



History and memory of the Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros (Bom Jesus, Piauí)¹

História e memória da Escola Normal Helvídio Nunes de Barros (Bom Jesus, Piauí)

Historia y memoria de la Escuela Normal Helvídio Nunes de Barros (Bom Jesus, Piauí)

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Abstract

The article reports the history of Escola Normal Helvídio Nunes de Barros. The college is located in Bom Jesus city, in the state of Piauí, and is a pioneer in the region concerning Normal education. The aim was to unveil a historical narrative about the school in its interrelationship with the educational context of Bom Jesus city in the 1970s. Based on the premises of Cultural History and methodologically on Oral History, with three contributors who experienced the founding period of the school – teacher and principal Dom Ramón, supervisor Ivanilde Borges and the student Ecildeide Martins –, cross-checked with documentary sources – the school's internal guidelines and Resolution CEE/04/70. The research verified that the emergence of the aforementioned institution happened due to the expansion of access to education, as well as the number of primary schools in the southern region of Piauí, which required specific teacher training in order to replace lay teachers.

Keywords: History. Memory. Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros.

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Resumo

O artigo relata a história da Escola Normal Helvídio Nunes de Barros, localizada na cidade de Bom Jesus, Piauí, o educandário é pioneiro na região na oferta do Ensino Normal. Objetivou-se desvelar uma narrativa histórica acerca da escola na sua inter-relação com o contexto educacional de Bom Jesus na década 1970. Com base nos pressupostos da História Cultural e metodologicamente na História Oral, com três colaboradores que vivenciaram o período de fundação da escola – professor e diretor Dom Ramón, supervisora Ivanilde Borges e aluna Ecicleide Martins –, entrecruzada com fontes documentais – regimento interno da escola e Resolução do Conselho Estadual de Educação n. 4/1970 –, foi desenvolvida uma pesquisa que constatou que o surgimento da mencionada instituição foi decorrente da ampliação do acesso à educação, bem como do número de escolas primárias na região sul do Piauí, o que demandou formação específica para o magistério a fim de substituir os professores leigos.

Palavras-chave: História. Memória. Escola Normal Helvídio Nunes de Barros.

Resumen

El artículo trata sobre la historia de la Escola Normal Helvídio Nunes de Barros, localizada en Bom Jesus, Piauí, pionera en la región en la provisión de educación normal. El objetivo es revelar una narración histórica sobre la escuela en su interrelación con el contexto educativo de la ciudad de Bom Jesus en la década de 1970. Basado en los supuestos de la Historia Cultural y metodológicamente en la Historia Oral, con tres colaboradores que vivieron el período de fundación de la Escuela – maestro y director Don Ramón, supervisora Ivanilde Borges y estudiante Ecicleide Martins –, entrelazados con fuentes documentales – el reglamento interno escolar y la Resolución del Consejo Estatal de Educación n. 4/1970 –, se desarrolló una investigación que constató que el surgimiento de la referida escuela fue el resultado de la expansión del acceso a la educación, así como el aumento del número de escuelas primarias en la región sur de Piauí, que requirió capacitación específica para la profesión docente para reemplazar a los maestros legos.

Palabras clave: Historia. Memoria. Escuela Normal Helvídio Nunes de Barros.

Introduction

This scientific research interrelates two coexisting fields, History and Education, by entering the field of Education History (VASCONCELOS; FIALHO; MACHADO, 2018), and, more specifically, works with the history of institutions (GATTI JR., 2002; MAGALHÃES, 2005; SOUZA; LIMA, 2016; SANFELICE, 2006). It discusses Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros, located in the city of Bom Jesus, Piauí, the object studied in this investigation.

The aforementioned school was the first institution founded in the southern region of Piauí designed to train teachers, however, it had an elitist nature, because, although it was associated to the Catholic Church, it charged tuitions which were inaccessible to the majority of the local population. Therefore, while excluding access to the economically disenfranchised, the school was responsible for educating most of the wealthy population, especially people from the elite, the almost exclusive audience of this institution.

The city of Bom Jesus is located in the south of the state of Piauí, in the valley of the Gurgueia River, approximately 635 kilometers from Teresina, the state capital, and has a population of around 30 thousand people. The city is characterized by its abundant water and fertile soil that foster agribusiness² when compared to other cities in the same state, in addition to standing out due to its production of soy and honey, one of the biggest sources of income in Piauí. However, the city has social problems, such as unemployment, which causes many families to depend on welfare programs to survive, such as Bolsa Família, as well as the lack of urban infrastructure, with lack of basic sanitation and public transport (IBGE, 2018).

Regarding the educational scenario, until the 1970s, the south of Piauí had high illiteracy rates mostly due to a lack of public education institutions and the fact that children and teenagers worked in agriculture to help support their families. Access to secondary education was restricted to the wealthy class because it took place in a single institution, called Ginásio Odilon Parente, which, in addition to charging tuition, had a difficult entrance exam. This type of exam was commonly used to restrict access to Middle School, since there weren't enough spots to enable the enrollment of all students (ABREU; MINHOTO, 2012).

After the arrival of the Mercedary Order³, with Bishop Dom José Vázquez Díaz, there was a prime concern with the population's education, through which people were socially influenced to know, believe and behave according to the Christian principles (TEIXEIRA, 2017). The order managed by Dom Vázquez founded some "trade schools" and "primary schools" in rural communities that were part of the Diocesan Educational Center, as well as two other schools that offered secondary education: Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros and Scientific Course Dom José Vázquez Díaz. Furthermore, the government of Piauí began, in 1990, to expand some secondary schools, such as Araci Lustosa School Unit and Joaquim Parente School Unit, also located in Bom Jesus (NOVO, 2017).

With the expansion of agribusiness, the city had increasing economic growth; at the same time, the promotion of education undertaken first by the Mercedary Order and later by the State improved the schooling of the population in Bom Jesus, especially of those who had time to dedicate themselves to study instead of working in agriculture to help support their families (RAPOSO, 2004).

In this research, however, we question how the constitution of the Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros took place in the educational context of Bom Jesus. To answer that concern, we developed a study aiming to unveil a historical narrative about Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros in its interrelation with the educational scenario of the city of Bom

² Agribusiness represents the group of agricultural and industrial activities that take place from the field to the final consumer. Nowadays, agribusiness is among the biggest job creators in the world.

³ Religious order from Spain that arrived in Bom Jesus in 1956 with Bishop Dom José Vázquez Díaz.

Jesus in the 1970s. The time limit stipulated is justified by the fact that the school opened in 1970, when it was founded and its educational activities began.

The relevance of studying the history of school institutions consists of unveiling possible analyses about the past and the present of the educational scenario, enabling the expansion of the understanding about the process of social, cultural and educational change in a determined time and space (FIALHO; SÁ, 2018). After all, “[...] the history of educational institutions has improved in the context of the studies of education history in Brazil, renewing the field of education history and organizing a new thematic field of Brazilian education historiography” (GATTI JR., 2002, p. 19, our translation).

It is important to clarify that, even in the condition of consolidated field, the studies about educational institutions haven’t yet managed to record the history and memory of important educational establishments, such as the Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros, an educational institution that marked the history of education and of teacher training in the southern region of the state of Piauí, founded in 1970 and extinct in 2001, after 31 years in operation. There wasn’t architectural preservation probably because the school didn’t have its own building and operated from different buildings, such as at the Bom Jesus diocese, on the 2nd floor of the cathedral, and later in the building of the Greater Seminary, which, in 2019, was also rented by a private school that offered Early Childhood Education and Primary Education.

The Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros also hasn’t achieved visibility in academic research, since we couldn’t locate studies about that institution in the main Brazilian scientific databases. This was verified in a search carried out in January 2019 to identify possible previous studies concerning the Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros. We carried out searches at the Journal Portal of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES, in Portuguese), the database Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) and the Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD, in Portuguese), using the following descriptors: “Escola Normal de Bom Jesus” and “Escola Normal Helvídio Nunes de Barros”. The only finding was a dissertation abstract at BDTD from the Federal University of Piauí (UFPI, in Portuguese), intitled *A Ordem Mercedária e a educação no Piauí: Escola Normal Helvídio Nunes de Barros* (The Mercedary Order and education in Piauí: Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros, our translation), but the full text was never available. Contacting the Library of the Postgraduate Program on Education (PPGE, in Portuguese) of UFPI, we obtained the information that the dissertation was presented, but the final paper⁴ was never handed in.

According to Le Goff (1996, p. 25, our translation), “[...] history is the science of the past, with the condition that this past becomes the object of history through endless reconstruction”. According to that idea, it is relevant to unveil the history and memory of Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros, because this (re)constitution enables not only understanding an object of historic study situated in the past, but also its inseparable interrelation with the present and the future. Unveiling narratives that uncover, through memories, the educational scenario of Piauí in the end of the 20th century, it is possible to: expand the understanding about the history of education in Bom Jesus, a city that lacks a record of historical narratives; and reflect about the interrelation between the history of the institution and the educational problems still experienced nowadays, such as the small number of schools of Basic Education, which is inadequate to assist the population of students, especially due to rural depopulation and to the fact that the city receives many migrants from nearby locations that arrive in search of better quality of life in more fertile land (IBGE, 2018).

Based on the premises of Cultural History (BURKE, 2010), which expanded the notion of historical source and the historiographic study objects, the valorization of micro-historic investigations is enabled. This research, in this perspective, stems from the history of a single

⁴ There were several attempts to contact the author of the aforementioned study, both through the phone number provided by PPGE and through the e-mail address registered at the institution, but it wasn’t possible to locate them.

institution, questioning a unique historic scenario: the educational context in Bom Jesus in the end of the 20th century. For that end, it uses as a main methodological procedure the Oral History (ALBERTI, 2005; AMADO; FERREIRA, 2006), cross-checked with other sources of documental nature, as is explained in the next section.

Methodological path

Based on the understanding that revisiting the history of a school institution, through memories, sparks a wealth of subjectivities interwoven in the narratives of the history of education of a place, it is important to emphasize that individual memory is inseparable from collective memory (HALBWACHS, 1993). It is related to world knowledge, social relations, cultures, values and distinct interpretations, tainted with subjectivities inherent to the act of narrating a time past, permeated by remembrance and forgetfulness, intentional or involuntary, that enable the creation of different historic stories (POLLAK, 1989) – far from the single, true and unquestionable History –, considering the interdisciplinarity between different sciences and the possibility of diverse narratives. Based on that premise, Le Goff (1996, p. 423, our translation) adds: “Memory as the property to retain certain information refers us first to a group of psychic functions, thanks to which human beings can update impressions or information from the past, or that they represent as past”.

In this sense, we revisited the memory of the Normal School through the narratives of individuals who experienced its education, considering the silences, facial expressions, what was forgotten and memories that were retained, after all, we understand that history can be woven based on new subjects, new problems and new approaches (BURKE, 2010), which depart from the universal, all-encompassing and generalizing macrosocial stories.

As methodological procedure, we used the Thematic Oral History due to the possibility to use a previously drafted project and contact the narratives of some individuals who experienced education at Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros during the institution’s operation. Therefore, we highlight that working with Oral History “[...] requires that the researcher have great respect for others, for their opinions, attitudes and positions, for their worldview, thus. It is that worldview that guides their statement and gives meaning to the facts and events narrated” (ALBERTI, 2005, p. 24, our translation).

The contributors invited to participate of the research providing information through a thematic interview – recorded, transcribed, validated and textualized – were selected considering the following inclusion criteria: professionals who experienced the entire period in which the school operated and students who began and/or concluded their teaching course in the first years of operation of the institution. Participated in the research: Bishop Dom Ramón López Carrozas, one of the first teachers of the institution, who later became the principal; Ivanilde Borges, supervisor at the school; and teacher Ecicleide Martins, who was a student in the school’s early years. The research followed the recommendations of Resolution n. 510, from April 7th, 2016, about the ethics in research in the fields of Human and Social Sciences. Thus, it is important to clarify that the interview with the bishop was provided by researcher Ademir Martins de Oliveira, and the others were carried out after participants expressed their consent and signed the informed consent form, moment in which we explained the research objectives, the participation method, the lack of direct benefits, the possibility to withdraw at any moment and the possible disadvantages – embarrassment, emotions etc.

Individual interviews happened at places and times defined by the contributors: Dom Ramón’s interview took place at his residence, on March 1st, 2018, at 4 p.m., during 53 minutes; Ivanilde’s happened at her residence on January 15th, 2019, at 3 p.m., during 42 minutes; and Ecicleide’s took place at her place of work, i.e., the coordination of a private school, at 2 p.m., on January 14th, 2019, during 36 minutes. The validation of the transcriptions with Ivanilde and

Ecileide happened in March 2019 following the technique of generating discourse structure by Flick (2019), which allows the interviewee to read the textualization and enables adjustment with additions and suppressions.

With the narratives, we felt the need to carry out a document research to locate the institution's internal guidelines, mentioned by the interviewees – although not very precisely – and other inputs that could contribute to the creation of the historic narrative about Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros. After all, cross-checking the oral sources with documental input would enable us to expand the understanding, since “[...] document analysis can constitute a valuable technique to approach qualitative data, whether complementing the information obtained through other techniques or unveiling new aspects of a theme or problem” (ANDRÉ; LÜDKE, 2012, p. 38, our translation).

The school's little preserved documentation that survived termites and moths, after Dom Ramón's death, was sent by the Bom Jesus Diocese to the Secretariat of Education of the state of Piauí, located in Teresina (the state capital), due to the fact that Bom Jesus doesn't have a public archive to store and preserve educational documentation. In the archive at the Secretariat of Education of Teresina, we located only the following documents: the school's inauguration resolution, a calendar from 1981 and the internal guidelines. The latter was fundamentally important to collaborate with the understanding of the history of the institution's foundation.

Normal School: understanding contexts

It is important to remember that the advent of the Normal School model to train teachers adopted in Brazil dates back to the 18th century in France, since during the French Revolution⁵ began to arise some reforms that contributed to the development of a new way to foster education. The ideas from the Enlightenment⁶ were relevant to boost several transformations in the educational scenario in Europe, with “[...] the institutionalization of public instruction and the pedagogical contributions by Comenius, Pestalozzi and others” (ARAÚJO, 2010, p. 36, our translation). The school was no longer part of the Church, since Europe still lived theocentrism, and was now regulated by the State, that is, it became public. Supported by the ideals of the Enlightenment, based on the terms “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity”, school would be seen as a primary mechanism for the development of society, with the State as responsible for its maintenance, after all, the developing society needed an education that attended the demands of economic and political changes that happened throughout the years. This was also when positivism emerged, since this system was born from conceptions of the Enlightenment (HOBSBAWM, 2013).

Thinking about the training of lay teachers who took on the job of educating, Joseph Lakanal (1762-1845), French politician and administrator, during the French Revolution, instituted, on October 30th, 1794, in Paris, the decree for the creation of the first Normal School in the Convention of France⁷, intending to “[...] defend specific training for teachers as a tool to enable national public instruction” (ARAÚJO, 2010, p. 41, our translation). The model of education offered by the Normal School in France inspired the training teacher institutions in Brazil, initially intended more emphatically for the feminine population in the wealthier social

⁵ The French Revolution (1789-1799) was a period of intense political and social agitation in France, which generated lasting social, political and economic changes in the history of the country and more broadly in the entire European continent (GILES, 1987).

⁶ The Enlightenment, also known as “Century of Lights”, was considered a European intellectual movement that began in France in the 17th century. The main trait of this current of thought was defending the use of reason over faith to understand and solve the problems of society (ARAÚJO, 2010).

⁷ We emphasize that the first concept of Normal School in the world was created by Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, in 1685, aiming to train teachers to work with elementary Christian education and standardize the schools and the teacher profession (ARAÚJO, 2010).

classes, later collaborating in large part to the creation of a workforce for elementary education with the intention to universalize primary education:

It is, therefore, evident that Normal School was one of the tools for the accomplishment of the universalization of primary education while the new pedagogical ideal was materialized: lay, rational, scientific and guided toward the new social and civilian values, envisioned by the French Enlightenment, and committed to the formation of citizens who are useful and active in the sense of attending to new demands and social-political-economic and cultural interests of the Modern State being consolidated. (ARAÚJO, 2010, p. 44, our translation).

Normal School had an important role in the project of universalization of primary education in Brazil, not different from what happened in Piauí, especially concerning the constitution of a new pedagogical model characterized as lay, rational and scientific. In addition, they also emphasized new values that collaborated to the formation of minimally instructed and disciplined individuals, since they needed to adjust to the new social, political and cultural concepts, that is, the individual needed to fit into the new standards for workers demanded by society: having elementary knowledge to occupy economically undervalued positions that required reading and developing basic mathematical operations, without enough critical conscience to challenge the model of production and capital accumulation (OLIVEIRA, 2004).

In Brazil, Normal Education history began in 1835, with the first Normal School, implemented in Niterói:

The first initiative to create that educational institution [...] was the Normal School of Niterói, which would serve as a model for similar institutions to be implemented in the other Brazilian provinces. Its creation was made official through Act n. 10 by the Legislative Assembly of the province of Rio de Janeiro on April 1st, 1835, sanctioned by the province president at the time, Joaquim José Rodrigues Torres, the Viscount of Itaboraí. (ARAÚJO, 2010, p. 55, our translation).

After that initiative, Normal Schools began to appear in other provinces aiming to train teachers for elementary education, since the educational development of the country would happen through the intervention of teachers, who needed to be well prepared. About that aspect, Saviani (2009, p. 144, our translation) highlights:

That path was followed by most provinces still in the 19th century, in the following order: Bahia, 1836; Mato Grosso, 1842; São Paulo, 1846; Piauí, 1864; Rio Grande do Sul, 1869; Paraná and Sergipe, 1870; Espírito Santo and Rio Grande do Norte, 1873; Paraíba, 1879; Rio de Janeiro (DF) and Santa Catarina, 1880; Goiás, 1884; Ceará, 1885; Maranhão, 1890. These schools, however, had intermittent existence, being closed and reopened periodically.

Normal Education reached the city of Teresina, in Piauí, in 1864, through the official authorization by Provincial Law n. 565, from August 5th, 1864, which boosted its implementation, which took place on February 3rd, 1865, as well as the creation of its guidelines, approved on September 6th of the same year (SOUSA, 2009). The operation of Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros, first Normal School in the southern region of Piauí,

the object of this research, began in 1970, years after the implementation of the Provincial Law, through the initiative of the Mercedary Order, the main religious entity responsible for education in the city of Bom Jesus in the end of the 20th century, as is explained in the discussion about this municipality, in the next section.

Contextualizing the educational scenario in Bom Jesus-PI

The city of Bom Jesus is located in the southern extreme of Piauí, next to Gurgueia River, and is part of the mesoregion of the southwest of Piauí, as well as the microregion of the High Medium Gurgueia, with a population of approximately 30 thousand people, many of whom work in activities related to agribusiness⁸ (IBGE, 2018).

Initially, Bom Jesus was called Buritizinho, a place where there was a vast field of buriti trees⁹, but its name changed later. As in most cities of Piauí, the Catholic Church had a strong presence in the city, and a group of pilgrims, in the first barracks of the 19th century, erected a chapel in the name of Bom Jesus da Boa Sentença, around which some families settled, thus fostering increasing population growth. Throughout time, the territory started to be known as Bom Jesus da Boa Sentença, receiving, in 1938, simply the name Bom Jesus.

In the territory division tables from 12/31/1936 and 12/31/1937, as well as in the annex of State Law n. 52, from March 29th, 1938, the city in question, already called Bom Jesus, is simply constituted, as before, by only one district, with the same name. [...] The same happens in the state's territory divisions, determined by State Laws n. 147, from December 15th, 1938, and n. 754, from December 30th, 1943, implemented, respectively, in the quadrennia 1938-1943 and 1944-1949. (SETUVAL, 1999, p. 7-8, our translation).

We understand, therefore, that Bom Jesus became an independent territory in 1938, but was only emancipated politically in 1948. In that occasion, the first mayor was Francisco da Cruz Filho (doctor Cruz) and the deputy mayor was João Nepomuceno da Fonseca, whose term lasted from April 21st, 1948, to January 31st, 1951 (SETUVAL, 1999).

Bom Jesus, in the 1950s, was a very small city, with few houses and streets, but was still a reference for nearby municipalities, because it had a banking system, profitable commerce and school, since in the southern region of Piauí the development of other cities was even smaller. With only one school, founded in 1930, which offered only primary education (2nd to 5th grade), Bom Jesus gained prominence, since it had the “[...] first free school, then called Singular School Franklin Dória, later School Group Franklin Dória, and nowadays School Unit Franklin Dória” (SETUVAL, 1999, p. 10, our translation).

With the increasing need for the population to continue their education, the Mercedary Religious Order negotiated with the local political power in order to found a school that offered further education to the population, in order to fulfill local students' need to continue their education. In 1956, a politician named Odilon Parente donated to the prelate a large building space where the educational institution could function. As an homage, the school was named Ginásio Odilon Parente and began to operate only in the morning shift, later implementing the afternoon shift, in order to meet the demand of students from the city and from nearby municipalities that desired to continue their education. It is important to remember that this was a private school and had a difficult entrance exam, being attended by local elite.

⁸ Agribusiness represents the group of agricultural and industrial activities that take place from the field to the final consumer. Nowadays, agribusiness is among the biggest job creators in the world.

⁹ Buriti is the dominant plant species of Mata dos Cocais, vegetation present in the mid-north subregion of Piauí.

With access to Middle School, corresponding to the 6th to 9th grade, the wealthy population of Bom Jesus soon started to feel the need for continued education, through Secondary Education. In 1970, the Bom Jesus prelate, through the sponsorship of “Obras Sociais do Gurgueia” and Resolution CEE/04/70, founded Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros, the object of this study, in an attempt to solve two demands: the desire of some young people to continue their education and the city’s need for teachers with some professional training to work at the schools that began to appear in the region. For example, in 1972, the second primary school of Bom Jesus was created:

This institution began its teaching activities on May 12th, 1972, during the government of Alberto Tavares Silva. The school received its name as an homage to Mrs. Araci Maria Ferreira Lustosa, the first teacher who graduated in the city of Bom Jesus (PI) (SOUSA; ANDRADE, 2013, p. 1679, our translation).

We observe that the demands, in fact, started to be met with the operation of Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros, because teachers who graduated the Normal Course started to work at the primary schools of Bom Jesus.

In 1979, the government undertook the responsibility to offer Secondary Education and founded Ginásio Joaquim Parente (named after a city councilor, son of Odilon Parente), with free education, which stood out due to its good teaching. As a result, Ginásio Odilon Parente was closed, since it was a private school, and the population preferred to study at a renowned establishment free of cost. Thus, the school that should benefit the students who didn’t have the means to fund their education ended up encompassing the region’s entire demand, once again privileging the wealthy.

Initially, in 1979, the school (*Ginásio Odilon Parente*) operated in two shifts, morning and afternoon, from the 5th to 8th grade (currently, 6th to 9th). Due to the foundation of this new school (*Ginásio Joaquim Parente*), the students had more opportunities to study and didn’t need to go to other cities or even pay tuition at a private school even without enough means. (SOUSA, R.; SOUSA, W.; ANDRADE, 2016, p. 7, our translation).

Only in 1982 another Secondary Education institution was created in Bom Jesus, the Agricultural School of Bom Jesus, which offered Primary and Secondary Education with Vocational Education in Agriculture. After that, other municipal and state school institutions emerged, because the education demand was increasingly higher due to population growth and the development of commerce. And Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros supplied most of the workforce for those educational establishments, since it was the only Normal School in the region.

History and memory of the foundation of Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros

The first Normal School of Bom Jesus had its operation authorized on February 27th, 1970, by Resolution CEE/04/70. In the 1970s, Brazil was under a military dictatorship, a period of intense change in several fields, such as: political, economic and educational. At the time, in the southern region of Piauí, specifically in Bom Jesus, regarding the educational scenario, the number of students who graduated Middle School grew, needing an institution that offered Secondary Education.

Pioneer in Normal Education in Bom Jesus, Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros received that name due to the friendship between the bishop at the time, Dom José Vázquez Díaz,

and the senator Helvídio Nunes de Barros and due to the bishop's belief that the politician would help obtain funding for the school, although the initial intention was to fund it through resources obtained with social projects, as is stated in its internal guidelines¹⁰, in Articles 1 and 2:

Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros is an openly Catholic and institutionally apolitical educational institution, which intends to offer to its students a full education, in order to prepare them for the perfect knowledge of their duties toward God, the Church, and the Nation. Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros has as fundraising entity the Obras Sociais do Gurgueia – philanthropic entities of charitable, educational, cultural and social assistance nature.

Philanthropic in nature, the school didn't depend directly on funding from the state or municipal government, foreseeing in its guidelines an apolitical education, that is, not involving education in political issues and refraining from problematizing the Brazilian political scenario of a dictatorship, characterized by repression, recession and restriction of individual freedoms (MARTINS, 2009). This education, according to Freire (2008), didn't enable contextualized teaching, the development of criticality or the formation of individuals involved with societal change.

The proposal of full education was fostered through the principles of Catholicism, focusing on individual obligations, and not on rights, especially striving for a perfect knowledge of their duties toward God, the Church and the country. In other words, according to the nationalistic ideas disseminated in Brazil in the 1970s, the school strove for technical education and the duties of patriotism (MARTINS, 2009).

Throughout its trajectory, Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros had three different locations: the first was above the cathedral, in front of Praça Sete de Setembro, no number, located downtown, where it stayed until 1990; the second was at 415 Arsênio Santos street; and the third location was on the same street, but at number 437. All buildings belonged to the diocese. Considering that the research aimed to understand its foundation, in the 1970s, we emphasized the period of its first location.

Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros, in its first decades, located on the second floor of the cathedral, intended to offer vocational education with a teaching course following the guidelines by the Catholic Church to educate students who were charitable, feared God and were apt for the teaching profession. The school wasn't part of the municipal or state network and its students needed to pay tuition to ensure its continuance, due to the allegation that the donations weren't enough for its maintenance. The school supervisor explained: "*It was a priests' school; it belonged to the diocese; it was practically free; it was symbolic tuition, for its maintenance only, because there wasn't secondary education here, and it impacted the entrance exam*" (BORGES, 2019, our translation).

It is important to reflect about that oral information, after all, in the 1970s, in Bom Jesus, there weren't many students who could stop contributing to housework and agriculture in order to dedicate themselves to studying, especially who counted on a family budget to pay for tuition. This situation resulted in the school being attended mainly by the children of the local elite, especially since the school had entrance exams. These elitist and segregationist characteristics aren't different from a considerable number of Normal Schools in the beginning of their operation in Brazil (MARTINS, 2009).

¹⁰ Guidelines drafted by CEE of Piauí in 1971.

Regarding the enrollment of students, they were enrolled by parents or guardians, or by the students themselves, if they were legally adults. Concerning enrollment, we highlight the determination in Article 31 of the internal guidelines:

Presenting documentation that ensures to the student the right to begin or continue studying in the grade in which they intend to enroll; to the discretion of the Direction, the candidate may be required to take an exam, and in case the results are deemed inadequate, they can be denied enrollment; there won't be an automatic renewal of enrollment for the following grade, and the student, through a guardian or on their own behalf, if adult, must request enrollment within the stipulated deadline.

In the light of the institution's internal guidelines, we can notice the severity concerning enrollment of students in Normal School through the entrance exam, at the same time that there is a loophole for favoritism and exam dismissal to the discretion of the direction. It is important to emphasize that, in practice, entrance exams were broadly used in the first years of operation of the school; later, with diminishing demand for Normal School, they were suspended, as the supervisor highlights: “[...] *in the beginning there were, later there weren't, but in the beginning there were exams because demand for the school was huge*” (BORGES, 2019, our translation).

School administration, according to Article 5 of their guidelines, was carried out by a principal “[...] properly qualified to exercise the job, who must preside over the operation of school services, the work of teachers and students and the relationship between the school and the community”. Concerning the teaching staff, teachers had to be qualified to work according to the law that regulated such matters, in this case, Law n. 5.692/1971, which stated:

The training of teachers and specialists to teach primary and secondary schools should happen at increasingly higher levels, adjusting to the cultural differences of each region of the Nation, and with orientation that attends to the specific objectives of each grade, the characteristics of the subjects, fields of study or activities and the development stages of students.

Manager and teachers followed the curriculum structure of the Normal School of Bom Jesus, drafted according to its Internal Guidelines (1971), which functioned thus: “Curriculum, as a group of all experiences under the establishment's responsibility, will be organized by the Principal, along with the Pedagogical Coordinators and the Teaching Staff of the Establishment”. In practice, the curriculum was organized by the manager, characterizing a hierarchy in school institutions. The school calendar, according to the internal guidelines (1971), had 180 school days dedicated to school activities, which were drafted each year, before the start of classes, by the pedagogical coordination, only undergoing changes if indicated by the school direction, which should ensure a minimum workload of 2,200 hours for High School. The institution's internal guidelines, guided by Law n. 5.692/1971, in its Article 11, indicated that “[...] the school year and semester, independent from the calendar year, shall have, at minimum, 180 and 90 days of effective school work, respectively, excluding time reserved for final exams, in case these are adopted”.

Regarding learning evaluation, it was quantified and expressed in grades from 0 to 10, with 5 being the minimum passing grade, as presented in Article 50 of the internal guidelines: “In order to move on to the next grade, the student must obtain at least 5 (five) in their final grade in all activities, fields of study or subjects”.

Concerning the subjects taught at the institution, they were divided between General Education and Special Training. The subjects that constituted the curriculum of General

Education were: Portuguese, Brazilian Literature, Foreign Language (English), Physical Education, Artistic Education, Geography, History, Social and Political Organization in Brazil (OSPB, in Portuguese), Moral and Civic Education (EMC, in Portuguese), Math, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, and Religion. The subjects in Special Training consisted of: Writing and Expression, Children's Literature, Children's Art, Basics of Psychology, Basics of Sociology, Basics of Philosophy, Complementary Math, School Administration, Didactics, Methodology of the National Tongue, Teaching Techniques and Supervised Practice.

Among the aforementioned subjects, as couldn't be different at an educational institution that belonged to the Church, Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros valued the Religion classes, adding activities such as community mass and religious festivals, to which the direction invited the community, along with all students in uniform, transmitting the message that the school was disciplined and well-organized. The former teacher toned down the disciplinary severity by stating: "*There were religion classes, community mass with all the students, some masses, some other religious festivities that required all students to attend in uniform, but it wasn't such an enforced, serious thing, it was more of an invitation*" (CARROZAS, 2018, our translation).

In an interview with a former student, Ecicleide Martins, contrary to the teacher's report, she remembers the dynamics of the institution as "[...] *traditionalist, disciplinary and rigorous concerning uniforms*":

We had the uniform, which would be the knee-length skirt, the shirt with sleeves and collar, we had to tuck the shirt into the skirt and wear a belt, no sneakers, black shoes and socks, and those socks had to be long, knee-length, sometimes we even wore some elastics to keep the socks in place, it was like: the skirt practically meeting the socks, it was that length. So they were all in that sense, the white shirt and the skirt was like a brown, beige. (MARTINS, 2019, our translation).

The former student shared rich details about the institution's uniforms and explained that these demands were indispensable in order to enter the school. In addition, the former student also reported that classrooms were too crowded, justifying the situation with the fact that the Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros was the only Normal School in southern Piauí:

The classes were super crowded, I think there were 40, over 40 students, because the classrooms at the Normal School were huge rooms and they were full, because that whole region of Manuel Emídio, Elizeu Martins, Colônia, Palmeiras, Redenção, everyone studied here. (MARTINS, 2019, our translation).

In addition to the severe discipline and the valorization of Religion classes, another point that must be discussed is the importance given by the school to OSPB and EMC classes. There was an exacerbated valorization of the nation, noticed since the relevance given to the parade on September 7th, Brazil's Independence Day, which was considered a historical landmark: "[...] *it was the prettiest thing. By the way, it was all the schools from the area together, it was always all of them, it was the prettiest thing, I don't think I ever had the opportunity to see any parade as beautiful as those in Bom Jesus anywhere*" (BORGES, 2019, our translation).

This overvaluation of patriotism was linked to the military regime in Brazil, which lasted 21 years (1964-1985), i.e., since Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros was founded in 1970, during the dictatorship, when it was common to praise civism and love of the nation in every school, celebrating September 7th was the most faithful representation of that

valorization. Normal Schools aimed to educate teachers who transmitted unconditional love toward the nation in an apolitical perspective, in which the political regime wasn't questioned, on the contrary, the need for obedience and subservience was praised.

OSPB and EMC classes weren't implemented in schools by accident; there was an underlying intention, since the idea that hovered over the country during the dictatorship was consistent with fitting people's behaviors into a social standard, which was being constructed by the State, of apathy and silencing, in order to discourage manifestations that opposed the autocratic rule. Through civic parades, respect toward the national flag, singing the national anthem before classes, among other activities, patriotism was developed (ABREU; INÁCIO FILHO, 2006).

Brazil's dictatorship, directly or indirectly, influenced the education of Bom Jesus through the practices imposed at schools, in contrast with a proposal of humanizing, emancipatory and democratic education (ARAÚJO; SANTOS, 2014), because the education proposal was upheld by the traditional teaching model, based on technicality and educational practices characterized by mnemonic, decontextualized and static operations. According to Luiz Júnior (2013, p. 35, our translation), "[...] the technical pedagogy of the 1960s-1970s strained to move the action focus away from the school, from social issues, toward learning problems, teaching methods and techniques".

Although emerging in antidemocratic scenarios, many Normal Schools in Brazil constituted a landmark in the History of Brazilian Education regarding pioneer specific instruction for teacher training, and Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros was an institution that significantly contributed to teacher training not only in the city of Bom Jesus, but also in the entire south of Piauí, since it was the only school of its kind in the region, as reported by Borges (2019, our translation):

It was because here in the south of Piauí there weren't teacher colleges and the school was really good in the first years. [...] it stayed in Bom Jesus when Bom Jesus needed it, because there wasn't secondary education, but then the agricultural school appeared, private schools, it wasn't as needed anymore, and I think that's why it closed.

We verify, through the interviewee's words, the importance of Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros for teacher training, especially in the early years of its implementation, since the region had no other schools to qualify professionals to work in education or schools that offered secondary education.

Operating for 31 years (1970-2001), the Normal School of Bom Jesus had as part of its legacy hundreds of professionals qualified to teach. The aforementioned institution was closed for several reasons, the main one being the governmental action to universalize Secondary Education through the implementation, in the rural area of Piauí, of several decentralized public schools that offered that level of education in the end of the 20th century.

The state opened by that time many high schools, even in rural areas! In every city, because, in the time of the Normal School, there wasn't secondary education everywhere, practically only here, so there were a lot of students, but, when the state started opening high schools here and there, the number of students decreased a lot, up to the point where only one student enrolled in a year, then we had to suspend it. (CARROZAS, 2018, our translation).

Carrozas explained how the extinction of the Normal School of Bom Jesus came about: although the number of students increased every year for Secondary Education, the state started

to implement public schools in the communities farther from the city in the end of the 20th century. Therefore, the neighboring population didn't need to commute to Bom Jesus seeking education and the local population already had other options to continue their education. According to Bishop Dom Ramón Carozas (2018, our translation), "*In 2001 the Normal School only had one new enrollment, reaching a point where there weren't enough resources to pay the teachers' salaries*". Thus, in that same year, Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros of Bom Jesus was closed, staying in the social consciousness of many inhabitants of Bom Jesus.

Final considerations

The research discussed the foundation of the first Normal School in the southern region of Piauí and its inseparable interrelation with the educational context of Bom Jesus in the 1970s. Consistently with that theme, as a driving problem for the study, we questioned how the implementation of the Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros took place in the educational context of Bom Jesus. In order to answer that unrest, we carried out a scientific research, with a micro-historical perspective, which used the methodology of Thematic Oral History cross-checking the oral sources – by two former professionals and one former student – with documental sources – internal guidelines and resolution concerning the foundation of the Normal School.

The study enabled the reflection that Normal Schools had gradual growth throughout Brazil since 1835, year when Normal Education was first implemented in the country, in the light of the French model. However, regarding the state of Piauí, Normal Education only began in 1864, in the state capital, Teresina, almost 30 years after the implementation of the first Normal School in Bahia, in 1836. In Bom Jesus, the main city of southern Piauí at the time, teacher training only began later, in 1970.

Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros was the first Normal School in southern Piauí, implemented in Bom Jesus. Up to 1970, education in the southern region of the state was carried out basically by lay teachers, because teachers who left the capital to work in Bom Jesus were rare. Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros was founded through the initiative of the Catholic Church, more specifically through the mediation of Bishop Dom José Vázquez Díaz, with the "Obras Sociais do Gurgueia" as the main organization that funded the institution, through donations.

Since there was the allegation that donations weren't enough to cover all the expenses of the Normal School, they charged tuition, which wasn't accessible to many inhabitants of the region. As a result, the school was attended primarily by the local elite, since those less affluent had to dedicate themselves to domestic chores and agriculture, and didn't have enough time for education nor resources to pay for tuition, school supplies and the required uniform.

As if the exclusion fostered by income weren't enough, there was also a strict selection process, based on previous knowledge, effected through entrance exams, in which only students who had attended a good Primary Education school were successful. It is important to remember that until 1957 there weren't any Secondary Education schools, since the *Ginásio* was only founded in 1958, and it was the only establishment to offer Secondary Education until 1973, when the first public school was implemented.

Linked to the Catholic Church, Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros followed the traditional education model, characterized by the authority being centralized in the teacher and the valorization of obedience, fostering knowledge through decontextualized mnemonic operations, consistent with the Christian principles of the Church and the patriotism characteristic of the dictatorship. There was severe control regarding the use of the uniform, discipline and punctuality, especially in activities such as community mass, hoisting the flag and civic parades, in which the school was shown to the community.

Based on “apolitical” education, Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros, in the first years of its operation, was marked by elitist education that reproduced the sociocultural values of the local elite, following a technical education that contemplated two groups of subjects: General Education and Special Training. The former concerned subjects in broader fields of knowledge, and the latter consisted of subjects aimed at teacher training. However, there was overvaluation of Religion classes, OSPB and EMC, subjects that transmitted, respectively, the values of Church and State, always focusing on the duties of citizens, and never on their rights.

Aiming to train Christian teachers, who feared God and the authorities and loved the nation, teacher training took place in an uncritical way, corroborating the model of society of the time: segregationist, excluding and unequal. The institution had its downfall in 2001, due to the foundation of other educational institutions, with similar goals, of a public nature, that is, when Secondary Education was universalized and supported by the government and the population of southern Piauí didn't have to bear the high costs of Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros in order to have access to that level of education.

Although with an elitist nature, especially in its early years, Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros operated for 31 years and was the institution responsible for the educational development in the southern region of Piauí through teacher training. After all, during approximately three decades this school acted as the only institution with that goal in the region.

Studying school institutions allows us to know and expand the understanding about the history of education in a determined place. In this sense, through the history and memory of the foundation of a Normal School, it was possible to begin at the micro, Normal School Helvídio Nunes de Barros, and discuss the macro, the educational context of Bom Jesus, since the expansion of the understanding of what can be considered a historical source, particularly based on the theoretical perspective of Cultural History.

It is important to infer that this study deploys a historical narrative that isn't intended as universal, general or unquestionable, on the contrary, it brings a reflection about the education experienced in the end of the 20th century in southern Piauí, a reality that still has much to be investigated. We hope that further research can shed some light on the city of Bom Jesus and the southern region of Piauí, still little explored in the context of Education History, collaborating to problematize the history and memory of Brazilian Education.

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