



The uncommon path of a popular education teacher¹

A incomum trajetória de uma educadora popular

La trayectoria poco común de una educadora popular

Paulo Rogério de Oliveira Teixeira
Universidade Católica de Santos (Brazil)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5623-6424>
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/7728273656794403>
paulorogério@unisantos.br

Luiz Carlos Barreira
Universidade Católica de Santos (Brazil)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6746-9706>
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/0821428930913743>
luizcarlosbarreira@gmail.com

Abstract

This article discusses the professional life of a popular education teacher, who began teaching while still a teenager on a coffee farm in the state of Paraná, Brazil. As an adult living in a neighborhood on the outskirts of the city of São Paulo, she drew near the Landless Workers' Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores sem Terra – MST) and became active in it. Due to this activism, she was able to earn a degree in Ecopedagogy (Pedagogia da Terra), with specialization in the use of native and landrace seeds in agriculture. It is no coincidence that she now advocates education from the rural area for the rural area, that is, an education conceived and practiced by those who, like her, live in rural encampments and settlements. The life path of this educator was reconstructed through interviews conducted according to research procedures observed by historians active in the field of Oral History. Narration of this story was conducted in the same way; it was conceived, structured, and produced according to such procedures, especially those related to a particular technique called interview transcreation.

Keywords: Popular Education. Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra – MST. Comuna da Terra Irmã Alberta.

¹ English version by Lloyd John Friedrich. E-mail: lloydfriedrich@hotmail.com

Resumo

O artigo discorre sobre a trajetória profissional de uma educadora popular que começou a se tornar professora quando ainda era adolescente, em uma fazenda de café, no estado do Paraná. Já adulta e residente em um bairro periférico da cidade de São Paulo, aproximou-se e passou a militar no Movimento dos Trabalhadores sem Terra – MST. Graças a essa sua militância, pôde graduar-se em Pedagogia (da Terra) e realizar uma especialização sobre o uso de sementes nativas e crioulas na agricultura. Não por acaso, advoga, hoje, uma educação do campo para o campo, ou seja, uma educação pensada e praticada por aqueles que, como ela, vivem em acampamentos e assentamentos de terra. A trajetória dessa educadora foi reconstituída por meio de entrevistas, realizadas conforme procedimentos de pesquisa observados por historiadores que atuam no campo da História Oral. O mesmo ocorreu em relação à narração, que foi pensada, estruturada e produzida também de acordo com tais procedimentos, especialmente aqueles relacionados a uma técnica particular, denominada transcrição de entrevistas.

Palavras-chave: Educação popular. Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra – MST. Comuna da Terra Irmã Alberta.

Resumen

El artículo analiza la trayectoria profesional de una educadora popular, que comenzó a ser maestra cuando aún era una adolescente, que vivía y trabajaba en una finca cafetera en Paraná, uno de los estados de Brasil. Esta trayectoria continuó cuando se mudó, más tarde, a São Paulo, que es otro estado de Brasil. Allí, viviendo en un barrio periférico de la ciudad, conoció y comenzó a trabajar en el Movimiento de Trabajadores Rurales Sin Tierra - MST. Gracias a su activismo logró graduarse en Pedagogía (desde la Tierra) y especializarse en el uso de semillas nativas y criollas en la agricultura. No es por casualidad que ahora aboga por la educación del campo al campo, es decir, una educación pensada y practicada por quienes, como ella, viven en campamentos y asentamientos. La trayectoria de este educador se reconstruyó a través de entrevistas, realizadas a partir de procedimientos de investigación observados por historiadores que trabajan con Historia Oral. Lo mismo ocurrió en relación con la narración, que fue pensada, estructurada y producida también de acuerdo con dichos procedimientos, principalmente los relacionados con una determinada técnica, llamada transcreación de entrevistas.

Palabras clave: Educación popular. Movimiento de Trabajadores Sin Tierra – MST. Comuna de Terra Irmã Alberta.

memory does not depend on more or less scientific skills to operate, because, elusive and organic, it appears in groups that sense or perceive the world; the ability to sense the world is made possible when the “sensed memory” encounters the “memory of the sense” of something, always constructed through circumstances.

José Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy & Leandro Seawright

This article recounts the life and professional path of a woman from the Northeast region of Brazil who, when still a child, migrated with her family to the state of São Paulo, where she began her school life. A few years later, in another migration, the family moved to the state of Paraná. There, still a child, she worked on coffee farms and continued her school education, an education that marked her deeply, above all as governed by time in the field, the coffee fields. It was in this rural environment as an adolescent that her path as an educator began. First, and by chance, as a lay/untrained primary school teacher. Then, some years later, as a volunteer teacher for youth and adults, but this time as a political choice.

Upon returning to São Paulo, she became active in organized social movements. Among other activities, she worked in educational projects developed in the sphere of the Youth and Adult Literacy Movement – MOVA². Over pirate radio in the community she lived in, she worked as an announcer. It was on this radio that she met and interviewed two leaders of the Landless Workers’ Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra – MST), who were active in Vila Brasilândia, a neighborhood on the outskirts of the city of São Paulo. This meeting was a milestone in the life of this woman, because this meeting, as it is said, turned her life around. She left the life she was leading and began to dedicate herself fully to the MST. From that time on, her life as a popular education teacher was also deeply transformed, as will be discussed below. What she had never imagined experiencing was becoming to be.

This woman, whose life story and professional life will here be told, is Mari Alves; she is one of the occupants of the encampment Comuna da Terra “Irmã Alberta” (Sr. Alberta Communal Land), built up on land that has been occupied by the MST for nearly twenty years. She and others who occupy this same communal land were interviewed by Paulo Rogério de Oliveira Teixeira in research for his Master’s thesis (TEIXEIRA, 2019). In this study, Teixeira gathered all the interviews he performed into a storybank.

² Movimento de Alfabetização de Jovens e Adultos – MOVA arose in 1989 during the administration of Paulo Freire in the São Paulo Municipal Education Office with a proposal that joined organizations of the state of São Paulo and organizations of civil society to combat illiteracy among youth and adults. Documentation retrieved from: <http://www.educabrasil.com.br/mova/>. Accessed on: 15 Mar. 2018. In 2005, legislative bill Law No. 14.05 of 10 Oct. 2005, based on legislative bill no. 110/05, proposed by the city councilperson Paulo Fiorilo of the Workers Party, once more instituted MOVA in the municipality of São Paulo in a vote taken in the São Paulo City Council on Sept. 14 of the same year and promulgated by the mayor at that time, José Serra.

Figure 1 – Entrance to the encampment

Source: Teixeira (2019)

Both in the transcribed interviews from Mari Alves, which are preserved in this storybank, and in the fieldnotes made by Teixeira (2019), a feature draws attention: the uncommon professional path of Mari in the field of popular education. This then led to the decision to develop a research project with the main objective of reconstructing and interpreting the professional path of Mari Alves, engaging in a collective effort of organization of the orally expressed memory of this popular education worker.

For that purpose, transcreation procedures were used. The main source of inspiration for these procedures is in the research studies and work conducted by José Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy in the Oral History Study Center of the Universidade de São Paulo (MEIHY, 1991; 2006), especially in his last work, recently published with coauthor Leandro Seawright (MEIHY; SEAWRIGHT, 2020). It contains the following reflection:

Transcreation is a gesture in the face of existence and not only an appropriate operation in oral history. As an operation, however, it serves to deal with interviews and [...] and it can serve to understand what analysis is; presumably, if memory precedes oral history, transcreation accompanies the levels of verbalization of the memory in different states of expression: before recording, during recording, and afterwards, at the time of said treatment of interviews. It should be clarified that part of the explanatory potential of the interviews is worked out in *transcreation* as a procedure for handling interview material (MEIHY; SEAWRIGHT, 2020, p. 160; emphases in the original text).

In carrying out transcreation of the interviews granted by Mari Alves, the general perceptions, feelings, and observations of Teixeira (2019) regarding the face-to-face contacts he had with the subjects of the study, recorded in his fieldnotes, were also considered as alternatives for analysis. There were several such contacts and they were not limited to the time of the interviews per se. Teixeira remained in the encampment for a few days, and returned to it a few months later. He participated in the activities of the occupants inside and outside the encampment, and established relationships of solidarity and friendship with them. It is thus assumed, once more along with Meihy and Seawright (2020, p. 161):

that transcreation in oral history is recreation not of the language or of the poem but, making use of the poetic tradition, it consists of an operation of verbal memory and oral history; in the analysis,

something new can also be done [...] within the text: “transmemorialize”, connecting or not the points of the remembrances from the understanding of the collective memory. To be sure, that oral expression of the memory fails, errs, lies, distorts, corrupts, and operates in reveries, dreams, inconsistencies, lapses, elucubrations, fantastic prophecies, visions, utopias, dystopias, euchronias, beliefs, disbeliefs, and ideologies is not just “tolerable” but intended, so as to survey the subjective character so discarded by scientific positions that are nearly always transplanted.

In analysis of the spoken registry (transcribed interviews) and of the fieldnotes:

it is not uncommon for oral historians to take references from their own areas of formal knowledge or training: historians, psychologists, sociologists, pedagogues, and other professionals are thus known through their approaches that draw upon their respective fields (MEIHY; SEAWRIGHT, 2020, p. 160).

Thus, the standpoint of the authors of the present analytical transcreation can be easily identified in the course of this article. This standpoint does not simply reveal the subject field in which they were trained and in which they act, but also, and above all, the view of the world and of history, as well as the political and ideological field of activity, of each one of them.

As will be seen, the life story and professional path of Mari Alves is a synthesis of many determinations, among which we highlight the following: the desire to teach, nurtured from an early age and carried out through chance circumstances; leadership behavior, strongly rooted in class consciousness forged in the struggle for survival; the active presence of organized social movements, such as the MOVA and the MST, in the process of political formation of the working classes; and the initiative of higher education institutions, such as UFSCar and USP, offering courses of political formation to workers organized in unions and social movements, such as CUT and MST. In short, Mari Alves became a popular education teacher within a very restrained and gelatinous civil society, for it had only recently come out of a particular political regime that exacerbated state power and subjected civil society to its interests and to those of the economically dominant classes, which persisted for over twenty years.

The narrative regarding the path of Mari Alves in popular education considers different historical moments in the life of this educator, from her birth to the present. A title was attributed to each one of these moments to clarify, in a synthetic manner, the sense that the protagonist of the story narrated here attributes to each one of them in the present.³

³ It should be clarified that though Teixeira (2019) observed all the protocols defined by Oral History, especially in regard to having been assigned copyright, in writing, to the interviews he had been granted, the authors of this article also proceeded in accordance with those protocols, that is, they received that consent, the granting of copyright from Mari Alves for publication of the final results of the process of “analytic transcreation” of the interviews she had given.

A child of forced migrants

My name is Maria Alves Silva, better known as Mari Alves. My activism in organized social movements and commitment to the interests of the working classes began when I got to know the Landless Workers' Movement, the MST, in my pilgrimage through the field of popular education. I occupy an encampment and dream of the settlement of workers that, on July 20, 2002, therefore, 18 years ago, led by the MST, occupied land in the neighborhood of Perus, in the city of São Paulo, where they set up an encampment called Comuna da Terra Irmã Alberta (Sr. Alberta Communal Land). Since then, I have lived in this encampment, and I am one of those responsible for managing it. My life as an educator, however, began long before my meeting up with the MST. It's a long story that began when I was still an adolescent, even before that.

I was born in July 1953, in a small town in the backcountry of Paraíba called Princesa Isabel, at the border with the state of Pernambuco. I was a child of forced migrants⁴; my parents arrived in the state of São Paulo, away from the capital city, when I was still a child. They worked on the land. Some years after that, they went to the state of Paraná and worked in the coffee fields there. Like every child of a rural worker, I got up very early to help my father in the labor. That's how I learned to work on the land.

Student and lay teacher in rural schools

In the country, it wasn't always possible to attend schools, even when they existed. The few schools I studied at were at the edge of the main roads and access to them was difficult. Sometimes you had to walk around five or six kilometers or ride forever to get to school. As work relations in the field were very precarious, we had to move a lot from farm to farm, and that had disastrous effects on my school life, as well as on the life of the teachers and of rural education itself. But that instability of the students wasn't the only factor that made rural education into a precarious and fragmented education.

The rural schools that I attended there in Paraná were only open six months of the year. In addition to there being no interest of the local municipal governments in keeping rural schools in operation the whole year, and not even in ensuring a permanent teacher in each one of them, the children of rural workers could only attend school between harvest times, because their labor was considered indispensable to the harvest. When the school went back into operation, they went back to classes, but the extended break in the studies, along with the absence of permanent teachers, made learning really precarious. For that reason, the big majority continued illiterate or semi-literate at fifteen years of age. I was lucky, because when we got to Paraná, I was already in the third year of primary education and there was a permanent teacher on the farm where we went to work. That teacher, whose name I don't remember, lived in town, but she went to the farm at the beginning of the week and stayed there all week long. The owner of the farm was an influential citizen in the region and there had to be permanent teachers on his farms. History showed, however, that being politically influential was not a necessary and sufficient condition to keep an exclusive permanent teacher in the school of that farm. I don't know why the teacher left the school, but it then came to operate like the others, that is, every six months, in between harvests of the coffee crop. Even so, there was the memory of a professional dedicated and committed to her work, as well as the striking example of the commitment of the community to the school. Everything I experienced there in those years I carry with me even now. That's why I consider the first

⁴ Forced migrants (known as "retirantes") in the sense of those fleeing the economic travails of especially the Northeast region of Brazil.

years of school as fundamental in the process of training for socialization. In the long breaks from school activities, I studied on my own, because I had already acquired the habit.

An appreciation for reading, for example, was encouraged by my parents. When the parents themselves encourage something, children really become motivated. My mother, for example, who was illiterate, asked me to read her the fairy tale books that the teacher of the rural school on the farm we worked on lent me, in São Paulo, soon after we arrived from the Northeast. In Paraná, especially after the rural school I attended lost its permanent teacher and the school came to operate every six months, the situation at home stimulated appreciation for reading. Every week, my father brought home newspapers and *cordel* books⁵. He, who was semi-literate, liked me to read him those *cordel* books, stories that he loved so much, maybe because they reminded him of his culture, of the place he grew up in. The newspapers were folded and separated for me to read during the week. They were important readings because access to books was practically impossible under the conditions we were in.

Some years went by and the situation of the rural school there in Paraná, particularly in the region we were in, had gotten even worse. The precarious working conditions of the teacher added to the no less precarious conditions of the physical spaces where the schools operated. On the farm we worked on, for example, there was a wooden school that collapsed. The school was re-erected by the workers, but there was no teacher designated for it. The community appealed to the mayor to try to resolve the problem. It was in that context that I began to make myself into a teacher.

Once the wooden school was re-erected, the community went to the mayor to have him hire me as the schoolteacher. Given the difficulties confronted at that time in finding and hiring teachers who were willing to work in the rural area, the mayor agreed to hire me. But for me to take on classes, I would have to take an equivalency exam for the fifth grade of primary school. I took the exam and was approved. Satisfying that condition, I could start to work, even though I had no professional training to carry out the job. For two years in a row, I was the reading or literacy teacher of the children of that community of rural workers.

The school was a long way from where we lived. There were a lot of students – more than forty I think, but I don't remember for sure. Most of the children had never gone to school. Although the salary was minimal, I worked with love and satisfaction. That job was one of my first accomplishments. From time to time, I heard about comments made by those, my first students. They are very grateful to me for having given them the opportunity to learn to read, write, and count. Many of them continued their studies, and that makes me truly happy and fulfilled.

Educator and activist in social movements

In the middle of the 1970s, upon going back to the state of São Paulo, more precisely to the city of São Paulo, I worked in various branches of the economy that were not at all related to education. Since I did not have formal teacher training, I couldn't give classes. However, the fact that I was living in a poor community made it possible for me to return to the field of education. The community was at the foot of the Cantareira Mountains and did not have leaders open to assuming the responsibility of directing the political struggle of the community and of presenting their demands. It was then that I began to act together with the community, becoming one of their leaders. Because of this activity of mine, I was invited to participate in popular education practices.

Among the various courses of staff training for popular education that I began to attend as soon as I returned to São Paulo, I would highlight those offered by the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo – PUCSP, Associação de Estudantes Católicos – AEC, Centro Cida

⁵ A popular and inexpensive form of literature of pamphlets hung on a cord (*cordel*) in markets.

Romano, and Centro Cultural Vereda, among other institutions. That way, I almost “naturally” arrived at Ação Educativa⁶ and, through it, I began to participate in the Youth and Adult Literacy Movement (Movimento de Alfabetização de Jovens e Adultos – MOVA).

It was in this context that I began to act in the field of popular education. I didn’t work in industry anymore, as I had been moved out of it because of health problems. I participated in the Street Art project, which worked with needy children. I got involved with popular health care movements in the basic health clinic (Unidades Básicas de Saúde). I was active as a youth and adult educator (educadora de jovens e adultos – EJA) for five years. That was a great experience because I addressed topics regarding environmental education, which were therefore quite relevant for day-to-day life in the countryside.

Along with all that, I also worked in a community radio called Cantareira Radio in the community I lived in in the Vila Brasilândia neighborhood. This radio project went into operation under my responsibility, even without following regulations. The radio transmitter was in a very protected location. We got to the location and stayed locked up there. We turned on the transmitter and began to work, always attentive to possible threats. When we perceived some of them, we quickly interrupted the broadcast and left the location, which remained locked up as a closely guarded secret. We worked in this atmosphere for a long time. I even came to take a course to be an announcer, which allowed me to head up a program on Saturdays. On a certain occasion, the creator and owner of the radio asked me to interview two directors of the MST, who were in the community working on distributing pamphlets. I’ll never forget that request. Thanks to that interview, I got to know better the work of the MST. I was invited, by those two directors, to participate in a meeting of coordinators and monitors of the MST that they were going to conduct in a few days in a church that was near the community. I went to that meeting and, since then, I came to be part of the movement. To do that, however, I had to interrupt the work I had been performing for five years as a youth and adult educator in the community I lived in.

I remember very well the day I let my students know about my decision. Soon after the meeting with the MST directors and my decision to become affiliated and dedicate myself to it, I went into the classroom with some pamphlets, explained to the students what the MST was, told them that I was joining it and that, for that reason, I was leaving the community and, consequently, the work I was doing in it, including with them. They were all stunned by my decision and asked me what was going to happen to them. I asked them to stay calm, that they would not be abandoned and that I would continue with them until the arrival of a new teacher. That was a very difficult time for me, for I was giving up what I had for what was uncertain.

I have many memories of that period. In the community I lived in until then, in Vila Brasilândia, I helped to develop projects, like those conceived by MEB (the Base Education Movement) and funded by the CNBB (the Brazilian National Bishops Conference) and I received a small remuneration for that work. It wasn’t a lot but it was right and I was able to live on it. In the MST, the work would be only voluntary, and so not remunerated. It was the work of an activist, of someone who believed in the cause pursued by the movement. For that reason, some of my companions from Vila did not initially believe that I would leave there, that I would go out on a limb. But that’s what I did.

My life in popular education continued however. In the MST encampment that had been designated for me to begin to live and struggle, when they learned that I was working in popular education in MOVA for more than five years, they proposed for me to set up and assume an EJA class at that location. And so it was. They quickly put up a canvas tent at the back of the encampment which is now the Dom Pedro Casaldáliga settlement. The next day, I was already there with the companions doing that which I most like to do: teach.

⁶ A popular education organization.

In that MST encampment, classes finished at 6:30 p.m. So, I caught a bus that passed on the road near the encampment, got off at the community where I had lived until then, and went directly to the EJA classroom. I had this routine for some time, the time necessary for the directors of MOVA to prepare another educator to take my place. And that's what happened. From that time on, I began to live exclusively dedicated to the MST.

Under the condition of an encampment occupant and encampment supervisor, I was designated by the MST directory to go to Rio Grande do Sul and take a technical course of high school level on youth and adult education, which was offered by the Instituto Técnico de Estudos e Pesquisas da Reforma Agrária – ITERRA, at the Escola Josué de Castro. Even with all the training I had acquired over the time of my activism in popular education movements, the two years that I spent in that school in Rio Grande do Sul were a time of great learning; they were simply fantastic. When I returned to the encampment, I was determined to apply all the knowledge I had acquired in the course. I wanted to make my corn patch, raise a garden, that is, make my lot in the encampment become productive. In the midst of that enthusiasm, I was informed that I had been recommended to be part of the first group in the Ecopedagogy (Pedagogia da Terra) course that would begin to be offered that year by the Universidade Federal de São Carlos – UFSCar. And there I went, once more, to the classroom.

“It was a really big challenge for me to study for a degree in higher education”

This Ecopedagogy would be a four-year course, like the other Pedagogy courses. It would begin in 2008 and end in 2011. The first group, of which I was part, began with sixty students, and few left the course over the four years. All the students were workers connected with rural social movements that had established a partnership with UFSCar to train their staff, such as the MST, the Federação dos Empregados Rurais e Assalariados do Estado de São Paulo – FERAESP, the Organização de Mulheres Assentadas e Quilombolas do Estado de São Paulo – OMAQUESP, the Federação (dos trabalhadores) da Agricultura Familiar (do Estado de São Paulo) – FAF, as well as quilombo dwellers⁷.

Studying for a degree in higher education was a really big challenge for me, but I was able to overcome all the obstacles. I finished and received a maximum score (ten) on my final course completion paper. I owe this opportunity for personal and professional achievement to the MST and to UFSCar.

Given my lived experience with popular education, the topic of my course completion paper was about a very frequent practice, especially in MST encampments: the *cirandas*.

The *ciranda* is a different type of school; it is not a “place to deposit children”, as are many nurseries or day-care centers that I know. Above all, children need to like to be there in that place for all the time they are there. For that reason, the *ciranda* needs to know how to awaken the interest of the children, but without failing to have a purpose and direction. It is a place for play, art, and fun, but also for a great deal of learning. It is a training space. There is a pedagogy to guide the practices of the educators that perform, in that space, part of the work of the entire process of training children, whether these educators have specific training or not.

The training of the educators that act or will act in the *cirandas* is of fundamental importance. Most of these educators learn and are trained on-the-job. One of the main characteristics of the *cirandas* is in the fact of its educators being part of the encampment and being connected with the MST.

The educators that act in the *cirandas* have to learn the entire work dynamic with the children. Whenever possible, the mothers also participate in this space of interaction. The feeling of community strengthens little by little in the child. Their mothers are with them. Their teachers

⁷ Dwellers of Brazilian hinterland settlements generally founded as an act of resistance by people of African origin from the time of slavery.

(educators) also make up part of the community. All of them are there, around the child. The community is present at all times. That makes the children of the encampment feel at home, in the company of their own group. Bonds of identity begin to arise and strengthen.

The feeling of solidarity, like that of identity, is also nurtured in the *cirandas*. Such a feeling is a constant concern of the educators and is nurtured, for example, at lunch time. Mothers already know how to proceed, because we have great concern for the good nutrition of the children. Everything is everyone's and is shared, regardless of who made it. Every time the encampment receives some food donation, cookies for example, this food is for all, and all will care for it. There is no possibility for this food or any other type of donation to be only for one or for some.

The *ciranda* is very important for the encampment. Even if the child attends another school, (s)he continues to participate in the activities promoted by the *ciranda* upon returning to the encampment. We understand this to be a space that will keep the children connected with the struggles of the encampment.

The struggle for land and education here in the encampment Sr. Alberta Communal Land was the topic I developed in my final course completion paper in Ecopedagogy at UFSCar (Cf. SILVA, 2011). In the paper, I describe this struggle. I speak of childhood education within an MST encampment, of the struggle for youth and adult literacy, of my commitment to education. I explain the understanding that I have acquired about the activity of the MST. It is a pedagogical activity, a "pedagogical movement", because from the time that subjects begin to participate in the movement, they can develop and grow in the sense of improving their life and study conditions, as well as being able to provide this to others. It is like a cycle: subjects leave the wretched life they are in, raise their self-esteem because they plant, produce their food, and participate in projects coordinated by the movement, and, acting in that way, they grow and make the movement grow.

To complete the degree in Ecopedagogy and write this paper was not at all easy for me. Besides my physical limitations, as I have arthrosis problems, my biggest challenge was to have to read and understand the texts that composed the bibliography of the subjects that were part of the course curriculum, that were more and more difficult. For somebody who didn't know what an academic environment was, who had never studied in "cutting edge" schools, but that had attended rural schools, whose teaching conditions were quite precarious, the only option was to break paradigms, in other words, be much more disciplined than the others and make a super-human effort to understand those texts and the discussions we had in the classroom, and, on top of that, learn to write in a clear, concise, and coherent way that was also grammatically correct. For sure, all that learning does not happen from one day to the next. It can take years! The most important thing, though, is that the seeds were cast on fertile land and that many of them will be able to grow if they are well cared for. But for that to happen, it is necessary to be able to rely on people that reach out to those in need. That was what happened to me.

In the last year I was at the university, when I was writing my course completion paper, I met a certain time with the advisor for the paper, professor Dr. Luiz Bezerra Neto. I told him at that time that I would like to do a quality job, a job that corresponded to academic expectations. The fact that I was a woman from the countryside could not be taken as an excuse, as a veiled authorization for me to be able to do a job of whatever sort. No, not in any way. I asked his help and my needs were readily met. I received all the orientation necessary to carry out this academic study of mine. Consequently, I was approved with a maximum score by the other members of the committee that evaluated my work. A feeling of jubilation took hold of me at that time. Only people like me would be able, not to understand, but to have an idea of the extent of such a feeling and appraise it.

“Pulling my bags once more”

Mission accomplished, I left books, computer, and other materials I had brought from São Carlos to the side, burning with the desire to take care of my crop field. But I wasn't given time for that. My performance in the Ecopedagogy course made the MST directors give me another university mission, this time in the School of Education of the Universidade de São Paulo. It was a specialization course in agrarian living, something for which I had been struggling for a long time. I didn't think twice about accepting the invitation. So, I went back to academic life. I went back to pulling my bags, living from one place to another, but very happy.

This specialization course was offered in partnership with the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes. Student housing was in that school. It was a peaceful environment because that space was ours. At USP, however, we had to mark out our space, as always occurs to people that come from socially marginalized regions. But it was very good because I met up again with marvelous people, like professor Dr. Lisete Regina Gomes Arelaro, who I had known from popular education movements when I still never imagined that one day I would work with this topic.

It was a marvelous course! Thanks to it, I could return to and deepen topics and questions that were approached in a superficial way in my undergraduate studies, particularly in my course completion paper. Topics and questions that I was very eager to return to and that were open for examination in this course. I took advantage of the opportunity and developed a study on the use and conservation of native and landrace seeds in the Sr. Alberta Communal Land encampment. I made an outstanding study (Cf. SILVA, 2015).

The professor that advised me in my course completion study was a woman who was quite engaged, widely traveled, and knowledgeable about the topic. Wherever she went, she took a bag of landrace seeds with her. That helped us a lot, because we could conduct experiments with those seeds. Actually, the aim of the professor was to disseminate the use of native and landrace seeds, especially in the universe of those that struggled for land ownership, like us in the MST.

The landrace seed is strong and important for our people; that's why I defend it so much and seek to spread my knowledge wherever I go. I grow and exchange seeds with other companions. This struggle also came to be my struggle. It has become a passion. There are people that come from Campinas to pick up bags and bags of seeds from us here. There are others that come from Vale do Ribeira. We made a crop of landrace corn here at Sr. Alberta in partnership with the companions from Vale. Many landrace seeds went there.

The reflections of Paulo Freire, who I had known from the time of my activity in MOVA, just as those of Josué de Castro (2006) regarding new food matrices, among many other thinkers from popular movements, were fundamental for development of my final study in the specialization course. Besides my advisor, I could count on a co-advisor, who also helped me a lot, especially in regard to understanding and establishment of concepts fundamental to popular education and to ecological education. In the presentation and defense of my study, I told everyone it was not only mine, but of all those who had participated directly and indirectly in its development, especially the professors with the responsibility of advisor and co-advisor.

“There is no satisfaction greater than teaching what I learned”

Arriving at a school and remaining there for two hours, in the afternoon or at night, discussing and debating topics of interest to the community is very important. Debating, for example, about land reform, which is one of the main topics of the movement, not necessarily about conflicts among land owners, but about the environment, is a topic of fundamental

importance for a class that works the land and lives from this work. This is a topic that always needs to be debated, and not only a few times. Talking about production of healthy foods, alternative lifestyles, and natural resources, about water on the planet and care for water sources, for example, are topics that are inexhaustible. They should be part of a curriculum of continuing education of workers on the land. We wouldn't need many (human and financial) resources to do that, because these topics are part of our day-to-day life. There is a lot of talk going on from people about these topics, but they are very distant from the reality they are talking about. They work in institutions that are totally separated, or nearly so, from real life. They don't live on the shores of a polluted river and don't need it to survive, as we do. Therefore, we have expertise, as they say in academic circles. Where do you see and live with environmental degradation? Here, in the Sr. Alberta Communal Land. We are therefore the ones most interested in this cause. Clearly, knowledge produced in academic circles regarding ecological questions is important, even fundamental, but it is not enough. We need public policies on basic sanitation, on rational use of natural resources, and on concrete measures of environmental protection. We also need to learn to make use of rainwater and reuse waste water, for example. Yet, we can't always rely on academic personnel for that.

Here at Sr. Alberta, I already did some workshops about planting grapes and management practices after harvest. Some students came and had practical classes, but it was a passing interest. It would be interesting if there were a fixed schedule, uninterrupted work on these questions, especially those related to water, which is extremely important for all of us here in the encampment, since water is scarce. The water that supplies the encampment is captured from a natural spring and is consumed without treatment. It was channeled by all of us and the costs of channeling it were apportioned. When Sr. Alberta is no longer an encampment and comes to be a settlement, that is, when the occupation of the land is legalized, I will strive to have a continuing schedule of discussion of all these questions. That is one of my biggest dreams. Creating a permanent EJA school is another dream.

For me, there is no greater satisfaction than teaching what I learned, what I know how to do, even without being paid for that work. It is very gratifying to hear from someone that you taught how to read and write that they intend to continue studies because they learned to see its value and because they became aware that knowledge is fundamental for living in society and in nature. It is not about subordinating nature to our interests, but learning how to live in it, because we are part of it.

So, I became a popular education teacher, engaged in the organized movement of landless workers. Yes, committed to the struggle of the occupants of the encampment like me here on the Sr. Alberta Communal Land, but also committed to the struggle of the entire working class. Always active in the field of education and of political, social, economic, and cultural training of my people.

Towards a school from the rural area for the rural area

Unlike what occurs in settlements, there are rarely schools in MST encampments. This is one of the main reasons why some families have resistance to joining the movement and to participating in occupations promoted by it. In our base work with families, they always ask about studies for their children, if these studies will continue or not. This resistance is less when the encampment projects are near towns, because there are generally several schools around the areas to be occupied. The state is obliged by law to make school openings available to residents around the public schools. This is a serious problem to be reckoned with by the MST because even if school openings are guaranteed for children of the encampment occupants, these schools are generally not "from the rural area" or even "for the rural area". There is a huge difference between these types of schools.

Figure 2 – “Sr. Alberta” Communal Land

Source: Teixeira (2019)

The school “from the rural area” should be conceived and administered by the people from the rural area, whereas the school “for the rural area” is conceived and administered by public authorities, nearly always unconnected or very distant from the reality of those who live in the rural area. Since they are responsible for setting up the entire structure of these schools, they also end up deciding on structure and curriculum proposals and teaching methods. Not infrequently, these schools operate like urban schools. They end up adopting the programmed content of the urban schools. The school directors do not have ties to the rural area, they are not from the rural area (from the country). They are also not affiliated with the movement and are not committed to land reform. They are schools that do not act in a synchronized way with the reality of the rural area.

When a teacher proposes to follow the curriculum conceived by the Pastoral Land Commission (Comissão Pastoral da Terra), its practice will be coordinated with the rural area, with the movement. For that reason, we strive for the teachers of the rural school to be from the encampment or settlement itself, from the movement, because they will then work according to the reality of the child from the rural area.

I always like to illustrate the understanding we have of this question by telling a little story about a child from the town that went to the rural area and rode a horse. In stories like that, there is often a person that takes care of the animal, an employee, and a beautiful and well cared for river to beautify the place. The child that does not live in the rural area, who only goes to the rural area as a trip or outing, tends to see or represent life in the rural area in a really distorted way, because of not belonging to it. The child from the rural area represents the world in which (s)he lives in an organic way, because of being part of it. I once went to a rural school in Araraquara where the children said they knew how to care for the crop field because they went along with their parents in the daily work. They knew how to plant, harvest, and prepare the food for their own consumption.

This is the life we are striving for. It is a struggle for education and establishing people in the rural area.

I talk about the struggle for education because I have been dedicated to it for a long time. Education and school education are interdependent social practices, but they are distinct. There are differences between them, but also differences from within each of them, as I hope to have made clear when I contrasted the school from the rural area and the school for the rural area. This same reasoning applies to the exercise of contrasting education through work and education for work. We cannot allow others to think for us, to conceive and impose control mechanisms over us. The history taught in schools is

dishonest. Unlike what is told in most history books, everything started with disrespect for indigenous peoples, the plundering of riches for increasing the wealth of other countries, which occurs until now. We are the “backyard” of the first world countries. When these countries want to solve fuel problems, for example, they plant sugarcane here, devastate and contaminate our soil, our water, to solve their fuel problems. This is disrespect for the sovereignty of the country and the people of this country.

Many years have gone by since the day I, still a girl, began to work as a lay teacher in a rural school. The struggle for a quality rural school education, however, has hardly begun.

Final considerations

Understanding history⁸ as *práxis* is understanding it as a field of many possibilities. This has been the presupposition encouraging and supporting the research practices of the authors of this article in the field of history of education, regardless of the time at which one or another began to be active in it. According to this presupposition, there are no models, standards, or laws governing the course of history, or consensus regarding the various ways of carrying out research within the discipline/subject field of history. There are only particular practices of research, practices that are therefore historically situated. Trained and practicing historians that recognize, express, and affirm such specificity are not few in number, and incidentally, this cannot be seen as a “privilege” of the discipline of history. Two such historians are widely known in Brazil in the area of education: the Englishman, Edward Palmer Thompson, and the Brazilian, Déa Ribeiro Fenelon. This understanding is present in many texts written by these two historians.

The points for reflection we present in this section could be completely ignored, as they do not bring about the objectives drawn up for this article. However, since each and every human practice (action) requires (theoretical) reflection on itself, and considering colleagues that work with (or are interested in) oral history, with whom all dialogue is always necessary and highly welcome – so as to broaden the analytical discussion, for example – we decided to highlight the following two closely related points for reflection. The first is in regard to the presence of oral history in the practices of research in education and aims at circumscribing the place for insertion of our practice – and consequently also of the article here published – in historiography related to the topic-issue in point. The second highlights the way the authors of this article made use of the products of research and of philosophical, theoretical, and methodological reflections of researchers that have demarcated this research, whose results are partially presented here, namely, Gramsci (1999; 2001; 2007)), Edward Palmer Thompson (1981; 2002), Jose Larossa Bondia (2011), José Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy (1991; 2006a; 2006b), and Meihy in coauthorship with Fabíola Holanda (2007) and Leandro Seawright (2020). The first of these authors is part of a philosophical tradition in the sphere of which we have constructed our conception of the world, which is guided by the philosophy of praxis; the next two are at the foundation of the understanding that we come to have of the idea of experience; and the others are interlocutors with whom we share the same understanding regarding the possibilities of production of knowledge in the disciplinary field of history of education, in dialogue with history and with oral history.

⁸ History as the product of the relationships that humans establish among themselves and with nature over time, and history as the practice of a discipline that produces knowledge regarding such relationships.

First point for reflection: theoretical basis of the research conducted

We will begin with the second point of reflection because we understand it is necessary, first of all, to explain the theoretical basis, both of the study we conducted and of the critical reading we made of the sample of historiographical production that works with oral history in the area of education. Proceeding that way, we hope to be able to contribute to broadening the analytical discussion regarding the possibilities of historical narration based on oral narratives.

Mari Alves, the protagonist of the story narrated in this article, would likely not have become a social educator, as she became, were it not for the planned efforts of various collective subjects in the heart of civil society (GRAMSCI, 2007). These subjects are participants of a worldview (of a *Weltanschauung*) guided by the philosophy of praxis (GRAMSCI, 1999; 2001). This philosophy is characterized by the dialectical unity between reflection and action (political) and aims at negation of social practices (here taken as synthetic expressions of economic, political, and cultural practices) marked by exploitation (in all the senses that this term can denote and connote). It is a philosophy committed to political action that does not disregard the need for moral and intellectual reform of society, aiming at raising dominated social groups to the historical condition of dominant and directing forces. This reform can (and should) be carried out by the political action of a party that spreads through civil society and that has the objective of creating the policy frameworks necessary for constituting a new historical block (GRAMSCI, 2001).

The philosophy of praxis (dialectical conception of history), the basis of a critical reading of current Brazilian society and of the possibilities of cultural intervention in this same society, with a view toward its political transformation, assists us in understanding the concrete practices (historically dated) of political organisms committed to such a change.

From our point of view, it would not be possible to understand and interpret the life (and professional) path of Mari Alves without taking such presuppositions into consideration. The study showed the importance of the intellectual function of collectives (political parties, non-governmental organizations, school institutions, and social movements), as well as that of individuals (professors) committed to a process of intellectual and moral reform of society, through which a determined social group can become a directing force, even before becoming dominant (GRAMSCI, 2001).

From the perspective of analysis, the importance attributed to (lived) experience in the processes of educating the social being is clear, both in regard to (formal) school education, strictly speaking, and in relation to (informal) education conceived in a more general sense that occurs outside the walls of the school.

Edward Palmer Thompson (2002), in discussing the risks of a formal education not guided by experience, questions what formal education may have offered to the child of the worker up to then?⁹ He himself replies – “(...) lifestyle and mental habits of the middle class” (p. 33). Having said that, he presents the following thesis:

Attitudes towards social class, popular culture, and education became 'set' in the aftermath of the French Revolution. For a century and more, most middle class educationalists could not distinguish the work of education from that of social control: and this entailed too often, a repression of or a denial of the validity of the life experience of their pupils as expressed in uncouth dialect or in traditional cultural forms. *Hence education and received experience were at odds with each other.* And those working men who by their own efforts broke into the

⁹ The text cited is the transcription of a lecture that Thompson gave at the University of Leeds in 1968 in the fifth annual conference of the Albert Mansbridge Memorial.

educated culture found themselves at once in the same place of tension, in which education brought with it the danger of the rejection of their fellows and self-distrust. The tension of course continues still (THOMPSON, 1997, p. 23; our emphases).

Upon analyzing the plot of the novel *Jude the Obscure* of Thomas Hardy¹⁰, Thompson (2002, p. 41)), in this novel, does not find rejection of the educated culture in favor of experience, but the affirmation of the “necessary dialectic between education and experience”. And he inquires, “To what extent do expanded educational opportunities diminish the cold distance” historically forged “between the educated culture and the culture of the popular classes”? For him,

There is no automatic correlation between 'real feeling and just sense'¹¹ and educational attainments. But the pressures of our time [and of the 1960s] are leading us to confuse the two – and university teachers, who are not always noted for their humility, are often ready to assent to the confusion. To strike the balance between intellectual rigour and respect for experience is always difficult. But the balance today is seriously awry (THOMPSON, 1997, p. 31).

The particular experience of Mari Alves is historical evidence that this “balance between intellectual rigor and respect for experience” to which Thompson refers continues to be a utopia in Brazil currently, in spite of the very few, though honorable, exceptions – the political-pedagogical practices of some professors that were part of the life story of Mari Alves, for example.

More recently, Jorge Larossa Bondia, trained as a pedagogue and philosophy of education professor at the University of Barcelona, aggregated other elements to the notion of experience we took from Edward Palmer Thompson. Strongly anchored in the reflections of Walter Benjamin, Larossa Bondia affirms that experience is “that which comes to pass *in me*” (2011, p. 5, emphasis of the author). This understanding considers, according to the author, **the principle of otherness** (“the happening of something that is not me” – in the definition, represented by the demonstrative pronoun “that”), **the principle of subjectivity**, of being subject to reflection, to transformation (“I am the place of experience” – in the definition, represented by the personal pronoun “me”), **the principal of passage** (“a departure from oneself to another thing” – in the definition, represented by the verb “comes to pass”), and, finally, **the principle of submission**, thus defined:

¹⁰ Thomas Hardy, novelist, poet, and historian, was born in Higher Bockhampton, province of Dorset, England, on 2 June 1840 and died in London on 11 January 1928. “Jude the Obscure” was published in chapters in Harper’s magazine in 1895, and, in a complete edition, in 1896. The novel, always recalled by English scholars, such as Raymond Williams and Edward Palmer Thompson, portrays the life of a young poor stonemason, Judas Fawley, in an England marked by decadence (last decade of the nineteenth century) of the values proclaimed at the peak of the Victorian era. Jude dreamed of studying in a university. He tried to enter one of them (Christminster), but was rejected. The closest he arrived to it was as a stonemason. He longed to have access to the learning and knowledge that the university produced but distributed in an extremely unequal manner. Though he was unsuccessful, he nurtured until his death the dream of one day being accepted.

¹¹ Reference to the poem *The Prelude* of William Wordsworth (7 April 1770 – 23 April 1850), considered one of the greatest romantic poets of England. The passage of this poem, cited by Thompson (2002, p. 21), is the following: When I began to inquire, / To watch and question those I met, and held / Familiar talk with them, the lonely roads / Were schools to me in which I daily read / With most delight the passions of mankind, / There saw into the depth of human souls, / Souls that appear to have no depth at all / To vulgar eyes. And now, convinced at heart / How little that to which alone we give / The name of education hath to do / With real feeling and just sense [(...) 1805 version of *The Prelude*, org. E. de Selincourt, Oxford University Press]”.

If experience is “that which comes to pass in me”, the subject of the experience is like a territory of passage, like a surface of sensitivity in which something passes, and that “which comes to pass in me”, upon passing through me or in me leaves a trace, a mark, a trail, a wound. That is why the subject of the experience is not, in principle, an active subject, an agent of her/his own experience, but a subject that receives, of submission. Or, in other words, the experience is not performed; rather, it is undergone (LAROSSA BONDÌA, 2011, p. 8, emphasis and highlights from the author).

For those reasons, experience would always be singular (principle of singularity), unrepeatable (principle of irreproducibility) and plural of singular (principle of plurality) (Larossa Bondia, 2011, p.15-17).

This reflection of Larossa Bondia reinforces the evaluation of Thompson regarding the imbalance between “real feeling and just sense” and “educational attainments” that he identifies in English society of the 1960s. We understand that such an imbalance is also present in current Brazilian society. Clearly, in a certain way, the popular classes that constitute Brazilian society have been considered by public policies of schooling put into practice in Brazil since the middle of the past century. Certainly, these same popular classes, though evidently not completely, have had access, for better or worse, to the educated culture. Nevertheless, that alone is not enough. It is not about “opening the doors” of secondary and higher education to the popular classes, as if such a measure were a necessary and sufficient condition for narrowing the distance between one social segment and another. A necessary condition, yes, but not sufficient. This social segment has entered the educational system, but continues to be ignored by those who hold control over them: politicians, directors, and professors – though, fortunately, not all. It is as if they were “invisible”, we could say, drawing a parallel between this perception of ours and that of the narrator of the experience of Judas Fawley, the figure in Thomas Hardy’s book, *Jude the Obscure*, when he refers to the way Jude was “seen” by the students of the University of Christminster, when he worked there as a stonemason¹². Or, otherwise – once more taking up the interpretation of Thompson (2002, p. 39) already cited in this article – this is evidence of the incapacity of the educational system in not being able to “distinguish educational work from social control”, imposing “repression of the validity of the life experience of the students or its very negation”. More than two hundred years after the publication of *The Prelude*, and more than one hundred after the publication of *Jude the Obscure*, the imbalance between “real feeling and just sense” and “educational attainments” continues to be present in Brazil. The thesis defended by Mari Alves regarding the need for a school from the rural area and for the rural area can be taken as an expression of this imbalance to which Thompson refers. And the analytical transcreation presented in this article as that which “came to pass” left its marks on the “territory of passage” of those that directly or indirectly lived the experience to which Larossa Bondia refers, that is, the authors of this article.

The reflections of Antonio Gramsci, Edward Palmer Thompson, and Jorge Larossa Bondia, highlighted above, allow an understanding of the connections (the rationality) of the methodological choices of the authors of this article in the field of oral history. The identity we constructed with the approaches of José Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy and those of some of the members of the research group he coordinated for several years, such as Fabíola Holanda and Leandro Seawright, was basically due to such reflections. Thus, we came to consider oral history

¹² “He was a young workman in a white blouse, and with stone-dust in the creases of his clothes; and in passing him they did not even see him, or hear him, rather saw through him as through a pane of glass at their familiars beyond” (HARDY, Thomas *apud* THOMPSON, 1997, p. 26).

as a “transformative practice of reality” (MEIHY, 2006b), since the relationship between interviewee (collaborator) and interviewer (researcher/oral historian) is always mediated by the notion of experience (THOMPSON, 2002; LAROSSA BONDÌA, 2011). Underlying this understanding is the principle according to which subjects that are forged in the mortar of the relations established among them and with nature are fully meaningful. According to this conception, the interviewee and interviewer allow themselves to be molded in interview situations. Herein would reside, in our point of view, the distinctive mark of oral history as a discipline that produces knowledge distinct from that produced in other disciplines of knowledge.

“Wisdom” as a form of knowledge concerns the valuing of human experience so as to advance the moral sense of individual or collective life experience. As a superior way of recognizing human experiences, this learning truly makes greater sense than a simple registry, and stories gain a social sense for exactly that reason (MEIHY; HOLANDA, 2007, p. 74).

One of the high points of recognition of oral history as a learning resides in the possibility of constituting it as a category stemming from scientific knowledge, which through this learning, always comes to be diagnostic (MEIHY; HOLANDA, 2007, p. 75).

Finally, it should be noted that the interviews given by Mari Alves, the basis of the narrative presented in this article, were not taken by us (historians of education that work with oral narratives) as a discourse practice free of contradictions just because they were narrated by a representative of a social segment historically exploited by social forces that dominate and direct a society such as ours, which has a capitalist basis and is part of an intricate system of international relations of dependency. The oral narratives of Mari Alves present, at the same time, traces of a specific worldview, that was and still is hegemonic in our society and that tends to naturalize what expression of concrete economic, social, political, and cultural practices is (practices which are thus historically dated), and traces that deny this same worldview.

To summarize, we can affirm that Gramsci, Thompson, Larossa Bondia, Meihy, Holanda, and Seawright, in their respective historical times and disciplines of activity, share a philosophical tradition that questions the use of traditional paradigms in the process of knowledge production. In the area of education, we also find researchers with this same profile. Guacira Lopes Louro, for example, was one of the first researchers in Brazil to question the traditional manner of conducting research in the field of history of education.

Second point for reflection: oral history in research in education

In one of the first articles he published, Guacira Lopes Louro presents the following evaluation of historiographic production regarding education in Brazil:

Traditional research in history of education is easily found talking about the initiatives of great men “evoking” institutions, educational campaigns, literacy alliances, laws, events, and dates, many dates. But the concrete subjects of this history remained hidden: What is known about the women and men who taught all subjects in a classroom – how did they organize their classes and teach their students? What relations did they establish with the families and the communities? What did the school represent for

the small children of the immigrants in the Brazilian countryside? What did they teach and how? What did fathers and mothers consider important in the education of the boys and girls in the 1920s or 1930s in Rio de Janeiro, in the small towns and countryside of Minas Gerais or Bahia? What was the boarding school of the elite of São Paulo like in the 1940s? What was done to evade authorities and control in a boarding school? What did the big city teach migrants from the Northeast region? Did the city take advantage of their other learnings? What was a skilled educated housewife in the understanding of the population on the plains of Rio Grande do Sul? How do teachers accommodate their professional and family tasks? How is a strike experienced by men and women teachers and students? (LOURO, 1990a, p. 29).

At the end of the 1980s, Guacira affirmed that there were still many other questions to formulate and that he was convinced that “in advancing some issues”, oral history could be “a fruitful support for illuminating some obscure subjects and topics” (LOURO, 1990a, p. 29). More than thirty years later, the historiography of education in Brazil has turned toward those “excluded” from history and, in the sphere of this production, many studies draw on oral narratives.

From a quick search on the Web, we can ascertain, even if in a quite precarious and provisional manner¹³, how oral history is currently being used in the area of education¹⁴. Such a search allowed identification of at least two blocks of research studies that draw on oral history – mainly doctoral dissertations and master’s theses published in article format in publications specialized in Education or in the form of studies presented in events that take place in the area of Education.

The first of these two blocks gathers studies that focus on multiple topics and questions; however, those that have teacher training as the object of analysis stand out, whether in generic terms or in regard to professional training of teaching staff that are active in distinct disciplines or fields, such as history, mathematics, physical education, special education, and science, for example. These studies tend to consider professional training as a process, roughly marked off by initial training (school) and by on-the-job training (continuing education). Some of them, however, are restricted to analysis of only one of these two temporal markers, without consideration of the entire training route.

The second block gathers studies on the pertinence (limits and possibilities) of oral history for the history of education. Proceeding that way, they raise the possibility of debating theoretical and methodological questions regarding the recurrent manners of conducting research in education, ever since publication of the first results of studies conducted in the area that made use of oral history.¹⁵

¹³ The logic of Web searches of what is published is still little known. It is not clearly known, for example, what criteria are used by search programs such as Google, Safari, and others in the search for the information requested.

¹⁴ To carry out this search, we used the following descriptor: oral history in education research in Brazil. In spite of more than 25 million occurrences located by the search tool, for our reading and analysis, we selected only the references that corresponded exactly to the descriptor used. Such procedure was necessary because the result of the search included references that were not related or that were very indirectly related to the topic of interest. Clearly, we advanced up to the point where it was possible in our reading of the pages that carry the identification and the electronic address of the studies located, selecting a number we consider quite reasonable – around thirty studies – for what we required. This sample constituted the main documental *corpus* of the analysis, the results of which are presented here.

¹⁵ It is worth noting here some of these studies that can be considered “pioneering”. Two articles published by Guacira Lopes Louro, for example, are noteworthy: one regarding the fruitfulness of oral history for writings on the history of education of those that were excluded from traditional historiography (1990a), and another regarding the education of Italian immigrant women in Rio Grande do Sul, which basically occurred at work (1990b). Furthermore, the studies presented at the Second Brazilian Oral History Conference: Oral History and Multidisciplinarity (II Encontro

Both blocks show the conceptions that the researchers have of oral history (though not only of that), whether presented and worked with as a source complementary to the other materials of historical research (filling in “gaps”), or conceived as an instrument or tool of research, that is, as a set of (technical) procedures aimed at the production of written documental sources from oral narratives obtained through interviews (structured, semi-structured, or open). The latter is the rule, which expresses possibilities of research different from those we considered.

A single study (HAAS, 2012) stands out from the set of studies analyzed by focusing on subjects historically ignored in the production of knowledge on the history of education in Brazil, in the terms presented by Louro (1990a), and by proposing an itinerary of research with oral history guided by a worldview that recognizes and admits the active presence of subjectivity in the process of knowledge production.

Haas (2012) expresses an understanding concerning the presence of oral history in research on education that, in our judgment, draws very close to the understanding that characterizes the research practices of the Oral History Study Center of the Universidade de São Paulo: the possibility of oral history being conceived and worked with not as an instrumental practice that aims at the production of written sources from oral narratives, but as a discipline and methodology with its own constitution. This expands the understanding of the oral source and operates with concepts of truth and reality anchored in paradigms that contrast with traditional ones. The traditional paradigms consider subjectivity as an annoying undesired presence in the process of knowledge production, because such a presence would negatively interfere in “objective” understanding of the real and therefore would create difficulties in or even impede knowledge of “reality”, thus producing “untrue” knowledge. In oral history, such as presented in Haas (2012) and in the studies and texts connected with the Oral History Study Center of the Universidade de São Paulo – as well as in our present article – the final result of the study with interviews will not correspond in an “objective” and “reflexive”¹⁶ manner to the narratives of the interviewees. Rather, they will correspond to the narrative of the researcher (oral historian), who, theoretically, will communicate the synthetic understanding he had of the topics dealt with in the research dynamic. This synthesis can be interpreted as an expression of a dynamic relationship, therefore of *interaction* (and of identity, in many cases), between the interviewee and interviewer – or between collaborator and oral historian, as Meihy (2006a), Meihy and Holanda (2007), and Meihy and Seawright (2020) understand – both taken as subjects that are simultaneously active and receptive in a historically dated cognitive relationship. For that reason, we take the narratives, both those of the collaborators and of the oral historian, as objective and true, because they are consensual and shared.

Nacional de História Oral: História Oral e Multidisciplinaridade), which took place in April 1994 in the city of Rio de Janeiro under the overall coordination of the Research and Documentation Center of Contemporary Brazilian History of the Fundação Getúlio Vargas, written by 1) Zeila de Brito Fabri Demartini, on oral reports and education (professional paths of men and women in primary education), conducted at the Centro de Estudos Rurais e Urbanos (Center for Rural and Urban Studies), a non-profit society dedicated to research in social sciences, affiliated with the Social Sciences Department of the School of Philosophy, Letters, and Human Sciences of the Universidade de São Paulo; 2) Maria Cristina Guido, on gender (female Catholic education), conducted at the Museu da República, affiliated with the Fundação Nacional Pró-Memória, in Rio de Janeiro; 3) Elza Nadai (USP), Ricardo Ribeiro (Unesp), Sonia Maria Leite Nikitiuk (UFF), and Diva do Couto G. Miniz (UnB), on history and memory of teachers (the institutionalization of the public school in Brazil and the organization of the teaching profession); 4) Irene Maria F. Barbosa (Unesp), on methodological questions arising from use of different research sources (school as a strategy for overcoming inequalities: reconstruction of the schooling history of victims of racial prejudice). Cf. Ferreira (1994), who reproduces the abstracts of the studies presented in this Second Brazilian Oral History Conference. However, the production of scientific studies in the area of education that make use of oral history is numerically significant.

¹⁶ Regarding the epistemological possibilities in question, see Thompson (1981), especially p. 9-62, and Schaff (1978), especially p. 65-98, among others.

In summary, it could be said, referring to the epigraph that opens this article, that the effort of the authors of this article consisted in bringing about the encounter of the “sensed memory” with the “memory of the sense” of the story, which materialized through a research project in the sphere of which the memory of the authors (researchers/oral historians) sought to receive the memories of the interviewee (collaborator), Mari Alves. This process of reception, for its part, led to the realization of how the authors (researchers/oral historians) were sensitive to “intersubjectivities in contact with the similar and the diverse” and confirmed how the action of the interviewee (collaborator) “recreated the dynamic of understandings” of all those involved in the project (MEIHY; SEAWRIGHT, 2020, p. 162).

References

CASTRO, Josué. **Geografia da Fome: o dilema brasileiro. Pão ou Aço.** Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2006.

FERREIRA, Marieta de Moraes (Org.). **História Oral e Multidisciplinaridade.** Rio de Janeiro: Diadorim, 1994.

GRAMSCI, Antonio. **Cadernos do Cárcere**, volume 1 (Introdução ao estudo da filosofia. A filosofia de Benedetto Croce.). Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1999.

GRAMSCI, Antonio. **Cadernos do Cárcere**, volume 2 (Os intelectuais. O princípio educativo. Jornalismo.). 2. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001.

GRAMSCI, Antonio. **Cadernos do Cárcere**, volume 3 (Maquiavel. Notas sobre o estado e a política.). 3. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2007.

HAAS, Clarissa. A história oral como itinerário de pesquisa na educação especial: construindo narrativas de “aceitação do outro como legítimo outro”. In: IX ANPED Sul: Seminário de Pesquisa em Educação na Região Sul. Caxias do Sul, RS, 2012. Available at: <http://www.ucs.br/etc/conferencias/index.php/anpedsul/9anpedsul/paper/viewFile/312/683>. Accessed on: 17 Apr. 2021.

LAROSSA BONDIA, Jorge. Experiência e Alteridade em Educação. **Revista Reflexão e Ação**, Santa Cruz do Sul, vol.19, n.2, p.4-27, jul./dez./ 2011. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17058/rea.v19i2.2444>.

LOURO, Guacira Lopes. A História (Oral) da Educação: algumas reflexões. **Em Aberto**, Brasília, DF, v. 9, n. 47, jul./set. 1990a, p. 20-29.

LOURO, Guacira Lopes. Lembranças de Velhas Colônias Italianas: trabalho, família, educação. **Educação & Realidade**, Porto Alegre, v. 15, n. 2, jul./dez. 1990b, p. 33-43.

MEIHY, José Carlos Sebe Bom. **Augusto & Lea: um caso de (des)amor em tempos modernos.** São Paulo: Contexto, 2006a.

MEIHY, José Carlos Sebe Bom. **Canto de Morte Kaiowa: história oral de vida.** São Paulo: Loyola, 1991.

MEIHY, José Carlos Sebe Bom. Os novos rumos da história oral: o caso brasileiro. **Revista de História**, São Paulo, n.155, 2 sem./2006b, p.191-204. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2316-9141.v0i155p191-203>.

MEIHY, José Carlos Sebe Bom; HOLANDA, Fabíola. **História Oral: como fazer, como pensar**. São Paulo: Contexto, 2007.

MEIHY, José Carlos Sebe Bom; SEAWRIGHT, Leandro. **Memórias e Narrativas: história oral aplicada**. São Paulo: Contexto, 2020.

SCHAFF, Adam. **História e Verdade**. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1978.

SILVA, Maria Alves. **A Luta por Terra e Educação no Acampamento da Comuna da Terra Irmã Alberta**. São Carlos, SP: Universidade Federal de São Carlos (Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso em Pedagogia da Terra), 2011.

SILVA, Maria Alves. **Práticas Sociais e Processos Educativos de Conservação e Uso de Sementes Nativas e Crioulas na Comuna da Terra Irmã Alberta**. São Paulo: Faculdade de Educação da Universidade de São Paulo (Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso – Especialização/Residência Agrária: Educação do Campo e Agroecologia), 2015.

TEIXEIRA, Paulo Rogério de Oliveira. **A Educação Escolar no Movimento dos Trabalhadores sem Terra, na Visão dos Acampados**. Santos, SP: Programa de Pós-Graduação *Stricto Sensu* em Educação da Universidade Católica de Santos (Dissertação de Mestrado), 2019.

THOMPSON, Edward Palmer. **A Miséria da Teoria ou Um Planetário de Erros: uma crítica ao pensamento de Althusser**. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1981.

THOMPSON, Edward Palmer. Education and Experience. In: **The Romantics – England in a Revolutionary Age**. New York: New Press, 1997, p. 4-32.