The experience of producing oral sources for the History of School Institutions[1]

A experiência de produzir fontes orais para a História das Instituições Escolares

La experiencia de producir fuentes orales para la Historia de Instituciones Escolares

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Abstract

As a research methodology, oral history stands out in the history of school institutions, either as a research guide. In part, it allows making sources to study realities whose material records of the past are not available. This methodology guided the research underlying the study to which it text is linked, a master's thesis on a Catholic school, the Externato Santa Teresinha. This methodology helped to structure and unfold the research, as well as to broaden sources scope. In this sense, this text reports the experience of producing sources according to oral history for such research, through an interview with five collaborators who participated in the history of that educational institution. The expectation is that this text may be pertinent and important to think of problems that permeate the production of oral sources and that it may inspire others to use oral history.

Keywords: History of school institutions. Research methodology. Catholic school.

Resumo

Como metodologia de pesquisa, a História Oral se projetou no ramo da história das instituições escolares, seja como guia da pesquisa, seja como forma complementar. Em parte, permite produzir fontes para realidades cujos registros materiais inexistem ou não foram encontrados. Essa metodologia orientou a pesquisa subjacente ao estudo a que este se filia; ou seja, uma dissertação de mestrado sobre uma escola confessional, o Externato Santa Teresinha. Essa metodologia não só ajudou a estruturar e desdobrar a pesquisa, como também ampliar o escopo das fontes. Nesse sentido, este texto relata a experiência de produzir fontes segundo a História Oral para tal pesquisa, por meio de entrevista a cinco colaboradores que participaram da história daquela instituição de ensino. A expectativa é que este relato possa ser pertinente e importante à reflexão sobre problemas que permeiam a produção de fontes orais e que inspire outros a usar a História Oral.

Palavras-chave: História das instituições escolares. Metodologia de pesquisa. Escola confessional.

Resumen

Como metodología de investigación, la Historia Oral no se propuso como una rama de la historia de las instituciones escolares, como una guía de investigación, como una forma complementaria. En parte, nos permite producir fuentes para realidades cuyos registros no se han encontrado. Este método estaba orientado hacia una investigación o estudio subyacente que trata con filia; es decir, una disertación de maestría sobre una escuela confesional, lo Externato Santa Teresinha. Esta metodología no es solo para estructurar y desplegar la investigación, sino también para expandir o abarcar las fuentes. En este sentido, este texto cuenta la experiencia de producir segundas fuentes de Historia Oral para dicha investigación, a través de una entrevista a cinco colaboradores que participaron de la historia de esa institución educativa. Con suerte, esta historia demostró ser relevante e importante al reflexionar sobre temas que impregnan la producción de fuentes orales e inspiran a otros a usar la historia oral.

Palabras clave: Historia de las instituciones escolares. Metodología de investigación. Escuela confesional.

Introduction

From the 1990s onwards, the history of education in Brazil experienced a process of renewal, at least with respect to the academic scope. It includes names such as Saviani, Buffa, Nosella and many others. Among the possibilities of focus, the history of school institutions was projected as one of the most fruitful, as it allowed us to embrace ranges such as the history of literacy, which came to fit in the field of school practices deployed in school institutions. More than new approaches, this renewal of the history of education involved resorting to theoretical-conceptual and methodological interdisciplinarity, so that the writing of the history of education could help to understand education in the present time and also to understand the pauses and continuities, the permanencies and transformations, the convergences and contradictions, the causes and consequences, among other possibilities for historical comprehension. A central element in the production of this history of education are the historical sources.

Despite the possibility of having records, for example, written and pictorial records of the past of a given school that allow placing it in time and space, with subjects and practices, with personal, pedagogical, administrative, institutional relationships, etc., not always allow us to enter into the daily operation of a school, especially what happened in the classroom and in spaces such as the courtyard; the relationships between students and teachers in the teaching and learning process. Faced with this impossibility, Oral History was projected as a research methodology that, more than complementing other methods, became the guide for systematic investigations. An example of this is the study to which this is associate with. This is a master's dissertation on a confessional school whose research was based, above all, on methodological procedures of Oral History.

This methodology helped to structure and unfold the research, in addition to supporting it with other types of sources derived from contact with interviewees. Thus, this paper presents the experience of producing sources according to Oral History. The expectation is that this experience report can be relevant and important for reflection on problems that permeate the production of oral sources and it can inspire others to use this methodology. The pertinence and importance — so it is hoped — would be the outline of levels of generalization of the methodological procedures of Oral History; that is, from application to research situations similar to the one to which this paper refers. In other words, may the reading of this report be useful for the methodological practices of Oral History in the field of education and the history of school institutions. The paper discusses the process of construction and execution of interviews with teachers and students. The production process of oral sources is presented; also, the process of locating documentary and pictorial sources, evoked, pointed out and raised during the interview process.

The research context

This report is part of the dissertation *Stories lived at Externato Santa Teresinha, 1942-1972*, presented to the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Uberlândia. The master research presented in the dissertation was supervised by Sônia Maria dos Santos. The focus was on a school that operated in the municipality of Araguari (MG), Externato Santa Teresinha. This school helped to educate those who could pay — whether from the city or region — prioritizing school education with a religious moral feature. Not by chance, its importance was projected with the schooling of generations of sons and daughters of numerous families. The day school was founded in 1932 by Natalina Jardim Bronzo de Almeida, under the name Colégio Santa Teresinha. Initially, it offered primary education, whose curricular orientation followed, with adaptations, the program of school groups in Belo

Horizonte, capital of Minas Gerais. In 1942, it was acquired by the priests of Colégio Regina Pacis, having undergone renovations in 1955, when the installations, then modern and prominent in local society, were completed. The day school was disconnected from Colégio Regina Pacis in 1972, when it joined the Congregation of the Fathers of the Sacred Hearts. From 1996 onwards, it was dismembered and its name changed to Associação Educacional Santa Teresinha. As such, it was deactivated in 2008, and the building was demolished in 2011 to make way for a car park.

Even though it has operated for more than seven decades, the historical records of the existence of Externato Santa Teresinha and its operation have proved to be scarce, especially those that documented its genesis and its regular activities in the 1940s–70s. In the process of administrative transitions, not only the school archives were lost, but also individual documents, that is, not necessarily archived. Given the scarcity - or almost non-existence of written documents (printed and manuscripts), the most viable possibility of recomposing the school past was to resort to the memory of those who directly experienced their daily life at school in that time frame and could tell their history of the school. The interview with such people proved to be viable as a way to produce sources. In addition, the interview allowed us to consider the experiences of teachers and students from this school institution as important to understand the past of education in Brazil. As Alberti (2004, p. 79) said, through it, "[...] scientific research and practice are combined and produce results. By carrying out interviews, Oral History is effectively established"; or the interview is the centerpiece of work with such a methodology.

In fact, Oral History imposed itself as the central methodology to carry out the master research. The assumption was that procedures such as the interview and other guidelines of such methodology would create conditions to approach the people to be interviewed in order to be able to reconstruct, with them, the context of teaching and learning at Externato Santa Teresinha; that is, reconstructing times and spaces, experiences, discourses and practices, actions and processes, among other presumable attributes in school education. Such choice, however, posed challenges. One challenge was finding and accessing documents that would provide useful clues for recognition, identification and contact with possible informants; above all, it was challenging to find people able and willing to participate.

Uses of Oral History

Until recently, non-documentary sources had little solidity in academic history; at least, they lacked the solidity that handwritten and printed documents have. The latter had (if still do not have) prevalence over oral sources, for example. But they tend to be scarce, as paper, the most common support for documents is very perishable and fragile, susceptible to the effects of the passage of time, water, fire and human hands. In this case, the reminiscence would be a way to fill any gaps in sources, as well as to complement a list of sources to give more scope to the systematic treatment of the object of historical study (and not only this). Written accounts based on memory would then help to reconstruct and interpret the past.

Halbwachs (1990, p.53) explains the notion of memory that fits here. According to this author, memory can be understood as collective - it would be the mnemonic record of the event that occurred in the life of a group and as individual. - It would be the point of view on the former, depending on the place where the individual is in the group. Although collective memory is formed by the gathering of individual memories, one and the other are not confused. The memories of an individual or a group invoke facts that occurred in a common past, as long as the thoughts of its members also agree with the others'. After all, forgetfulness of a certain era can mean a loss of contact with their surroundings. Thus, the testimony of certain members (would confirm or deny what is already known about a

given event) can help recalling forgotten passages, because, by coming into contact with each other, they are able to identify one another and thus merging past events.

The thought of Candau (2012) converges to this distinction. According to him, memory and identity are interdependent: there is no one without the other, just as there is no recollection without oblivion. But only memory enables perceptions of duration, continuity or rupture, just as the connection between the stages of one's life only happens when the meaning of this temporal sequence is understood. In social interaction, the subject elaborates, defines and redefines his identity as a successive social construction; while his memory is the endless reconstruction of the past. Therefore, the continuous search for his places is at the intersection between the certainties of the present and the ruptures and absences of identity marks; therefore, Oral History cares more about what is common to the group, yet this does not mean devaluing the individual.

A work based on Oral History begins with the elaboration of a study project, in which memory, ways of narrating and the interviewees' group identity are linked. The project unfolds in the present time, through the dialogue among a group of people to be interviewed and someone who introduces himself as an interviewer to result in the production, in the present time, of a document that refers to the past; production of a record through which the past can be understood, inferred and interpreted; production of a historical source.

According to Ferreira and Amado (2006), in a study that adopts Oral History, it has to be the center; not a complement. It should be noted that the use of this methodology is important to study a past about which there are few material records and which do not give enough scope to re-present, understand and interpret the past. In this logic, Oral History makes it possible to write the history of those and of what supposedly does not have a past record because of a lack of documents and that, soon, would be excluded from written history.

Bom Meihy (1994, p. 52) refers to "fundamental contributions" of Oral History to validate the interview as a source, above all as a document for historical research, whose writing derives from a text that is the transcription of what was reported in the interviews. According to Alberti (2004), Oral History can be used in different disciplines that use interviews with selected participants to develop a systematic research or with witnesses of a given event or situation (the eyewitness). Thus, as a methodology, Oral History allows us to approach the studied object from the point of view of the production, in the present, of a written document that counts as a source.

Bom Meihy (1994, p. 52) clarifies that Oral History as a methodology appeared after World War II, that is, after the emergence of electronic technology that made it possible to create and disseminate portable audio recorders. In other words, the use of Oral History as a research method became possible in the mid-1960s, with the chance of recording speech and replaying the recording as needed. Being able to listen and re-listen, with the possibility of pausing, rewinding or advancing the recording, created conditions for the recorded report to be put on paper in written form and read as such; that is, read as a document.

It is worth saying, in the light of Alberti (2004, p. 19), that the product of Oral History is not intended as an absolute truth; rather, it is intended as a *possibility* of truth. The story produced on the basis of such methodology would be "a variant of the past"; a possible, plausible, credible story. As Alberti summarizes, "[...] no longer the past 'as it actually occurred', but the ways in which it was and is learned and interpreted". This seems to be valid for written history according to other sources.

The production of oral sources: means and ends

If the interview is the essence of working with Oral History, recording it is the *sine qua non* step. It is the possibility of using the audio recorder in an interview that allows talking about "document production", "return to the source", "assembly of testimonies collections", "authenticity of transcribed excerpts" and "interview analysis" (ALBERTI, 2004, p. 112). Interviews recorded through electronic recorders allow talking about the purpose of producing the oral source (or the oral document).

The use of an audio recorder[2] can cause discomfort to the interviewee. It is the role of the interviewer to minimize it. In part, the recorder should be given only the necessary attention; for this, it is necessary to be familiar with its use so that technical problems do not interfere with the interview. Furthermore, ensuring a recording that is useful for document production requires care; for example, testing the recording device first and making sure it doesn't fail due to a power outage; identify the recording: inform the place, date and names at the beginning of the recording, topic to be addressed and other necessary information, such as a type of header before the first interview questions (ALBERTI, 2004). The identification procedure is central to the process of organizing, classifying and transcribing the interviews with a view to producing a document that will be read as research data. Afterwards, the interview begins with the first question. There is a need to avoid overlapping lines, which can make understanding difficult at the time of transcription.

According to Alberti (2004, p. 121), there are ways to conduct an interview. They range from conduction by the interviewer to free reporting, when the recorder is turned on and the interviewee is allowed to speak freely. There is the mixed mode: the interviewer listens to his interviewee, then intervenes, directing the discussion. It is important to note the formulation of the questions to be asked. They have to be open, simple and direct, so as to provide the interviewee with an opportunity to explain his/her points of view (documents from the period and mentions of specific facts can help even more to remember). Another fact to be noted is that an Oral History interview is full of repetitions, sometimes because of the interviewer, who asks for more clarification on the subject, and the interviewee, who may have a crystallized view of the topic.

Indeed, despite the importance of the recorder as a form of recording for Oral History, the interview is essential; that is, the programmed and direct action that is unfolded between interviewer and interviewee. In the personal relationship with interaction, sensitivity appears as fundamental to help to understand the informant's attitude and performance and what is not said, but that accompanies the speech: gestures, posture, mannerisms, facial and eye expressions, the look, etc. Everything can tell the researcher a lot about the emotional state of a recollection triggered by the interview in the interviewee's subjectivity and that can be expressed, for example, in tears, blinks and sighs.

Activating someone's memory from a perspective of recomposing (reviewing, reliving, recreating) the past is an action that seeks to value the individual history of each respondent, respecting their experiences and their individuality. Conducting an interview

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[2]It is important that the interviewer writes down the full names of people cited, as well as words spoken which were unclear. If convenient, the recording can be stopped to ask for or clarify expressions or notes exposed by the interviewee. Likewise, the verification of unknown names, words and expressions used during the interview should be left for the end. Right after the interview is over, it is convenient to use the field notebook to write down impressions, taking advantage of the fact that the event and the report heard are still fresh in the memory. It is also convenient that such annotations are made with a minimum of systematization so that you can point out the contributions of the report to the progress, stages, themes of the research, etc. In other words, the researcher should keep writing down first impressions, inferences, associations and comparisons, passages literally converging on the research points, and so on.

based on Oral History requires maximum attention to the interviewee, as much interest as possible in what will be and was narrated. It is necessary to consider the informant's social context, as memories and recollections are open to analytical perception if they are contextualized, as Halbwachs says (1990); contextualization serves as the basis and starting point for reconstructing memory (recalling past memories in the present). Otherwise, it tends to be very likely that the respondent does not feel comfortable enough to talk about the subject with interest, willingness and detail, for example.

In this sense, interviewer and interviewee are protagonists in Oral History as a methodology. They are distinct. Among other attributes, they have different interests, functions and purposes in the interview process. But they are interdependent: there needs to be communication between them. The relationship between interviewer and interviewee takes place between different people, with different opinions. The dialogue between them will result in the interview as a product of mutual collaboration (MEIHY; HOLANDA, 2017). Thus, the due course of the process requires, in addition to mutual respect and adaptation to rhythms, the complete engagement in the reconstruction of the past, in which the interviewer seeks to deepen and explore the possibility of the memorial narrative, analyzing and constantly evaluating it. Each interview session is a unique opportunity. Even if the interviewee is the same, every time he speaks it won't be the same way.

For the successful execution of a research that uses Oral History, it is required that the researcher/interviewer has solid knowledge of the object of study, which must be derived from primary and secondary basis (ALBERTI, 2004). The foundation is important to ensure, as much as possible, that the work is successful in its stages, especially in the initial stages, when inexperience tends to affect performance time. Previous studies on the topic to be researched and the clear definition of points that will permeate the interview help to guide the steps to be taken, such as the elaboration of scripts and individual questionnaires. It is important to emphasize: research that uses Oral History as a methodology begins with the preparation of a project that chooses a group of people and the way in which the recordings will be conducted; presetting the duration, the mode of transcription from oral to written and who will check the transcription, among others.

Production of oral sources in practice

The process of construction and materialization of the interviews in the light of the methodology of Oral History was developed based on the research problem, which guided the choice of subjects and themes to be explored, as well as the dialogue with the study objectives and questions. In general, the interviews aimed at recollecting the experiences and practices of subjects who participated directly in the pedagogical routine of Externato Santa Teresinha during the period studied here.

For the first version of the master research qualification report, it was possible to interview three people: Altina Maria Barcelos, Eunice de Fátima Silva Bagliano and Chede Abud. As for the choice of interviewees, the "[...] qualification of those being interviewed" was observed, so that their speech could have the "testimonial character" necessary for the production of oral sources (BOM MEIHY, 2017, p. 39). In other words, the choice of respondents followed the criterion of *having worked or studied at the day school*. After all, their reports would be the main sources for developing the research.

Once the possible interviewees were outlined, the next step was to contact future informants in order to obtain acceptance of their participation in the investigation. For this purpose, clarifications were made, in particular, about the methodology — its purposes — and the importance of the interview so that the methodology could be applied. Seeking as much sincerity and transparency as possible, not only the purpose of the research was

clarified and emphasized, but also the respect for the informants. In this sense, it was important to emphasize the existence of a document to be signed by each respondent, not only consenting to the academic use of the interviews, but also granting the rights to use them in the form of publication.

Once the consents were signed, it was necessary to carry out a biographical survey of the informants in order to prepare for the planned interview. The idea was to obtain a minimal prior understanding of personal, professional and school life; individual peculiarities such as physical conditions to speak in a row for more than half an hour, inclination to speak willingly (engagement and detail in the conversation), tone of voice, diction and others that were relevant to the successful progress of each interview. Also, in the first contact, the planned interview was agreed upon; each respondent was also asked to provide (personal) documents, photographs and other material records to give more solidity to the process of constructing the interviewees' data and — of course — of the research.

The interview followed a general initial script to find out information about the history of Externato Santa Teresinha. Respondents could speak freely. This moment of speaking generated excessive repetition; but this one wasn't unimportant. It was useful as a complement and reiteration. Open and flexible, this script guided the most planned interview, so that it was conducted without omissions. Other questions emerged in the conversation at first, so that they could be asked later in an individual script.

The elaboration of the individual script arose from the crossing between the general script and the biographical data of each interviewee. At that time, it was possible to list the particularities of each one and what was common to the group, in order to broaden the knowledge on the subject. An interview script was designed to obtain data on the education and professional performance of teachers and student activities in the day school. While the first script was the starting point for going into the field, the second helped to unfold and go deeper.

As the environment where the interview takes place can influence the concentration, quality of recordings and time, among other factors, the choice of location was important. By choice of the interviewees, the interviews took place in their respective homes. The duration varied depending on the interaction created with each interviewee; but they lasted an average of an hour to an hour and a half of recording. It was essential that the meeting did not become tiring or boring for the informants.

In effect, closing the interviews was a decision guided by the time factor. The limit number of two meetings, the scope of the topics and themes explored were considered: if all items had been addressed; whether it was worth going back to points that the interviewee did not want to talk about at a given moment; if the subject started to repeat himself too much; if all the questions in the script had been explored. In addition, for a smooth, harmonious and transparent closure, a brief explanatory retake of the structuring objectives of the research helped to reiterate, for the interviewees, the role of each one, that is, the measure of their contribution, and eventual additions to what was reported. At the last meeting, a pre-prepared letter of assignment of rights was presented to be signed. Before, there was clarification that it was a document of bureaucratic formalization, to the point of requiring signature in two copies so that nothing could change in the content of both.

It was necessary to be clear that the interview would create an environment capable of bringing out feelings and emotions that could vary from person to person and interfere with recall as a stimulus to speech or silence. In any case, such feelings and emotions make up the whole of the interviewees' expression and could not be relegated to the background. The direct and engaged participation of interviewees in the dialogues was shown in their emotional states during recollecting.

There were moments in the interviews when the interviewee expressed himself in a way that was not captured by the recorder, with tears, gestures, features, blinks, sighs, among others. The circumstances that most changed their emotional state alluded to the memory of Externato Santa Teresinha and their professional training. The tone and rhythm of the conversation tended toward nostalgia. It was essential to respect to the extreme not only these moments – which were also of reflective, conclusive and reminiscent silence (search in memory); but as well the moments of speech, so as not to interrupt the flow of the report and the memorial exhibition. These moments were observed when the interviews created the expectation of elucidating parts of the speech that, immediately, seemed to be relevant.

If it can be said that a certain memory motivated by a given feeling — such as nostalgia — has inhibited the interviewees' voice in clarifications and recollections, for example; it can also be said that the recorder had a similar effect in the course of some interviews. There were those who, at the time of the conversation, made gestures with the intention of asking for the interview to be interrupted or to say that certain lines could not be recorded in audio. At these times, it was necessary to remember and clarify that the report would be transcribed and that a copy would be given to each respondent so that they could read, reread, revise, correct, alter, suppress, add, etc. before accepting. It was stressed that only after acceptance would the interviews be published. This reiteration brought reassurance and confidence.

Once the documental and interview conditions were agreed upon, it was necessary to define the order in which they would take place. The criterion adopted was the degree of involvement of each respondent with Externato Santa Teresinha. Following this logic, the first interview was with Altina Maria Barcelos, who worked at the school for many years as a secretary; the second interview was with Chede Abud, Maria Abbud's nephew and who was raised by her. The purpose of this choice was to build a framework to structure the research.

Altina Maria Barcelos — henceforth Barcelos — was the first person contacted in the search for information about the school, considering the possibility of indicating other people and documents. This contact took place in the early days of the decision to study Externato Santa Teresinha historically. Then, there was a second contact to see whether she could grant an interview in the light of Oral History to talk about the school, record information she had given in the first contact and add others. At first, she hesitated, precisely because of the discomfort of the audio recording. After clarification, she agreed to speak. The date for the second meeting was then scheduled. Barcelos preferred her home as the location for the interview, as she takes care of a sick sister, so she cannot be away for long.

On a Saturday afternoon, Barcelos spoke for the first time in front of the recorder. She reported memories of Externato Santa Teresinha, about how and when she started working and her activities. She stated the date of foundation of the school and mentioned the names of those in charge. She referred to the principal Maria Abbud, who served as principal for many years. She said how she was chosen to run the institution and spoke of her death. She alluded to the operation of the school, the methodology used, the events celebrated and — with great regret — its closure. Barcelos's interview not only clarified obscure points about certain events related to the school, but also gave more direction to the research developments.

The next interviewee was Chede Abud - henceforth Abud. A close relative of the principal, Maria Abudd, he was a student at Externato Santa Teresinha. Upon contacting Abud, an interview was scheduled at his residence, on a midweek night, depending on his availability. In his interview, he spoke of Maria Abbud: origins and composition of the family, academic and religious education, honors received in the city, illness and death. He told about the operation of the day school. He referred to the sale and its closure. The interview was important because it informed a lot about the biography of the principal.

Then there was the interview with Eunice de Fátima Silva Bagliano - henceforth, Bagliano. During the contact to invite her to participate in the research, she readily accepted. More than that, after answering more general questions, she indicated two teachers who had worked at Externato Santa Teresinha during the period studied and who, perhaps, could also speak: Maria Angélica Diniz Póvoa and Lêda Maria Borela Diniz Póvoa. Bagliano said that she had a close relationship with the Abbuds since she was little, so she spoke about the family's arrival in Araguari and their peculiarities. She also said that, at the age of 12, she worked in the day school, first as a servant, then in the secretariat, finally as an assistant to the regent teacher. She reported that, after graduating from Teaching school, she started working as a teacher in the city of Araguari. She remembered the years and grades attended and the methodology used. She also listed teachers and students. The exercise of remembering did not hide her longing for those times.

The interview with Bagliano was built on solidly established bonds of trust. Not by chance, she exemplified, that in Oral History, each interview session with the same interviewee is unique; each report will not be given in the same way. In fact, in the first interview, the interviewee said that she helped the teachers at Externato Santa Teresinha, but she did not say clearly that she had not worked as a teacher; it was on the second time, after becoming more confident, that she clearly said that, even though she was qualified, she never "had a classroom at Externato Santa Teresinha" because she was a servant. Supposedly, as a teacher, she would not be looked down upon by the students' parents. The interview was relevant as a form to access Bagliano's training and professional performance, especially to the teaching practices of the day school.

On the same day that Bagliano indicated the name of Maria Angélica Diniz Póvoa to be interviewed, the contact was made with her. Póvoa volunteered to contribute to the research in such a way that the meeting was scheduled for the week following the contact, at her residence. During the interview, she said that she always studied at "School of Sisters", from the first years of elementary school until the Normal School. She remembered that time with nostalgia. Her report informed that, after completing her teaching degree, she began working at Externato Santa Teresinha as a teacher, in addition to joining the History course at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Languages of Araguari. At the end of graduation, she got married and moved to Brasília, where she did not teach. During the interview, when asked about the knowledge of other teachers who worked at the day school during the same period, she indicated her sister-in-law, Lêda Maria Borela Diniz Póvoa, henceforth Borela.

Given the possibility of having one more interviewee, contact was made with her in order to talk about the research and invite her to participate. Borela was afraid at first. She said he would think about it and make contact later. And she did it by phone to set the date for the interview at her home. The initial fear gave way to the opening, as she searched for documents of that period in her personal collection and took notes to enrich the interview. She said that she studied at Externato Santa Teresinha for two years (first year late, first year early) and taught later. She also studied at Grupo Escolar Raul Soares, where she studied the rest of primary education until the conclusion of secondary school, before taking the Normal School at "School of Sisters". At the same time, she started working at the day school as a teacher. Soon after, she entered the Program of Pedagogy of the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Languages of Araguari. After graduation, she began working as a professor at this college, where she spent 26 years as a professor in Psychology, General Sociology and Sociology of Education. Although there was a script for conducting the interview, Borela wanted to tell her story chronologically, which proved to be productive because it facilitated not only the organization of her report, but also — and above all — the understanding of her trajectory.

As it can be read, the interviews took place in a mixed way. This means that at one point the interviewees were able to speak freely, at others they spoke more directly. One consequence was the excessive repetition of content, although it should be noted that even redundancy was important, as it sometimes came with complements to what was said before, sometimes it pointed out discrepancies. Each interview could be read and reread according to the particularities of each interviewee, but without losing the sense of collective memory; that is, from a group of subjects who, in their field of social practice, had experiences of a similar nature, similar experiences and impressions in relation to spaces, people, practices, objects and events that took place in the same school institution and in teaching and learning circumstances and school administration. In addition, to help in recalling details, notes were taken during the interviews (about given names, gestures, expressions and others) to help to understand the recording by remembering important information when transferring the oral reports to the written form. The recordings were recorded in digital files that could facilitate their archiving, organization and handling (listening) in computer programs such as the Word text editor.

Oral sources: materialization and purposes

Transforming speech into writing - moving the text from the oral state to the graphic - is a central procedure in the methodology of Oral History, that is, in the research described here. This process was carried out right after each interview to take advantage of the fresh memories of the meeting and enrich the transcription stage. It was followed the suggestion to, before starting the transcription, listen to the excerpts for familiarization with the recorded speech of each interviewee. The process took time. Before transcription, each interview was played in its entirety and with pauses after certain lines to check the quality of the recording and clarity of diction; to listen to the construction of reasoning until the end, without anticipating conclusions of thoughts, among other points. Then the transcription itself began, paying attention to the intonation and rhythm of speech so that the punctuation could organize the presentation of the report without mischaracterizing elements such as emphasis on tone, cuts and suspension of thoughts through unfinished sentences, suspended in the flow of the report; in short, so that speeches were not suppressed. The process of listening to the recording and typing the text was permeated by pauses to read and reread the notes made during the interview dialogue.

Once the transcription of each interview was ready, there was the step of checking the fidelity between audio and text file, that is, between speech and writing, to check for discrepancies. The step unfolded by listening to the audio simultaneously with reading the transcript. This verification confirmed names, dates, facts and references, so that the transcript would not have factual errors in the information given. Consulting dictionaries, encyclopedias and reference works helped to ensure more accuracy to the transcribed text. This is because any mistakes, surnames, codenames and nicknames mentioned by each respondent were transcribed as such and explained in a corrective footnote, when applicable. Likewise, this step took time, because it was permeated by pauses for adjustments, changes, corrections and additions in order to leave the transcript in conditions to be read fluently. The first reading of the modified version validated this condition of clarity (it also brought to mind the memory of more details of the meetings with the interviewees).

The transcripts presented the necessary uniformity and standardization for writing, including conventions such as heading, mentioning the names of speakers and saying goodbye. It was necessary to make use of certain markings to fill in the gaps, making use of symbols that indicate recording interruption, emphasis, silence, laughter, emotion, excerpts read and incomplete statements. This was required because the interviews will be published in the midst of a society based on formal writing and on paper (or its digital representation) as a parameter of what a document is. Spontaneous speech, however guided, still tends to be devalued as a

document. It is as if the condition of data source presupposes characteristics of fixity and stability, such as orthographic uniformity, punctuation, interpolation of explanations, synonyms, unfolding of acronyms, indication of dates and inclusion of complements, etc. In addition, not only chronological accuracy, but also temporal serialization is desirable as elements of structuring the content of the interviewees' recollection. In general, the preparation of scripts accounts for the form of organization of the report; even though the spontaneity of speech and the flow of memory and conversation tend to call into question any expectations that everything will "go according to the script".

It is worth returning to the argument that until the 1990s the use of oral sources was not common among historians. Supposedly, they were unreliable from the point of view of being faithful to the objective reality to which they referred. Therefore, they were not useful for the reconstruction of the past. It was justified that history should be written according to official and period documents, in an objective way. In effect, the methodology of Oral History presupposes dealing with the present time — that is, with informants who are alive and recollecting their history in the present. In this logic, oral sources can be understood as the result of memories that someone was willing to report; as verbal elaborations of experiences that entered the memory repertoire of those who, perhaps, had to tell their story and whose oral expression renews them as new experiences are added to what was accumulated and recalled as remembrance. As Ferreira and Amado (2006, p. 15) say, oral sources "are narrative sources" about the past produced in the present, just as the texts that report a given story are narrative. Thus, they would have a fictional character, an invention of a universe.

On the other hand, the reading of such sources also tends to be different according to the repertoire of experiences of those who read them. It is likely that, for example, the interviewed female teachers would read the interviews of their colleagues with a different understanding of the context from that underlying the reading of the accounts in this dissertation, precisely because their repertoire of memories is that of someone who has experienced, in daily practice, the context reconstructed by each interview.

The transcript was submitted to the respective interviewees so that they could read and make adjustments, corrections, changes, cuts and whatever else they considered necessary to sign the "Free and Informed Consent Term", which authorizes the publication of the interviews. With the acceptance of use and oral sources in hand to develop the research, it was time to reread them analytically in a historical approach and considering the subjectivity surrounding their production and the means employed in the transition from oral to written.

The historical-analytical reading of the interviews as historical sources aimed, then, to present an understanding of a given excerpt from the past of Externato Santa Teresinha, based on the story that was told by the interviewees — whether personal or collective — which is inferred from the reported context. Although it can be thought of a certain degree of subjectivity at the origin of such sources, as if it were a very personal view, it should be said that it is important to extract from them the symbolic, cultural element; which, given its nature, would not be restricted to *one* interviewee, but would permeate the life history told by *all* interviewees. In this sense, if it can be said that oral sources are distinguished from other documentary forms by their distance from the historical fact - unlike documents of the time produced for writing, it can also be said that they are similar because, from written and epoch documents, it is also important to extract the symbolic, cultural element, especially the unspoken contextual element, etc.

However, the informants of a survey based on the methodology of Oral History are also important to locate and access other documents that can be used as a complementary source. This importance was projected, for example, in Barcelos's interview. The initial procedure of going to the field in search of sources was, precisely, to look for someone who could provide information about the day school. It was known that she had worked at the institution for a long time, so the first step was to look for her in order to explore the possibilities of contribution.

This first contact was an informal conversation recorded only by memory and brief notes; the common thread was the history of Externato Santa Teresinha: its origins and facts of its history; and about places that could contain documents and information useful for writing the history of this school. Promptly and readily available, she provided important information to locate, in addition to people—it should be noted—documents and photographs that would prove useful for the development and support of the research described here. In addition, there was an interviewee who granted access to their personal files, such as photographs from the family collection of the principal Maria Abbud.

From orality to documentation: cultural history and documental and iconographic sources

Indeed, the possibility of finding non-oral historical documents to carry out the research required seeking other conceptual-methodological historical supports. We worked with the approach called cultural history. Cultural history "[...] has as its main objective to identify how, in different places and moments, a certain social reality is constructed, thought, read" (CHARTIER, 2002, p. 16–7). The reading of such reality would occur, to a great extent, through symbolic-material forms of representing it, whether written, manuscript, or iconographic, for example. It posits a "history seen from below", a history of the opinions and experiences of the people and of social changes, a history of the part of the people that for a long time has been excluded: the poor, the illiterate, women, children, black, those afflicted by mental illness and others. In effect, this story with a French bias promoted a "[...] 'documental revolution' that maintains new ambiguous relationships with history" (LE GOFF, 1990, p. 17): the sources were expanded — they can be oral and visual, printed and handwritten documents etc. — and began to embrace a particular look, in which cultural relativism is present in writing and in the objects of history.

As Chartier (2002, p. 20) clarifies, representation can be understood as access – for example, seeing something or someone that is absent as a physical, objective, palpable reality. The photograph of a person, then, would be a type of representation that makes the absent person present, that is, such an individual is alive in the memory and that motivates verbal expression, among other possibilities. It should be emphasized that the representation of the object is not the represented object itself; the statue or bust of someone in a public square is not that someone. Furthermore, according to Chartier (2002), representation can be understood as a symbolic relationship between the visible object and its moral meaning, such as the image of the lion symbolizing the income tax, which allows characterizing it in relation to others symbols.

In addition, according to Prost (2008, p. 75), the historian, while at work, started to go into the field with questions, queries, also with hypotheses, because in this line of French historical studies, history would not be a pure and simple, chronological and descriptive enumeration to remain under these attributes. "The queries occupy a decisive position". It is a function of this questioning attitude that the historian will seek and treat the sources, in order to extract the necessary clarifications to answer his questions or prove his hypotheses. This, however, does not mean that his sources are exhaustible, that he would not accept other analyzes and interpretations; who would not submit to further questioning. The usefulness of each would be, precisely, to the extent of the questioning, that is, the pertinence, plausibility and feasibility of the answer.

This contextual description of cultural history assumptions points to the conceptual basis on which the documents found were initially considered, according to information given by the interviewee Barcelos. Thanks to her memory, the name Regional Superintendence of Education of Uberlândia was mentioned, which could have filed documents from the day school at the

Rainha da Paz State School, in Araguari. The consultation with this institution led to documents of Externato Santa Teresinha and of Colégio Regina Pacis (to which the day school belonged in a certain period; it is worth remembering). The result of this search was access to information about Santa Teresinha that would be important to reinforce the base of the research.

The next step was to look for Rainha da Paz State School, where documents of Externato Santa Teresinha are filed. The school board was ready to help. To do so, the school librarian was contacted, who reported the existence of files. They were in an inactive classroom, where documents of Regina Pacis School were deposited, as well as broken desks and chairs, obsolete computer parts.[3]

However, the documents of Externato Santa Teresinha were not kept in the same place as those of Regina Pacis School; that is, the materials were found under a ramp where cleaning products of the school are stored, inside four school lockers, in cardboard boxes suitable for the office. They contain school registers, time books, blank certificates, bulletins, monthly payment booklets, evaluation form, miscellaneous correspondence and other documents, alumni records, receipts; but with no apparent formal organization such as chronological sequence. This made it difficult to consult them for possible use in the research described here, even though they were not documents relating the period studied.

The next search took place in the Public Archive Dr. Calil Porto, in Araguari, where there are photographs, newspaper clippings and books with editions of the newspaper *Gazeta do Triângulo* between 1932-1970. Photographs were also found: mass, first communion and parties, of teachers, students and the school. But they have little identification or information of the period, authorship of the photograph and recorded events. It took two months of intense research, in which different information was found that significantly contributed to the research.

By way of summary

Bearing in mind the logic that Oral History makes it possible to write the history of those and what supposedly do not have a past - the "excluded from history", the research with such methodology has brought to light stories that would otherwise be latent, at the mercy of someone who was willing to evoke them by memory to be told. Indeed, the field research on Externato Santa Teresinha projected subjects who participated in the historical process of the school and whose memories became a central element to support and develop the investigation presented here. Their memories allowed us to derive a look at their representations and the construction of an identity as a participant in the school practices that took place at the day school during the period studied here. Above all, the memories helped to recreate important events not only in the teaching and school activities, but also in a broader context — the society of Araguari — which ran the risk of getting lost in space and time, being forgotten or ignored.

It is not by chance that the readiness that each respondent demonstrated as a participant in the research can be read as an indication of the desire to tell her story because it is a very particular and striking subject for each one; a symbol of a life stage. If the school is something central to the research — it is associated with the object of study — it is no less important for the interviewees. Bagliano's account presented a nostalgic tone when referring to the emotions and feelings that recalling those times evoked in her; in other words, remembering the times

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[3] As Buffa (2002, p. 28) says: Everyone who has some experience with archival research knows the precarious conditions in which they are found. Boxes with important documents are mixed with the remains of curtains, broken desks and many mites. This is one more reason to research the history of educational institutions and try to preserve what remains of our educational memory.

when she studied and worked at Externato Santa Teresinha was something that moved her internally, that took her out of a certain state of mind because it stirred her emotions. Thus, each report was also important to tell personal stories, search for memories, organize them in a flow and let the speech flow, each one in her own way.

In spite of the singularities of each interview and of each interviewee, the point of view that was outlined about Externato Santa Teresinha was derived from a collective memory, insofar as the speeches of each informant converged on a common thread, on a historical process. When talking about the day school — physical structure, teaching practices, religious teaching classes, curriculum, commemorative dates, etc., it was possible to perceive intertwining of the lines; realizing that, when the focus was on each individual's history — confirming a coherence and convergence of perception and assimilation of school activities and daily life that is associated with the idea of a collective memory — it was possible to infer from the reports the nature of the day school as a school institution. It was a private and confessional school. The offer of scholarships had little effect on the view that it was a school that operated following the logic that selection was a sign of prestige: the less accessible to the general public, the more accessible to the economic elite of Araguari, who wanted to be distinguished in the society for symbols, like education in a school of social prestige.

However, the interviews allowed us to infer that such prestige was not greater than the pedagogical inadequacy. Teaching at Externato Santa Teresinha was considered traditionalist, as suggested by the use of the syllabic method and *the Childhood Booklet*. Hence, from the 1990s onwards, the opening of non-confessional private schools with the promise of educational innovations led to the gradual reduction of the student body in the day school until its disappearance from the urban landscape, the building that once characterized the city.

It was not without signs of sadness that the interviewees spoke of this final stage, especially the teachers who participated directly in the historical process of Externato Santa Teresinha, either as a student or as an employee. The bond they established with the school had a high level of involvement. Working at this school was a possibility associated with relationships and social contacts, that is, with referrals. Teachers, for example, were invited. Not by chance, they remained for a long time. When they left the institution, it was for private reasons. Training in the central magisterium was also required. The teachers who worked in the day school took the Normal School at Colégio Sagrado Coração de Jesus – "School of Sisters" – then the only establishment to offer such a program in the city and region, which is why it received girls from other cities.

Graduating and working in schools linked to the Catholic Church is a central element to understand and write the history of Externato Santa Teresinha, as they allude to the broader educational context in which education in Araguari was framed, especially the private one. In the period studied, the debate on education experienced moments of effervescence, precisely because of the clash between public and private schools; that is, the educational action of the government of a secular state and the attempt to reestablish power over education that had been deprived by the declaration that Brazil would be a secular state after the proclamation of the Republic and that such a state would have public education as its central agenda.

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