

THE CLOSING OF NORMAL SCHOOLS IN MATO GROSSO (1937–1947)¹

O FECHAMENTO DAS ESCOLAS NORMAIS EM MATO GROSSO (1937–1947)

EL CIERRE DE LAS ESCUELAS NORMALES EN MATO GROSSO (1937–1947)



Rômulo Pinheiro de AMORIM

e-mail: romulo79@gmail.com



Elizabeth Figueiredo de SÁ

e-mail: elizabethfsa1@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT: This text analyzes the representations constructed regarding normal education in light of the closure of normal schools in Mato Grosso from 1937 to 1947. The selected timeframe is based on the termination of activities at the Pedro Celestino Normal School in late 1937 and the resumption of normal education in 1947. The question arises as to how the extinction of normal schools was portrayed in the official documents issued by the state administration. The theoretical framework for this study is based on the concept of representations developed by Roger Chartier (1990), as well as the approach of António Nóvoa (1995) on teacher professionalization. For the elaboration of this article, decrees and governmental messages found in the Public Archive of Mato Grosso were consulted. The narratives present in the public documents sought to portray that the decision to close the teacher training institution would provide a favorable scenario for the development of state education.

KEYWORDS: Teacher development. History of Education. Education in Mato Grosso.

RESUMO: *Este texto tem como objetivo analisar as representações construídas em relação ao ensino normal diante do fechamento das escolas normais em Mato Grosso, no período de 1937 a 1947. O recorte temporal selecionado deve-se ao encerramento das atividades da Escola Normal Pedro Celestino no final de 1937, bem como à retomada do ensino normal em 1947. Diante dessa situação, questiona-se como a extinção das escolas normais foi retratada nos documentos oficiais emitidos pela gestão estadual. O embasamento teórico para este estudo consiste no conceito de representações desenvolvido por Roger Chartier (1990), assim como na abordagem de António Nóvoa (1995) sobre a profissionalização docente. Para a elaboração deste artigo, foram consultados os decretos e mensagens governamentais encontrados no Arquivo Público de Mato Grosso. As narrativas presentes nos documentos públicos buscavam retratar que a decisão de fechar a instituição de formação de professores proporcionaria um cenário propício para o desenvolvimento do ensino estadual.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Formação docente. História da Educação. Educação Mato Grosso.*

RESUMEN: *Este texto busca analizar las representaciones construidas sobre la enseñanza normal frente al cierre de las escuelas normales en Mato Grosso, en el período de 1937 a 1947, así como el restablecimiento de la enseñanza normal en 1947. Frente a esta situación, surge la pregunta: ¿cómo se representó la extinción de las escuelas normales en los documentos oficiales emitidos por la administración estatal? El subsidio teórico para este estudio fue el concepto de representaciones elaborado por Roger Chartier (1990); así como el enfoque de António Nóvoa (1995) sobre la profesionalización docente. Para este artículo, fueron consultados decretos gubernamentales y mensajes ubicados en el Archivo Público de Mato Grosso. Las narrativas transmitidas en el documento público buscaban representar que la decisión de cerrar la institución de formación docente brindaría un escenario favorable para el desarrollo de la educación estatal.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Formación docente. Historia de la Educación. Educación en Mato Grosso.*

Introduction

Research on the training of primary school teachers in Mato Grosso had expanded in recent years within education graduate programs, particularly when the investigation extended to periods encompassing the beginning of the Republic until the 1960s. Several research groups focusing on the history of education in Mato Grosso have conducted studies related to normal schools, especially with the increase in these institutions after the 1940s. Thus, master's and doctoral research aimed to depict aspects related to the creation, organization, functioning, teaching practices, and curriculum of the normal schools established over the decades in the state.

However, before this period of expansion, there were only two normal schools in Mato Grosso in the 1930s: the Pedro Celestino Normal School, founded in Cuiabá in 1910, and the Joaquim Murtinho Normal School, established in 1932 in the city of Campo Grande.

The training of primary educators ceased to be offered in these two normal schools with the creation of the specialization course for teachers at the Liceu Cuiabano through Decree n. ° 112, dated December 29, 1937 (MATO GROSSO, 1937). In Campo Grande, the same course was made available at the Liceu campo-grandense through Decree n. ° 229, dated December 27, 1938 (MATO GROSSO, 1938). After a period of inactivity, these institutions resumed their activities through Decree-Law n. ° 834, dated January 31, 1947 (MATO GROSSO, 1947).

Although the period of closure of the Pedro Celestino Normal School has been mentioned in various studies, we still find a gap in the history of education regarding this event. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct more in-depth investigations to clarify the motivations behind the termination of activities in teacher training institutions and the conditions of normal education after this event. This episode raises questions about why the state government deemed it necessary to interrupt the training of primary school teachers in these educational institutions at that time.

Given this circumstance, we formulated the following research question: how was the closure of normal schools represented in the official documents issued by the state administration? Therefore, this text aims to analyze the representations constructed about normal education related to the closure of primary teacher training schools in Mato Grosso from 1937 to 1947. The chosen time frame is due to the termination of activities at the Pedro Celestino Normal School in late 1937 and the reestablishment of normal education in 1947.

The representational discourses disseminated by the state administration were analyzed based on the concept of representations developed by Roger Chartier (1990). This concept

encompasses the actions of individuals, groups, and institutions that seek to establish perceptual mechanisms about certain events to become predominant in society and be linked to their specific interests. Representations aim to classify, order, and define something in the social environment they are issued, to introduce ideas and social visions to be accepted and practiced by people.

The governmental representations regarding the interruption of activities at the facilities of the Normal School in Cuiabá and Campo Grande were disseminated through state decrees published in the Official Gazette of Mato Grosso. Therefore, for this study, we focused on analyzing the narratives presented in Decree n. ° 112/1937 (MATO GROSSO, 1937), which addresses the closure of the Pedro Celestino Normal School.

The discourses presented in the official document aimed to create a favorable atmosphere for the closure of the normal school by constructing a narrative that conveyed the idea that this event, initially seen as unfavorable for the state's school education, was perceived as something positive for teacher training at the time by the governmental sphere.

In addition to addressing this aspect, we will also discuss the process of teacher professionalization in the face of the closure of normal schools in the state during the mentioned period. To do so, we will analyze based on Antônio Nóvoa's (1995) approach to teacher professionalization. The author understands this process through the relationships established between the state and teachers since state interventions contributed to the creation of circumstances that influence the characterization of the teaching profession and the relationship established with teachers, who may react to government actions seeking the improvement of the profession.

For the realization of this work, decrees and official messages found in the Public Archive of Mato Grosso were consulted. The analyses revealed that the narratives in these documents sought to convey the idea that the closure of the teacher training institution would result in a conducive context for the development of state education.

Historical aspects of primary teacher education in Mato Grosso

The governor of Mato Grosso, Pedro Celestino (1911), aiming to establish a normal school in the state, sought to hire teachers from São Paulo to coordinate the creation and functioning of a primary teacher training institution.

Thus, with the arrival of the teachers from São Paulo, the pedagogical structure of the Cuiabá Normal School was organized, and its regulation was formalized through Decree No. 266, dated December 3, 1910 (MATO GROSSO, 1910). In the early 1930s, the Cuiabá Normal School has renamed the Pedro Celestino Normal School in honor of the mentioned governor (SILVA, 2006).

At the beginning of the institution's activities, the lack of a suitable building was one of the problems affecting the development of pedagogical activities, as the school operated in a rented house on the former Rua 1º de Março, now known as Rua Galdino Pimentel. The location did not provide the proper conditions to create a conducive environment for teacher training, as reported by Leowigildo de Mello, "the most urgent measure to be taken is the relocation of the school to another building. None of the houses it currently occupies offer the hygienic and pedagogical conditions required in school buildings" (MATO GROSSO, 1911, p. 1, our translation).

Political interference in the hiring of teachers to teach at the institution was an aspect that hindered the functioning of the school. Often, political appointments for teaching and administrative positions did not consider the pedagogical needs of the institution, which affected the development of education. Thus, the appointment of educators was related to political influence rather than the pedagogical qualifications of the teaching candidate (SILVA, 2006).

This aspect of teacher professionalization was addressed by Nóvoa (1995), stating that one of the stages for the advancement of teaching as a professional activity is establishing legal support for the exercise of the profession. The official definition of who could work as a teaching professional was not yet consolidated in the state, as the criteria for entering this career were subject to political interference, allowing the possibility of individuals without the proper pedagogical qualifications to engage in educational activities.

Despite the difficulty of basing entry into teaching on pedagogical aspects and the lack of professionals with adequate training to teach at the normal school, a set of knowledge necessary for teaching was beginning to be established, as highlighted by Nóvoa (1995).

After the year 1913, the duration of the course was extended to four years. Although this was relevant for teacher training, allowing more time for study and the development of theoretical and practical conceptions of the profession, the number of graduates from the normal school was smaller than the number of students enrolled in the course in the early years after its creation in 1910, resulting in a reduced number of qualified teacher trainees to teach in primary schools in the state (SILVA, 2006).

During Pedro Celestino's second term (1922-1926), the school expanded its teacher training activities, increasing the number of graduates from the course. This expansion of the normal school was related to the school's reform, which included the presence of a specialized technician to oversee the institution's administration (RODRÍGUEZ; OLIVEIRA, 2009).

In addition to the Normal School of Cuiabá, an educator training unit was established in the southern part of the state due to the arrival of rail and road transportation in the region, facilitating migration and contributing to the expansion of commerce. Thus, creating primary schools to serve the population in the southern part of Mato Grosso resulted in the need for teachers (BITTAR, 2004).

In the face of this context, the Normal School Joaquim Murtinho was founded in Campo Grande in the early 1930s. The school operated in the same building where the Joaquim Murtinho Primary School had been established in 1921 (BITTAR; FERREIRA JR., 1999). However, the institution faced problems related to the lack of adequate infrastructure, as the location did not have a suitable space for school activities. Additionally, there were difficulties in managing the coexistence of the normal school and the primary school in the same environment (MATO GROSSO, 1931).

Despite the structural problems of the normal schools, the government made efforts to modify the teacher training course, seeking to incorporate the principles of the new school into the curriculum, including psychological aspects developed by the educational sector (RODRIGUES, 2006).

During the 1920s and 1930s, initiatives were taken to improve the education offered in these training institutions, such as introducing and expanding the workload of the subjects in the normal course, which lasted four years.

The normal school program of 1926 already presented changes in its structure, emphasizing the study of psychology in education, which began to be approached more comprehensively throughout the course. This allowed the inclusion of content such as the study

of individual needs and differences in human development, especially in child development (FIN, 2012).

The need to broaden teachers' knowledge to overcome the limitation of studies restricted to the essential mastery of content was pointed out by the director of the normal school in 1924 as a challenge to be faced through the changes established in the Normal Education Program in 1926, as

"[...] the new program transformed the contents of Psychology and Hygiene into specific subjects, with the former being taught in the course from the 2nd year, joining Pedagogy knowledge; in the 3rd year, providing the foundation for Didactic Methodology knowledge" (FIN, 2012, p. 78, our translation).

Hygiene discipline was included in the Program of Primary Public Instruction, which led to its incorporation into the normal school curriculum. Knowledge related to physical education, such as the nature of different diseases and their consequences, as well as recommended care and treatments, was the knowledge teachers should acquire in normal school (FIN, 2012).

The teaching approach based on the practical-theoretical knowledge of the teaching-learning process became prominent due to the influences of the progressive educator movement. The creation of model schools attached to normal schools aimed to allow the practice of the methods learned in the normal course.

The practices of organizing school life and teaching methods that the students of the normal course should understand occurred through observation and imitation of the pedagogical practices carried out by the teachers in the attached school. The lessons showed how teachers organized students and taught the content (CARVALHO, 2003).

In the 1930s, the course curriculum was restructured to provide a more professional education. Methodology, method, gymnastics, and moral and civic education were removed, and subjects such as the history of education, official writing, physical education, and civic education were introduced (FIN, 2012).

The state normal schools continued to offer a four-year course, emphasizing the study of teaching methodologies in the final year and the practice of the trainees in the model school. Teacher education had as its main objective the learning how to transmit educational knowledge to students.

Government initiatives aimed at modifying aspects related to teacher education reflect the attempt to incorporate educational knowledge developed over the decades into the profile

of these professionals. The professionalization of teaching, as highlighted by Nóvoa (1995), advanced when pedagogical knowledge approached a theoretical foundation derived from research in the field of education.

Throughout its trajectory, the course for primary teacher education was structured in a specialized manner and with a relatively long duration through institutions created for this purpose. However, the closure of normal schools had a negative impact on the continuity of this process of strengthening the professionalization of teaching in the state.

Representations regarding the closure of the normal school in Mato Grosso.

The Pedro Celestino Normal School, located in Cuiabá, was deactivated through a government decree in the late 1930s, with it being determined that teacher education would be offered through a specialization course available at the Cuiabano Lyceum.

Decree n. ° 112/1937 (MATO GROSSO, 1937) was issued by the state government of federal intervenor Júlio Strübing Müller. The decree above established the closure of the normal school based on a set of arguments aimed at creating a justifiable foundation for this decision adopted by the state administration and defining some guidelines for the operation of primary teacher education after this decree.

The narrative spread in the decree sought to emphasize the aspects that school education would gain with the interruption of normal school activities, as we can see: "considering that a large number of graduated progressive educators, sufficient for the needs of our primary education, allows for the requirement of a longer and deeper course for future teaching candidates" (MATO GROSSO, 1937, p. 1, our translation).

The representation revealed initially in this passage highlighted that the closure of the normal school would not result in a lack of trained teachers for the primary schools in the state. This perception created a scenario where students would not be without normalist teachers in each primary educational institution. In other words, the presence of these teachers would ensure the continuity of school education carried out by qualified professionals, as the number of normal school students met the demand of schools in Mato Grosso.

The government narrative is related to the advancement of teacher education, as it can be observed that initially, the aim was to establish the idea that closing the training institutions would not be a problem. Then, the perception was presented that the education of primary

educators would undergo modifications that would provide pedagogical progress to teaching candidates.

The cessation of activities at the Pedro Celestino Normal School would represent the development of teacher education in the state without causing harm to primary education with the unit's closure. This reinforced the idea that the moment of teaching in Mato Grosso allowed for implementing changes in normal education, given the sufficient number of normal school students in the state.

One of the changes consisted of the possibility for teaching candidates to initially complete a secondary school course and later opt for the specialization course for primary teachers, which lasted for one year. The state management presented this change as positive for the training of future teachers, allowing for a long period of dedication and professional preparation.

Thus, the use of the words "long" and "profound" is articulated to reinforce the idea that there would be a pedagogical advancement in teacher education and, consequently, an improvement in the teaching of primary schools. This is because these institutions would have the presence of more qualified professionals to teach.

According to Decree n. ° 112/1937, extending the study time to work in teaching was equivalent to completing the four grades of the secondary school course and an additional year of specialization for teaching. However, in the report of federal intervener Júlio Müller to the President of the Republic in 1940, it was mentioned that the specialization course for primary educators should be two years (MATO GROSSO, 1940).

With this change, the government's perspective indicated that future teachers would have sufficient time to deepen their educational knowledge before teaching in primary schools of the state, as emphasized in the decree: "considering that these candidates can follow the same sequential course of secondary gymnasiums, completing their professional preparation with the study of specialized subjects, undertaken after the completion of the sequential course" (MATO GROSSO, 1937, p. 1, our translation).

After establishing that the closure of normal schools would not affect the inclusion of normal school students in primary teaching due to the existing quantity, the termination of the institution's activities was also associated with the pedagogical development of teaching candidates.

This aspect was reinforced when the state management presented the understanding that students entering the ginásial course would be better prepared to do so. Additionally, they would

perform better in the training course due to the efficiently conducted studies in private schools, which prepared them for the admission examination to secondary education. This perspective is highlighted in the decree: "considering that there are several private colleges in this capital that effectively prepare students who wish to take the admission examination for the secondary course and that the State should not compete with these colleges, but rather contribute to their prosperity" (MATO GROSSO, 1937, p. 1, our translation).

The governmental sphere highlighted a scenario aimed at efficiency in preparing students for entry into the ginásial secondary course, aiming to raise the educational level of the students both in the gymnasium and for those who would take the specialization course for primary teachers offered at the Liceu Cuiabano. This would contribute to the improvement of teacher education in the state.

Private schools are presented by state management as examples of efficiency in education in the state. In their narrative, the importance of the growth of these private entities is emphasized, and the state is encouraged to support their development to contribute to improving education in Mato Grosso.

The disseminated understanding suggests that public education should not compete with the efficient education provided by private schools. Therefore, they should be maintained and expanded in the state. Thus, eliminating public schools is not seen as detrimental to education in Mato Grosso but rather as a mechanism that could contribute to the overall progress of state education. This idea was associated with the closure of the normal school.

From the state's perspective, the closure of the normal school can be considered as the removal of a barrier that hindered people's access to other professions, "considering that the current organization of the Pedro Celestino Normal School does not allow students to complete enrollment in higher schools, depriving them of pursuing another profession" (MATO GROSSO, 1937, p. 1, our translation).

The narrative disseminated by the state aimed to convey the idea that the normal school needed to change its organization by being incorporated into the building of the Liceu to not only facilitate the pedagogical growth of teacher education but also allow students to pursue other careers. Thus, the normal school closure represented a gain for the society of Mato Grosso, with the possibility for individuals to become professionals in different fields.

To emphasize the benefits of the modification in providing normal education, the state management highlighted investments in courses that would give practical conditions for people to pursue other professions through preparatory courses for admission to higher education.

According to the decree, "considering the urgency of establishing the complementary course created by Law No. 49, of October 10, 1936, aimed at preparing candidates for enrollment in higher courses" (MATO GROSSO, 1937, p. 1, our translation).

From this perspective, this narrative aimed to broaden the perception of the benefits resulting from the end of the normal school, as the new organization would not prevent teachers from changing professions and would also enable the necessary preparation for entry into higher education courses.

The perspective emphasizes the unnecessary need for investments in expanding normal schools, as the population would have more advantages when the government invests in the implementation of preparatory courses and the creation of more vocational courses, as mentioned in the decree itself: "considering that it is imperatively consistent the creation of vocational schools in this capital and that a Course of Bookkeepers will facilitate for many young people to pursue this profession" (MATO GROSSO, 1937, p. 1, our translation).

The idea represented in the government discourse reinforced the understanding that it would be better for the society of Mato Grosso to expand the possibilities of pursuing other careers while the teaching profession would be maintained through the creation of a specialization course. Thus, a representational environment was constructed in which the closure of the normal school should not be seen as detrimental to the state's education, as the normal course offered at the Liceu would no longer be considered a barrier to entry into higher courses.

The notions elaborated by the state sought to construct a coherent narrative of justifications aimed at imposing and legitimizing the changes implemented at the end of 1937 regarding school education and the abolition of the normal school. To do so, they sought to articulate the discourses in a complementary manner and reinforce the understanding that their actions would lead to the educational progress of Mato Grosso, providing the population with more excellent professional opportunities, even with the discontinuation of teacher training courses in normal school facilities. This aspect is referenced by Chartier (1990, p. 17, our translation), who states that the constructed representations "are always determined by the interests of the groups that forge them."

The representations put forth by the state government sought to establish perceptual mechanisms regarding the changes made in normal education through the closure of the normal school, to classify and order the changes to become prevalent in society, being accepted and practiced by the people (CHARTIER, 1990).

Despite the elaboration of a vision that praised the pedagogical advancement of normal education and the progress of school education in the state through state interventions in teacher training, the government's actions led to the emergence of restrictions that hindered, at the time, the development of teaching as a professionalized category in Mato Grosso.

The closure of the normal school in the state for ten years contributed to the emergence of a massive gap in normal education in Mato Grosso. As observed in the historical aspects of teacher training, the normal course sought to consolidate itself in the 1920s and early 1930s.

Despite several interruptions in its origins in the late 19th century, various attempts at pedagogical reformulation in its curriculum occurred during this time, as well as the expansion of subjects and the duration of the training, establishing that teacher training would take place over four years.

However, this effort was interrupted by the abolition of the Pedro Celestino Normal School and the subsequent reduction of training time when a specialization course for primary teachers was offered at the Liceu Cuiabano.

As highlighted by Nóvoa (1995), the development of teacher professionalization involves establishing specific institutions for teacher education. This aspect was not followed by the state government. On the contrary, instead of seeking to expand the number of normal schools in the state, they chose to close the only units dedicated to teacher training.

The importance of institutions exclusively focused on teacher education is emphasized by Nóvoa (1995), as he points out that professional development occurs through specialized training, with courses aimed at providing the necessary theoretical and practical foundation for teaching. Furthermore, this program should have a relatively long duration and be conducted in a school whose sole purpose is to educate teachers.

Thus, by extinguishing the normal school, the state administration did not allow for expanding and consolidating institutions solely dedicated to teacher education. Those who wished to pursue this profession were forced to enroll in a specialization course with a significantly shorter duration compared to the normal course in the early 1930s.

The professionalization of the teaching profession was compromised with the closure of this school, as the time for study and preparation for teaching was reduced with the creation of the teacher specialization course at Liceu Cuiabano.

The knowledge and techniques necessary for the teaching profession should be acquired within a short period, contributing to the weakening of teaching as a specialized

activity based on established practices and knowledge obtained during a long-duration course conducted in schools specifically dedicated to this purpose.

For the government sphere, the closure of the normal school meant an increase in teacher education's time and pedagogical depth, considering the latter as the sum of the time spent on secondary education and specialization.

This "longer and more profound time for future teaching candidates" (MATO GROSSO, 1937, p. 1, our translation) was not directed towards the development of specialized knowledge and techniques for teaching. This is because the time allocated to secondary education did not aim to train teachers; its subjects and organization did not have that intention. Specialized subjects would be addressed after secondary education, which did not constitute a pedagogical deepening for teaching since the specific issues would be part of the teacher training within a short period.

In addition, teaching still lacked further advancement to strengthen itself as a professionalized activity. Despite the state administration's claim that there were numerous certified normal school graduates to adequately meet the demand of primary schools, reports from subsequent governments highlighted the problem of a significant presence of untrained educators, meaning teachers without the education derived from the normal school practicing teaching in the state.

The closure of the normal school may have contributed to the worsening of this situation in the following decades, as institutions dedicated to teacher education remained dormant in the state for ten years. Despite the existence of a specialization course for primary teachers at Liceu Cuiabano, government reports from 1940 and 1942 indicate a low number of enrollments in this course, with only three and four students enrolled, respectively.

Final considerations

Governmental representations created a scenario highlighting educational progress in the state, derived from their actions regarding normal education. However, the closure of the normal school should be considered as the path that allowed the state administration to promote pedagogical growth in teacher training and improve the performance of students in primary schools through the presence of better-prepared professionals for primary education.

The state government's interventions in normal education hindered the development of teacher professionalization in Mato Grosso at the time, as they suppressed the pursuit of

strengthening specialized knowledge and skills in the profession. Closer connections with scientific disciplines in institutions dedicated exclusively to this purpose were restricted by reducing the normal course hours and incorporating them into a building that offered various courses without the primary aim of teacher education.

In addition to failing to contribute to the deepening of pedagogical training for teachers, the closure of the normal school and its adaptations further contributed to the maintenance and increase of the problem of untrained teachers' presence in the state. This aspect perpetuated the perception of teaching as a non-professionalized activity, as it reduced the need to acquire specialized knowledge through long-term studies and allowed the practice of the profession without the adequate education provided by schools dedicated to this purpose.

The historical aspects of teacher education indicate that the course aimed at its establishment took a long time to develop in the state. However, despite the structural and personnel difficulties, the two sole teacher training institutions in Mato Grosso showed initiatives to reformulate their curriculum, aiming to enhance pedagogical knowledge through greater integration with scientific disciplines.

The four-year training period for future teachers strengthened the development of specialized knowledge in teaching. However, analyses of the state government's representations regarding normal education in the late 1930s indicated a lack of concern for the specialized knowledge of the profession. Their representational speeches sought to legitimize the changes made in normal education, emphasizing the positive aspects of closing the state's normal schools.

A negative image of the normal school was created, portraying it as an institution that did not provide adequate pedagogical training for future educators. Additionally, it was argued that this formative school hindered opportunities for entry into other professions, justifying its closure for the benefit of school education in Mato Grosso. In this sense, the representational discourse was crafted to defend the idea that the closure of the teacher training school should be accepted and understood as something that would elevate the state's education level.

However, the analyzed representations here highlight the lack of understanding by the state administration regarding the importance of the normal school in the process of professionalizing teaching at the time. This is because those who dedicated themselves to teaching should possess an official license establishing their status as teaching professionals, derived from specialized education in institutions dedicated to this purpose (Nóvoa, 1995).

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About the Authors

Rômulo Pinheiro de AMORIM

Department of Education of Mato Grosso (SEDUC), Cuiabá – MT – Brazil. Basic Education Professor. Doctoral Degree in Education (UFGD). Postdoctoral degree (UFMT).

Elizabeth Figueiredo de SÁ

Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT), Cuiabá – MT – Brazil. Associate Professor. Doctoral Degree in Education (USP). Postdoctoral degree (UC-Portugal).

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