, frosted glass panel with a transfer of beautiful letters.” (Castilho, 1854, p. 3). To use it, students would take the pencil as they had done on the slates and cover the letters or figures drawn as they appeared underneath.

When the teacher recognizes that they have now successfully applied all the various translations from within the panels, he places a translation in front of each student, so that instead of applying it, he can copy it. He persists in this part of the exercise for many days, until they are able to copy it with the desired regularity; once this is achieved, he moves on to the third and final writing exercise.

Dias thus complied with the Emperor’s orders and followed the schedule of activities ordered by the Minister of the Empire. To this end, he suggested to the Brazilian government that it “[...] look into the conditions under which any of the student-teachers of this Method would propose to come and teach it in Brazil” (Dias, 1864, p. 230). Dias reports that he had visited “all of these schools in Lisbon in the company of Castilho himself. From these visits, he concluded that the method seemed “advantageous”. However, he emphasizes that “[...] I did not open up to Mr. Castilho [to travel to Brazil], having heard and read in the newspapers that he proposed to go to Rio in person to implement his method” (Dias, 1864, p. 230).

This interest of Castilho was manifested in “others [two previous ones] in which that gentleman seems to have attempted this trip (p. 230). The first was before moving to the Island of São Miguel, in the Azores. According to him, “he hesitated for some time between the attractions of Brazil and those of the Azores; [but] the Azores prevailed by far” (*O Carlista dos Açores*, 1847, p. 34). The second, upon his return to Lisbon. Both were justified by financial problems and the criticism his method received from professors and the Lisbon Academy of Sciences. The third, which interested Gonçalves Dias, took place in 1853.

In an article published in the newspaper *O Constitucional: folha política, literatura e comercial*, from Bahia, it describes the reasons why Castilho did not immigrate to Brazil, after leaving the Azores and the recognition of his poetic talent by the Portuguese court. This long text seems to summarize Castilho’s trajectory and his method, the difficulties in keeping it running and the financial conditions that were present throughout his personal, literary and educational trajectory.

Brazil was very close to welcoming to its hospitable soil the greatest poet and the most elegant and flowery Portuguese prose writer of whom we can boast today: Dr. António Feliciano de Castilho. Since the college called Pórtico, founded in 1859 (sic), was unable to prosper due to lack of financial resources, the illustrious writer, who was in charge of a family, saw him without any other means of subsistence, other than a modest pension of 400\$000 rs. He will therefore decide to travel to that empire, and as a loving father, prepare a better future for his five children, whom he intends to naturalize as Brazilians upon their arrival; in which Brazil would certainly benefit greatly in the interest of its glory, especially because the eldest, who is only 12 years old, is a true wonder of ingenuity and understanding, and already, without any outside help, makes them very affectionate to see. This resolution, however, fortunately for Portugal, has at least been postponed. He had announced it at one of his last artistic-literary gatherings, in terms that were, in fact, full and modest, while at the same time expressing the great confidence he had in the love that the new, rich and vast transatlantic empire showed for public education and for the gentle arts, no less than in the benevolence that his august emperor had deigned to show him, naming him a nobleman of his imperial house and an officer of the Rose, in gratitude for having dedicated his drama *Camões* to His Majesty, etc. Our government, however, upon learning of this decision by the distinguished poet, believing it would be a disgrace to the country’s reputation if it were allowed to be carried out, showed a desire to prevent it, making him hope that it would soon place him in a position that was not as advantageous as he deserved, and the government hoped that he would renounce his project for the benefit of the country. On this occasion, Dr. Castilho also received a token of appreciation that Their Majesties give to his most deplorable merit. The Queen had deigned to accept the tribute of a Poetic Debut, containing a collection of the beautiful and magnificent hymns recently composed by him, and the Prince Royal the dedication of the second edition of the Castilho Reading Method. His Majesty thanked the excellent and inspired poet by presenting him with a rich tobacco box,

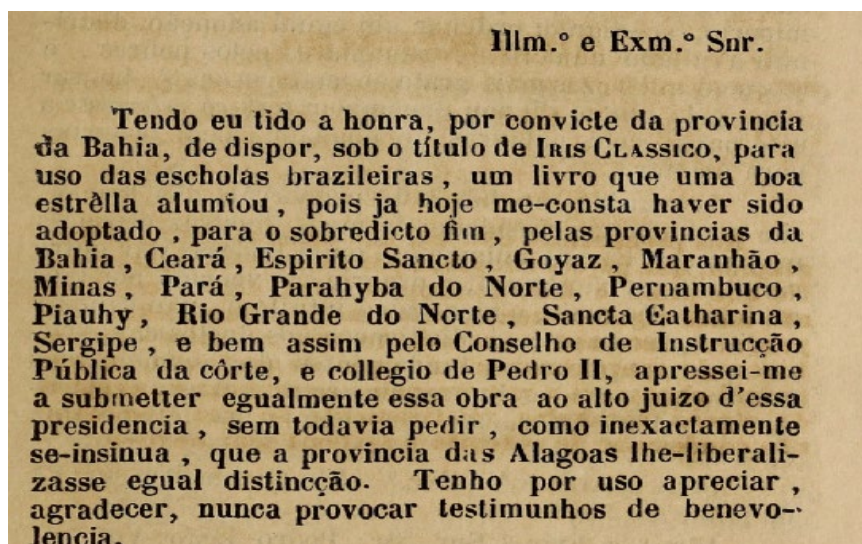
adorned with diamonds, and His Royal Highness presented the illustrious, generous and most zealous teacher of Portuguese childhood with a box also of exquisite gold work, in which is set a magnificent cameo of great value (Exterior, 1853, p. 1).

In a letter to Pedro II, dated April 12, 1853, Castilho, after his return from the Azores, expressed his desire to immigrate to Brazil. This was also a period in which his reading methods in Portugal were met with the greatest objections from teachers, silence from the Lisbon Academy of Sciences, the Council of Public Education and other virulent criticisms of his Pedagogical Campaign and the author.

From the outset, sir, I conceived the project of moving with my family to the happy Empire and the great shadow of Your Majesty's throne; to offer my children in your glorious service, and to request for myself the incomparable honor of obeying the ardent and perpetual desire of Your Imperial Majesty with the dissemination of primary studies through the easy and pleasant methods that I had the fortune to create, and to see marvelously propagated throughout the kingdom, and loaded everywhere with opulent fruits (Sodré, 1949, p.93).

What was Castilho's interest in Brazil? There are several reasons that may answer this question. The first is family ties, since his brother José Feliciano de Castilho Barreto e Noronha had lived here since 1846 and stood out in the academic world for his book *Iris Clássico*, published in the Province of Alagoas. Regarding this work, Castilho describes the following:

Figure 2 – Excerpt from the presentation of the work *Iris Clássico*, by A.F. de Castilho



Source: Noronha (1860- Warning).

Another justification is the vastness of the Brazilian territory, the strength of all its resources, which raised it to the level of political influence, "in which only its intellectual

development will participate” (Castilho; Leite, 1857, p.12). Furthermore, Castilho, as a man of letters, was known for his works, which were sold in commercial establishments and published in the press throughout Brazil, such as *Gazeta Mercantil* (Rio de Janeiro), *Diário de Pernambuco* and *Publicador Maranhense* and, perhaps one of the most relevant, admiration for Pedro II, “[...] a prince who in the prime of life is already mature for wisdom; who loves and practices letters, like virtues; and through whom the greatest empire will also become the most blissful” (Sodré, 1849, p. 86).

Castilho's justification for attempting to travel to Brazil was the same as that used when he went to the Azores: economic order. In order to prevent this forced immigration, Deputy Cunha Sotto-Maior requested the granting of financial resources to the Chamber of Deputies of Portugal on April 11, 1853, to help him with his financial needs.

The sad news is going around, and it is going around with great certainty, that Mr. Dr. Antônio Feliciano has definitely decided to leave Portugal for Brazil on the 13th or 14th of this month, in order to go, at the age of 53, to seek, in that empire, the means that he lacks here, to feed his family, and take care of the education of his little children. The Chamber [of Deputies] would allow that, for a similar reason, this singular and truly extraordinary man [...] this true friend of humanity [...] [who employed] all his talent, all his meditations, and all his time [to] invent [...] a simple, pleasant and recreational method, by which one can learn [...], to leave Portugal for a foreign kingdom. I request that the Government, through the competent Minister, come as soon as possible and propose to this Chamber the means that it deems most convenient to remove the reason that forces Mr. Antônio Feliciano de Castilho to leave the country. (Chamber, 1853, p.1).

In order to meet the needs of this “unique and truly extraordinary man” and his family, he was appointed General Commissioner of Public Instruction by the Portuguese Method, which gave Castilho the power to control and disseminate his method and criticize others adopted in Portugal. Regarding the subject, Castilho reports that:

Everything was ready for departure; already missing my homeland, I was placing deep in my heart the love of a new homeland for my children; the ship that takes me to a brother [José Feliciano de Castilho Barreto e Noronha], and for him this respectful letter, was finally going to take me; when an unforeseen event and of irresistible force for a good soul, came to imprison me once again in the land of my birth” (Sodré, 1949, p. 93).

However, despite all of Castilho's efforts and the relationships he established with his supporters and Portuguese intellectuals, his method did not achieve the desired results; that is, it did not become the only one adopted in Portugal. Method.

Castilho's desire to visit Brazil, aborted twice, was fulfilled with the specific purpose of publicizing his *Repentant Reading* [*Leitura Repentina*] to teachers and obtaining support from Pedro II for its adoption in the national territory. To this end, he promoted courses and wrote in newspapers, as he had done in Lisbon, Porto, Leira and Coimbra, to recruit followers for his Pedagogical Campaign. In Rio de Janeiro, his method spread to other locations, especially in the Northern Provinces. However, as in his homeland, he encountered objections, which were, to a certain extent, different from those he encountered in Portugal.

3 Echoes of Castilho's voice in Brazil

When crossing overseas, António Feliciano de Castilho (1800-1875) aimed to disseminate his method of teaching reading and writing, developed from a school that he himself described as bold and modern. These pedagogical ideas that crossed overseas echoed the sound of the poet's voice who called for the defense of a school that would regenerate society, based on a liberal, civilizing and Christian project (Boto; Rocha; Albuquerque, 2023, p.10).

For Castelo-Branco, Castilho came to Brazil because he "[...] was unable to impose his method as official and adopted at the national level" (1977, p. 33). We corroborate the author, but we add that there were other reasons: a) he conceived of Brazil as a new land of opportunities; b) his consecrated name as a man of letters; and; c) the constant invitations from his brother José Feliciano de Castilho Barreto de Noronha "for a trip to Rio" (Sodré, 1949, p. 93; d) the "special and unequivocal proofs of appreciation" of the Emperor for the poet (Sodré, 1949, p. 88).

On January 17, 1855, on board the English ship *Great Western*, "a dazzling star appeared on our beautiful horizon in the Portuguese sky, leaving the superb Tagus to come and reflect itself in our majestic Guanabara" (Diário, 1855, p. 3), it was "The worthy Portuguese poet, whose lyre resonated harmoniously in our soul, the distinguished man of letters, Mr. António Feliciano de Castilho" (Castelo-Branco, 1977, p. 34), who began to reside during his stay in Rio de Janeiro on Rua da Misericórdia.

Upon arrival, he maintained contact with Pedro II, who was in Petrópolis, a "common" situation between them, as correspondence between the monarch and the poet was frequent, as well as with Garrett, Alexandre Herculano, Camilo Castelo Branco, Ramalho Ortigão, among others; but "With Castilho, the emperor maintained a long spiritual contact. Pedro II [invited him] to Brazil in order to establish his primary education program" (Sodré, 1949, p. 82). We emphasize that the Portuguese poet, "[...] expressed admiration for the emperor [...] [since] his stay in the Azores, in 1849, when he dedicated the work *Camões*, to "his Majesty" Dom Pedro Segundo, Emperor of Brazil" (Sodré, 1949, p. 86).

In correspondence to Pedro II, dated before and after his arrival in Brazil, he describes his method and scope in Portugal. Could it be these letters that prompted the emperor's invitation for the "desired visit"? (Sodré, 1949, p. 86). In one of them, Castilho reported that:

My efforts for primary education, from which more than a hundred free schools were born in half a year, from which new schools are springing up every day [...] the opening of each class was a true celebration for the locals, and a thunderous ovation for me, administrative, municipal, ecclesiastical and military authorities congratulated me, associating themselves with my enterprise [...] Her Most Faithful Majesty, the august sister of Your Imperial Majesty, visited the new classes more than once, herself [...] (Sodré, 1949, p. 86).

However, before its arrival in Brazil – in addition to the descriptive letters of the Method to the emperor – its method, as previously stated, had already been recommended, on "June 21, 1853 by deputy José Nogueira de Jaguaribe" (Câmara, 1853, p.1), to be adopted in regimental schools. However, it is Jose Vicente Martins, the greatest propagandist of the Castilho Method, when he states that:

In Lisbon and Porto I attended lessons and exercises in the CASTILHO METHOD, which was read immediately, and although I was already satisfied with the results I had seen, I waited until experience perfected the method and public opinion sanctioned it, so that anyone who wanted to [adopt] this method in Brazil would not have to struggle with so many difficulties" (Câmara, 1853, p.1, author's emphasis).

In order to publicize it in Brazil, Vicente Martins published in 1854, in Rio de Janeiro, the *Cartilha de leitura repente*, or plagiarism of the Castilho Method, which according to the homeopathic doctor

[...] I intended to reprint the Castilho Method as is, in order to popularize it; but not wishing to harm the author, and after a private correspondence I had with his brother José, I limited myself to publishing this primer, which is a plagiarism of the method, and for that very reason gives it greater merit. As a plagiarist, like so many famous writers, let the sincerity with which I confess my sin serve as an excuse. I firmly wanted this method to spread in Brazil, because it is good; and my desire has long been to avoid the greatest obstacles in your path. Here is the primer for learning to read while playing, praising God, and thanking the blind old man for the light and life that he distributes to the poor ignorant children, those who are most loved by God and most worthy of being so. Each municipal council of the empire can send for a copy of this primer or plagiarism to have it taught in some free school in its municipality. I will give it to you free of charge, and very willingly (Martins, 1854, p. 12).

According to Boto, Rocha and Albuquerque (2025), in this work, the author explains the method, the furniture for its application and the “disposition of personnel in a classroom for sudden reading” (2025, p.15). Explanations are highlighted throughout the book, either in footnotes or in parentheses. But at the same time that he follows Castilho’s proposal, he exercises “a whole movement of appropriation and reinvention of that which he supposes to be plagiarized” (2025, p.18).

With the purpose of expanding Castilho’s method, João Vicente, in 1853, opened a school in his residence, in partnership with Father João Soares de Souza, the Colégio de São Januário for boys under 12 years old who had no primary education, children of poor parents and who wanted to read using this method, and as an incentive to learning he offered the prize of “[...] fifty thousand reis [to whoever] best satisfies the exam” (Colégio, 1853, p.1). Before his school initiative, Augusto Emilio Zaluar had already opened a school centered on the Method, as announced in the *Jornal do Comércio do Rio de Janeiro* on September 7, 1853.

Dear Sir, by the method of sudden reading of Mr. A. F. de Castilho, I have resolved to admit, free of charge, to my college establishment, 12 external students, who are from poor families residing in this parish [of Glória] [...] Therefore, the people who are in a position to benefit from the spontaneous offer of the Dear Sir Zaluar, with their respective documents, appear in this court, until October 1st. In addition to obtaining the guide that must be presented to that gentleman, for the admission of poor students (College, 1853, p. 1).

Therefore, there was fertile ground for Castilho to plant his pedagogical ideas in Brazil, which after “a pleasant conversation of about an hour” (Castelo-Branco) with the Emperor, was authorized to teach his course, with the same purpose held in Leiria, Coimbra, Lisbon and Porto; to spread and form followers of his method, as Castilho writes.

Two years ago, sir, it only occurred to me here that Your Majesty would not be displeased to recognize in practice the Portuguese method, of which the theory alone gave you a clear idea, I presented myself without further invitation at that court, and asked for and received authorization from Your Majesty’s government to conduct a normal course there (Sodré, 1949, p. 86).

Castilho in Brazil continued his educational campaign, which had begun in several Portuguese cities. After receiving authorization from the Emperor, he began preparations with government authorities and, on March 22, 1855, his Sudden Reading class was opened. This course was widely publicized by the press in several provinces, such as Per-

nambuco, Bahia and Maranhão, for example. The *Jornal do Comércio* (1855), from Rio de Janeiro, when publishing an article on the subject, reported that:

Mr. Castilho opens his rapid reading class today to public and private teachers and all those who wish to attend. The illustrious poet has already fought in Portugal, where he introduced his name to a rapid teaching system, and intends to do the same in the country's capital. Rio de Janeiro always welcomes foreigners with kindness, and we are certain that Mr. Castilho will also be received with general consideration from Rio de Janeiro to other places in Brazil (Sudden Reading [Leitura repentina], 1855, p. 2).

Castilho, just like in Portugal, would engage in disputes with “[...] several Brazilian subjects [...] who became his opponents” (Albuquerque, 2025, p.3). Clashes that led, “[...] even [to] the interruption of his Course” (Albuquerque, 2023, p.158) with 589 enrolled students. “After this event, Castilho proposed to those interested to reschedule the 30 classes at his home; [but] only 21 participants accepted the proposal” (Albuquerque, 2023, p.160).

However, there are marked differences between the opponents in the two countries. In Portugal, the objections were more virulent because they not only affected the pedagogical proposal, but also its author, as is clear from Castilho's refutations to the Association of Teachers of the Kingdom and Islands, published in the work *Respostas aos Novíssimos Impugnadores do Método Português* [Responses to the New Opponents of the Portuguese Method] (1909). In Brazil, the criticism was focused on some teachers, such as Costa Azevedo and Francisco Cristiano Valdonato (Rio de Janeiro) and José Alexandre Passos (Alagoas). In Portugal, the criticism came from teachers and their Association, the Lisbon Academy of Sciences and the Public Education Council in Coimbra. In both territories, the presence of the monarchy was fundamental for the expansion of the method, both there and here. In Portugal, when he was appointed by the queen as General Commissioner of Public Instruction by the Portuguese Method; in Brazil, by the invitation sent by Pedro II to the provinces to indicate teachers to attend Castilho's course in Rio de Janeiro.

What they had in common were the disputes between teaching methods: in Portugal, between the Old Method and Castilho's Modern Method; in Brazil, between his teaching proposal and the reading method developed by Costa Azevedo and Valdonato, a “plagiarist of Jacotot” (Albuquerque, 2023, p. 166) and in Alagoas, due to the preference of Francisco José Soares over Ignacio José Passos to go to Rio de Janeiro as Castilho's apprentice. In Brazil, the defense of a nationalist public education and in Portugal, the need to nationalize education, hence the name in the third edition of the Portuguese Castilho Method.

About his opponents from Rio de Janeiro, Costa Azevedo and Valdonato, Castilho, in a letter to his wife, describes them as:

Two literary scoundrels with a lot of boasting, in a speech very overloaded with praise for me, as a writer and poet, and very covered in hypocritical formulas, tried to stir up (and in fact they did stir up) a quarrel of a weak nationality, saying that there was also, printed here, twenty-one years ago, a reading method, a great thing, written by a great man, of whom most of them had barely heard, called José da Costa Azevedo; that he certainly would not have taken mine from him, but that he had found me with him; that with that method one could learn in six months, as one could see in a school in this city, etc, etc, etc... (Castelo-Branco, 1975, p. 286 *apud* Albuquerque, 2023, p. 167).

In Maranhão, a pedagogical terrain for the method, professor F.L.F. refutes the Legislative Assembly's proposal to send a teacher to Rio de Janeiro to attend Castilho's classes, stating that:

Seeing [...] the bill presented [...] [which] intends to authorize the provincial government to send a primary school teacher, or any other qualified person, to study [...] the Castilho method, in order to practice it in the province, I thought it would not be out of place to say a few words in the press about the usefulness, or rather the uselessness, of this provision. I have six children, and I was the primary school teacher of all of them, and of some other people's children [...] I taught them using different methods, I have ideas from Castilho and I expect nothing from him. This method was tested in Rio de Janeiro by its own author, and has not yet been generalized in public classes, which would have happened if it had succeeded. What better for Maranhão than to see the court carry out such a dubious test at its expense, with the author himself at the forefront of it! Maranhão should wait a little and it will be free from embracing a chimera for an improvement. This is the humble opinion of your constant reader (Correspondence, 1856, p. 2).

However, despite the rejection of the Castilho Method in Brazil, its supporters, it seems to us, did not stop at adopting it; but mainly, produced compendiums on the method. Jose Vicente Martins, in *Cartilha de Leitura repente ou plagio do método Castilho* (1854) and Antônio Gentil Ibirapitanga (Bahia) in three works: *Collection of manuscript lessons*, (1855); *Orthographic Compendium for use by boys in public education using the Portuguese method* (1855) and *Collections of rules and exercises for teaching the first letters using the Castilho method* (1855). In Portugal, this activity was restricted, it seems to us, to Felipe Leite, in the work *Exercícios de Leitura Manuscrita* (Exercises in Manuscript Reading) (1852).

Figure 3 – Books published based on the Castilho Method (Brazil and Portugal).



Source: Author's Collection.

These works, the course taught by Castilho in Rio de Janeiro to teachers from various provinces and the comments in the press about the Method, contributed to its adoption and implementation in various educational territories in Brazil, as described below:

Table – Educational territories and teachers of the Castilho Method in Brazil³.

TERRITORIES	TEACHER(S)
Alagoas	José Francisco Soares Pe. Maciel (sobrenome não identificado)
Bahia	Antônio Gentil Ibirapitanga Felipe José Alberto
Ceará (Sobral)	Frederico Costa Rubin
Goiás	Feliciano Primo Jardim

³ Information collected from newspapers in various Brazilian provinces found in the Digital Newspaper Library of the National Library.

Minas Gerais	Antônio Pedro Pinto
Pará	Francisco Malaquias Soares
Paraná	Antônio Pereira da Costa Fonseca Prof. Cleto (sobrenome não identificado)
Pernambuco	Francisco de Freitas Gambôa Priscila Senhorinha Mendes Albuquerque Pe. Bernardo Fernandes Viana Manoel José de Farias Simões Menna Callado da Fonseca Bernardes Fernandes Vianna Antônio Inácio da Silva (Colégio N. S. do Bom Conselho) Pe. Lopes (sobrenome não identificado) André Alves da Fonseca Junior
Rio Grande do Sul	Antônio Gonçalves Viana Diniz
Rio de Janeiro	José Vicente Martins Augusto Emilio Zaluar Pe. João Soares de Souza Firmina (sobrenome não identificado) José Pacheco de Mendonça Martinianno Antônio Pereira Valentim José da Silveira Lopes

Sources: The autor.

From this table we can see that the Castilho Method was adopted in several educational territories, especially in the Province of Pernambuco and in the Neutral Municipality, Rio de Janeiro, due to the number of teachers who taught classes and opened schools through this pedagogical proposal. Likewise, in the Northern Provinces, where the highest incidence of adoption occurred, this was probably due to the presence of teachers from the region in the course taught by Castilho in Rio de Janeiro and the defense and commitment of professors Antônio Gentil Ibirapitanga and Francisco de Freitas Gambôa and, in particular, the recommendation of its application as a method for renewing Brazilian public education by Abílio Cesar Borges, at the time, inspector of public education in Bahia.

4 The Castilho Method in Bahia and Pernambuco

The Castilho Method, both in Portugal and in Brazil, gained enemies, but also practitioners and defenders of this teaching proposal in favor of reading and writing. These defenders, in both territories, used the press to express opinions about the advantages of this “[...] divine method, [...] a true letter of freedom and redemption for childhood” (Borges, 1856, p. 52). In Brazil, the defenders of the Method, as a strategy to disseminate it and adapt

it to the national reality, speak at the tribunes of the Legislative Congress, such as José Nogueira Jaguaribe, publish texts, open schools and classrooms and, for example:

[...] the Silveiras Lopes, from the capital of this empire; the Ibirapitangas, and Albertos, from Bahia; the Soares, from Alagoas; the Mennas, the Drimons, the Farias Simões, FONSECAS, Silvas, Viannas, Maximos Figueiredos, and Adrianos, from Pernambuco; the Carneiros da Cunha, the Liberatos, in Rio Grande; the Ruys Florencio, and Father Medeiros, in Apodi and Ceará (Castilho; Leite, 1857, p. 1).

This being said, it shows the expansion of the method across several Brazilian territories. In a letter to Pedro II, Castilho informs that this fruit was harvested “in many towns of the empire”, bringing benefits to primary education and appeals to the monarch to support and “intercede on behalf of all children”, as we quote below.

Your Majesty knows how I governed it, for you did me the honour of being present at it; you already know what fruits could have been harvested, for many towns of the Empire are already enjoying them: Pernambuco, Bahia, Alagoas, Sergipe, Rio Grande, Piauí, Apodi, Ceará. However, since the truth cannot be hidden from God or kings, the great benefit of primary school, regenerated according to the spirit of the century, the aphorisms of science, and the dictates of charity, continues to be wasted by the vast majority; a great pity, for which, if the present does not yet know how to complain, future friends of the human race will be able to accuse this selfish age. Lord! Whoever appealed to Your Majesties on behalf of an old man, how could he fail to intercede on behalf of all children? If the happiness of a single hut is so great, what will not be the happiness of an entire Empire? Happy is Your Majesty, who has it closed with the scepter in his imperial hand. That is why I aspire with such importunate supplications, that Your Majesty, seeing experiments, in and conscientiously carried out under his own eyes, may become aware of the truth through the clarity of his great judgment; and, recognizing it, may give him the support of Titus in his states. Lord! history will not always be useless. An obscure man, despised, mocked as a visionary, had a world to give, and he went about offering it in vain from throne to throne. As soon as one accepted it, this America sprang up from nothing; the planet was filled with its most beautiful hemisphere (Sodré, 1949, p. 91).

The expansion of the Method found fertile ground in Bahia and Pernambuco, mainly. In the first province, the greatest and most important defender of this “[...] grand invention of the profound Portuguese philosopher and poet, Mr. Counselor A. F. de Castilho” (Bahia, 1856, p. 51) was Abílio Cesar Borges, who in a report on public education in Bahia in 1856, reported that in principle he had his “precautions” regarding Castilho’s teaching proposal, until he saw Antônio Gentil Ibirapitanga applying it in the classroom and, mainly, after the “[...] conversation that took place on the subject between [him] and its erudite author in Rio

de Janeiro” (Bahia, 1856, p. 51). Regarding the classes of the “cordial apostle of the method” (Bahia, 1856, p. 52), in Bahia, professor Felipe José Alberto describes Cesar Borges as:

I was overcome with admiration, overcome by a kind of magic, when I noticed the various and most natural artifices with which the Castilho method facilitates the development of memory and understanding, resulting in enjoyment and accelerated use: - there are the teaching subjects so simple and naturally linked. Affiliated by such art, which starts from the very simple to the simple, from this to the less and more complex, always marching the intelligence from the known to the unknown, by such a sweet and imperceptible gradation, that the child's spirit goes as if gliding through everything with indescribable satisfaction and presence, satisfaction and readiness that further increase all the amenity and childishness, if you will allow me to say so, of the marvelous production of the great Portuguese talent (Bahia, 1856, p. 53).

If the Castilho Method was accepted in the Province of Bahia, Pernambuco was where the ideas circulated most in the press and schools (night, regimental, private and public) were opened, following the creation of the Central School of the Castilho Method by Professor Francisco de Freitas Gambôa. This school became a reference as a place for applying the method in other provinces in the North, such as Ceará (Sobral) and Rio Grande do Norte (Apodi), where in a letter to Gambôa, Professor Joaquim Frederico da Costa Rubin states:

CASTILHO METHOD
Sobral, February 5, 1860

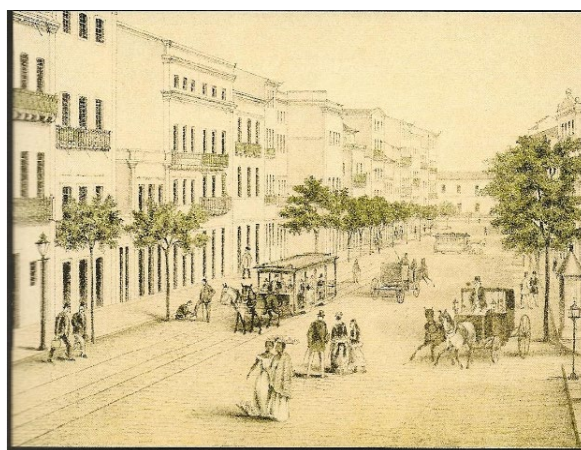
Dear Mr. Francisco de Freitas Gamboa – the method here is progressing, as can be informed by the bearer of this information, Mr. Manoel Afonso Aquino de Albuquerque, a businessman who has a 5-year-old boy in this class, and I have many of those years, which proves the taste and advancement that has been achieved, although some enemies of progress rage, get angry and mock the Portuguese method, that there being a skilled teacher here who educates and instructs girls very well, does not prevent my class from having 16 girls, so I am committed to being a teacher of both sexes; I believe this to be a great triumph for the Castilho method. You can count on it (Castilho Method, 1860, p. 2).

This Central School of the Castilho Method operated from 8 am to 3 pm. This schedule was to prevent the boys from “[...] walking alone on the street and in the company of less than zealous carriers” (Aviso, 1856, p. 3), whose time was divided as follows: from 8 to 9 writing, from 9 to 10 accounting, from 10 to noon, “continuous reading of prose and verse, from noon to 1 am writing of letters and receipts and writing for beginners, from 1 to 2 accounting, from 2 to 3 grammar, and continuous reading for beginners” (Aviso, 1856, p. 3), in the evening (Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays) instructing teachers interested in the use of the Method.

The concession for its operation was granted by Castilho, when I was in Recife, on my return from Rio de Janeiro to Lisbon. “It was on the 8th [of August] 1855 that, disembarking, the Honorable Counselor Dr. Castilho [...] deigned to grant us, in his capacity as author, a diploma to teach and prepare teachers for the new method” (O dia, 1862, p.1).

From this central school, “branch schools” were created, which complied with the law regulating public education in art. 88, which allowed schools and classrooms to be opened using this method. The first was that of Professor Bernardo Ferreira Viana, at 59 Rua da Cadeia, in Recife, to which Francisco de Freitas Gambôa donated “all objects related to the establishment of such schools for all parishes in this capital, after all, they would in no way be inferior to the central school in Santo Antônio”. “This neighborhood was both larger and more densely populated, occupied by a population composed mostly of poor workers” (Clemente, 2013, p. 98).

Figures 3 and 4 – Santo Antônio Street and Cadeira Street.



Source 1: https://pt.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Antiga_Rua_da_Cadeia,_Recife.jpg.

Source 2: Clemente (2013).

This school was created to prevent children from running the risk of crossing the bridges that cross the city and being subject to the weather, and to meet the demands on Saturdays when the Central School was closed. Branch schools were created in the cities of Rio Formoso, Goiana, Nazaré and Vitória, in addition to Recife. The sixth branch school was created on January 12, 1856, directed by professor André Alves da Fonseca Junior who, in an invitation published in O Liberal Pernambuco (1856), expected the presence of all teachers from other schools to accompany their students “decorated with the medal of Exm. Castilho, on ribbons of the appropriate colors to the different schools, with each boy carrying, if possible, a bouquet of flowers” (Installation. 1857, p. 3).

This presentation proposal was in line with Castilho's recommendations, in the work *Diretório para senhores professores das escolas primarias pelo Método Português* (1854), in which, when distributing prizes to schools, students and guests should present themselves with "the greatest pomp possible" (Castilho, 1854, p. 58).

The night school, created to serve Brazilian and foreign men, followed the guidelines of the classes at the Marvilla Normal School, created by Luiz Felipe Leite, "it was the only incentive that moved us to give this night course, for the benefit of our fellow citizens from both hemispheres" (Gambôa, 1863, p. 1). To meet the demands of teachers and students at these institutions, Castilho sent

five alphabetical reviews, five collections of illuminated alphabetical charts, five collections of calligraphic translations, five copies of happiness through instruction, five explanations of what glass papers are and how to use them, and among these five explanations other handwritten ones, five directories for those who have to teach using the Portuguese method (Gambôa, 1863, p. 1).

The seventh was by teacher Priscila S. Mendes Albuquerque, to serve girls, with the title "Castilho Method", the *Diário de Pernambuco* (1881), published

The undersigned informs the respectable public and particularly the parents of its students, that on February 3, its already well-known classroom will open at Rua do Imperador, no. 29, where it continues to receive boarders, half-boarders and day boarders and boarders. Priscila S. Mendes Albuquerque (Method, 1881, p. 2).

On October 4, 1863, the Central School celebrated 10 years since its establishment, in whose report Freitas Gambôa describes the progress in teaching reading and writing to children, and the expansion of the method in Pernambuco and

[...] all through this method, which is the only pure simultaneous method, it has produced the wonderful results that we have presented in public exhibitions, in the halls of Santa Isabel, to the Honorable Presidents of this province, and to a large number of spectators. Advantages enjoyed by our distinguished colleagues D. Priscila, Ramos, Barros, Leite, Silva, Simões and all those with humanitarian hearts who adopted this method of teaching through love. Thus, ten years of triumph have passed for the Honorable Counselor Antônio Feliciano de Castilho, to whom all the glory of this brilliant result belongs. (School, 1863, p. 2, emphasis added)

The survey of the Pernambuco press allows us to state that the Castilho Method was adopted in Recife from the 1950s until 1888, competing with other methods, as stated by Clemente (2013, p. 74, emphasis added).

The ninety-nine (99) educational establishments announced in the 'Publications on Request' column of the *Diário de Pernambuco*, on Tuesdays, between 1880 and 1888, were distributed across forty-six (46) different streets in the city. On the same street, Rua do Imperador, located in the Santo Antônio neighborhood, we observed the announced existence of three different teaching methods: the American, João de Deus and Castilho.

Finally, as a way of demonstrating the difference between schools using the Castilho Method and others, a phrase by Professor Rubin from Ceará was posted at the entrance of schools in Pernambuco, in which he said:

Laughing, the school attracts us
The teacher is within us, friends
We have a friend and father in him (*Método Castilho*, 1860, p. 2)

5 Final Considerations

Gonçalves Dias, during his travels for the Brazilian government, went to Portugal in search of documentary evidence about Brazil and, at the same time, to study the teaching methods in vogue, including the *Leitura Repentina* (Repeated Reading) by the Portuguese writer and educator Antônio Feliciano de Castilho. According to the author, his method aimed to renew Portuguese education, dominated by old methods that made educational institutions unattractive, through quick and enjoyable teaching, and which alienated students because, instead of innovating, they reproduced knowledge and, instead of freedom, punished them.

To this end, he proposed a method of reading, writing and arithmetic in which clapping, marching and singing would attract students, make teachers interested in teaching and schools into playful, attractive spaces for learning that were less boring. This would also involve changing the spelling of the Portuguese language, which did not represent the everyday speech and expressions of people who did not frequent noble salons, literary gatherings and academies of arts, letters and science.

These changes in the ways of teaching and learning in the language, in the movement of bodies and the use of artifacts, such as glass paper, the time spent teaching and learning in a short period of time, were the object of criticism and rejection that spread throughout the Portuguese territory.

Castilho, since his departure to live in the Azores (1847-1849), for financial reasons, had cherished the desire to immigrate to Brazil for various reasons, including the presence of family members, admiration for the royal family and because he considered the country promising opportunities. Upon assuming the position of commissioner for the instruction of his method, he aborted the second attempt.

In 1856, he finally came to Brazil with the aim of promoting his method and, if possible, making it a national teaching proposal with the support of the Emperor. Upon arriving, he reproduced the same strategies adopted in his pedagogical campaign in Portugal; he gave courses to teachers from several provinces, and wrote articles for newspapers in Rio de Janeiro, Bahia and Pernambuco that were reproduced in periodicals in Maranhão, Ceará and Pará, for example.

In Brazil, as in Portugal, he would face objections, mainly in Rio de Janeiro and Alagoas. However, the rejections were less virulent and aggressive than in Portugal, and with different objectives. There, there were disputes between the “old methods” and the “modern method”, as Castilho called his teaching proposal. Here, the confrontation was for the defense of a national education and for political reasons, and especially for the dispute between his method and that created, since 1834, by Costa Azevedo. On the other hand, his opponents in Brazil exercised power in the field of education: Costa Azevedo, who had been director of the Escola Normal do Rio de Janeiro, and Francisco Crispiano Valdonato, teacher of the imperial princesses, both defenders of the Jacotot Method.

Despite its opponents, Repentant Reading was adopted in several Brazilian provinces and in the capital of the Court and found followers and defenders such as José Vicente Martins, Augusto Emilio Zaluar, Francisco de Freitas Gambôa, Frederico Costa Rubin, among others. Defenders used the press to publicize the method, opening schools and publishing books that had Castilho’s proposal as a reference.

This educational movement by Castilho in Brazil reached its greatest reach in the Province of Pernambuco, from the Central School of the Castilho Method, created by Francisco de Freitas Gambôa, which became the center of expansion to other locations in the North, such as Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte and Pará. This statement is based on the number of schools centered on *Leitura Rependina* and the quantity of news articles published in the *Diário de Pernambuco*, *Jornal de Recife* and *Liberal Pernambucano*, which can be found in the Digital Newspaper Library of the Brazilian National Library. This data also reveals that Castilho’s proposal, in Brazil, had a long duration, from the empire until the early years of the Republic and was adopted in regimental and night schools, charitable institutions (for girls and boys) and private institutions.

Finally, this text highlights the fertility of the debate on teaching processes in Brazil in the nineteenth century, the ways in which pedagogical models from other countries were transposed, in this particular case, the Castilho Method, and the disputes between defenders and critics who sought to renew teaching and learning processes focused on the acts of reading, writing and counting.

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