

Relatos de vida de professores primários portugueses (Antes e depois de 1974): Resgate da memória em histórias de vida ¹

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Resumo

Resgatamos memórias narradas por 7 professores primários aposentados (relatos de vida reconstruídos em histórias de vida), como alunos do ensino primário, do ensino secundário e do Magistério Primário no Estado Novo e como professor (profissão no contexto sócio-histórico), no período antes e depois de 1974. Usámos o enfoque biográfico-narrativo, no seio da metodologia qualitativa, com base fenomenológica e hermenêutica. O estudo decorreu entre 2019-20 no domicílio dos professores e cumprindo as regras éticas e legais. Recorremos à técnica de entrevista em profundidade (narrativa biográfica) e à observação participante (notas de campo). Submetemos o seu conteúdo a categorias analíticas e de interpretação no tempo histórico, cujos resultados demonstraram uma relação entre histórias e as reminiscências relatadas e articulação dos processos identitários (biográfico e relacional) de reconstrução do percurso e identidade ‘ser professor’ naquele tempo sócio-histórico. Igualmente analisámos as visões e representações que esses professores entrevistados tinham do ensino e da escola na atualidade.

Palavras-chave: Histórias de vida. Biografia-narrativa. Ensino português. Professor primário aposentado. Memória histórica.

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Life reports of Portuguese primary teachers (Before and after 1974): Rescue of memory in life stories

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Abstract

We retrieved memories narrated by 7 retired primary school teachers (life reports reconstructed in life stories), as students of primary education, secondary education and in the Estado Novo Primary Magisterium and as a teacher (profession in the socio-historical context), in the period before and after 1974. We used the biographical-narrative approach, within the qualitative methodology, based on phenomenology and hermeneutics. The study took place between 2019-2020 at the teachers' homes and in compliance with ethical and legal rules. We used the in-depth interview technique (biographical narrative) and participant observation (field notes). We submitted its content to analytical and interpretation categories in historical time, whose results demonstrated a relationship between stories and reported reminiscences and articulation of identity processes (biographical and relational) of reconstruction of the path and identity of 'being a teacher' in that socio-historical time. We also analyzed the visions and representations that these interviewed teachers had of teaching and school today.

Keywords: Life stories. Biography-narrative. Portuguese teaching. Retired primary school teacher. Historical memory.

Informes de vida de maestros portugueses de primaria (Antes y después de 1974): Rescate de la memoria en historias de vida

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Resumen

Rescatamos recuerdos narrados por 7 maestros de primaria jubilados (relatos de vida reconstruidos en historias de vida), como estudiantes de primaria, secundaria y primaria en la escuela primaria Estado Novo y como maestros (profesión en el contexto socio-histórico), en el período anterior y posterior a 1974. Se utilizó el enfoque biográfico-narrativo, dentro de la metodología cualitativa, basada en fenomenológicos y hermenéuticos. El estudio se realizó entre 2019-20 en el hogar del profesorado y cumpliendo con las normas éticas y legales. Se utilizó la técnica de entrevista en profundidad (narrativa biográfica) y la observación participante (notas de campo). Sometimos su contenido a categorías analíticas y de interpretación en tiempo histórico, cuyos resultados demostraron una relación entre las historias y las reminiscencias reportadas y la articulación de los procesos de identidad (biográficos y relacionales) de reconstrucción del camino e identidad de 'ser maestro' en ese tiempo socio-histórico. También analizamos las opiniones y representaciones que estos profesores entrevistados tenían de la enseñanza y la escuela en la actualidad.

Palabras clave: Historias de vida. Biografía-narrativa. Enseñanza portuguesa. Maestro jubilado de primaria. Memoria histórica

Introduction

We know that life histories offer great possibilities, especially through the biographical-narrative method, as they involve a process of reconstructing individual memory into collective memory, based on the narrated experience of those who lived it, within socio-historical moments from the past to the present (PUJADAS, 1992; WOODS & JEFFREY, 2002). Indeed, the life history constitutes an interpretation by the researcher in (re)constructing the life narratives of retired primary teachers, according to various categories. This study refers to the reconstruction of the lives of retired primary teachers in terms of their professional identity and the voice and representations they experienced. According to Goodson (2004, p. 33), teachers' narratives connect with the 'stories of context,' which allow the reconstruction of teaching and the material culture of education, while also producing new understandings of the political-social construction of their profession. It is in this experience that the teacher 'constructs the events' in the time and space in which they were lived (NÓVOA, 2003, p. 33), reflecting on how they faced pressures arising from social forces, economic changes, and technological advancements in their professional practice.

Life history is a source of information about teaching practice, as Nóvoa (2005) highlighted by noting that the narrations given are the narrator's (teacher's) account of their existence in the historical time of their professional activity, aiming to reconstruct the events they experienced while also transmitting the experience they acquired. In fact, the given narrations reflect aspects (dimensions) of the teachers' identities shaped by their experiences and historical contexts, but they also constitute learning processes ('narrative learning') (GOODSON, BIESTA, TEDDER & ADAIR, 2010). That is, the acts of life narration were converted into learning: historical memory marked by learning in action (FERRAROTTI, 2007). Thus, narratives are translations of retained experience records and often describe the power of transformations. Both history and narrative, as well as history and memory, merge in memory (HALBWACHS, 2004). Hence, the narrative text is linked to the context in the conjunction of the life history of our study with the characteristics of the objective (socio)historical framework of the time, in which their professional trajectory developed, as Huberman (1993) emphasizes. It is important to clarify that biographical life stories ('life story') are understood through the life history methodology ('life history') by the researcher, which involves analysis of analytical and interpretive categories, based on theory grounded in the triangulation phase (using documents from other sources and testimonies related to the historical time of analysis), as

highlighted by Goodson (2004). In other words, a connection was established between the personal and biographical narratives of the interviewed teachers with their identity as educators within the socio-historical, cultural, and institutional context of the time (REIS & CLIMENT, 2012).

The study is part of the MRIR Research Project and used life histories from the biographical process of 7 retired primary teachers (situational case study), focusing on the professional identity of 'Being a Teacher.' This involved using their personal biographies: experiences as students in primary and secondary school, training in Primary Teaching, entry into and practice of the profession before and after 1974 (teaching methods and interactions in education) in different historical periods. The collection of these life stories, transformed into life histories, involved articulating the teachers' individual biographical narratives within the socio-cultural, educational, and historical-political context of the time (GOODSON; LINDBLAD, 2011).

This connection allowed the individual (memory) to become collective (discourse) in a dual dimension: in the time and place where the forms of subjectivity associated with these teachers' experiences and lives were (re)constructed (SERRET-SEGURA, A.; MARTÍ-PUIG M. & CORBATÓN-MARTÍNEZ, 2016). Thus, life stories became a critical tool for historical memory and helped us build new perspectives on teaching and teacher identity. Denzin (1989) states that a life is lived on two levels: one where daily routines and tasks manifest, and the other in the realm of feelings and emotions, beliefs, moral conduct, and the inner self that is not always externalized but can be captured through (auto)biographical narratives. It is this latter world that emerges from life history, giving the person (narrator) a fundamental place in historiography through their own narratives, reconstructed with epistemological markers and based on references.

We focused on the historical arc of the period 'before and after 1974,' using biographical narratives through in-depth interviews, giving voice to their representations as students and as primary school teachers. This voice became a life narrative in the situational historical context of the time, offering a kaleidoscopic view of 'Being a Teacher,' which allowed an interactive relationship between the narrated story, life, and the school contexts they experienced (BOLÍVAR, 2014). These lives and professional trajectories are action narratives, based on a 'genealogy of context' that provides meaning or significance in historical time and gives relevance to their narrative (GOODSON, LOVELESS & STEPHENS, 2012). Our aim was to recover lost memory through the narratives and representations of retired primary teachers (life stories) in their teaching career. We established the

Life reports of Portuguese primary teachers (Before and after 1974): Rescue of memory in life stories following objectives in our study: understand the image of the school, the school experience during childhood/adolescence in primary and secondary education, associated with the family's socioeconomic situation and the social context of the time; To comprehend the training process at the Teacher Training School, analyzing the curriculum, teaching methodologies, didactics and pedagogical practices, activities, and resources in preparing to be a teacher; To analyze the career and professional performance related to changes in educational policies and socio-historical contexts before and after April 25th; To understand the daily life of the teacher in the school, including teaching methodologies, content taught (didactics), teaching materials, pedagogical relationships, (extra)curricular activities, inspection visits, etc., that is, the identity of their teaching profession; To identify the most significant phases/moments of 'Being a Primary Teacher' (views), from the present.

The teacher, as a professional, expresses various skills, information, beliefs, attitudes, concerns, and interests throughout their professional journey, during which both negative and positive events contribute, directly or indirectly, to their professional development. This development is viewed as a phenomenon of change that occurs over the years, as a lifelong learning process when we consider the person as a whole (BOLÍVAR, DOMINGO & FERNÁNDEZ CRUZ, 2001). To better understand how this development happened, it was important to look at the past experiences of these (retired) teachers, seeking to know their life stories. We used historical research (biographical-narrative research as a methodological option), which allowed the researcher to understand the memory, perceptions, feelings, and representations of these social actors.

The structure of the article is based on 5 points of hermeneutic analysis (critical and phenomenological): Historical and political context of education in the State before and after 1974; Methodological context of Life Stories through the biographical-narrative approach; Epistemological concerns in the construction of life stories; Process of constructing the Life Stories of teachers; Reflections on the representations/views of 'Being a Teacher' before and after 1974.

1. The Historical, Political, and Educational Context of the Life Stories

The educational system during Salazar's regime in its early phase, starting from 1936 (the creation of the Ministry of National Education and the National Education Board), was deeply ideological in defending traditional values "God, Fatherland, Family," through symbols (crucifix and

portraits of Salazar and the President of the Republic on the wall) and a basic curriculum. There was an increase in female teachers (feminization) in education in the 1940s and a higher number of girls attending primary education. The public instruction was based on 3 years for girls and 4 years for boys, with the intention that everyone would learn to read, write, and count. However, in reality, poor school performance and exams, lack of schools/facilities and teachers, and the deficit of teaching materials were associated with the social misery of families, forcing many children to leave school or attend with difficulty and failure (CARVALHO, 1987). This reduction in schooling (1st grade with 3 classes of compulsory elementary education, from ages 7 to 11, with a final exam; complementary education from ages 11 to 13 for those continuing in secondary or technical education) would later be altered. This education embodied a traditional pedagogy centered on the teacher and the 'unique' textbook, with few didactic resources. Early childhood education was outside the official education system.

A primary school teacher or school regent had one class of each gender, some in the morning and others in the afternoon, when schools had no more than one or two classrooms. The material culture in the classroom (teaching materials) was deficient in didactics as it was limited to: maps on the walls and a globe; school notebook; single textbook; fixed board on the wall and some cabinets, besides the teacher's desk, chairs, and tables for the students, and a ruler or pointer to punish the undisciplined. The Portuguese school system was backward compared to new teaching methodologies, being outdated in relation to most European countries, with endemic delay and high illiteracy rates, about 70% of the population being illiterate, mostly women and children. Despite the early governments having enacted some reforms for various levels of education, the curricula were limited to basic school learning, with no coeducation, abolition of complementary education and higher normal schools, and creation of 'teaching posts' in rural areas, where the teachers, the school regents at the time, in many cases, knew only how to read and write, but were required to demonstrate moral and political integrity (CARVALHO, 1987). The fight against illiteracy, considered a priority, since ignorance of reading and writing, from the regime's perspective, prevents the contamination of doctrines considered harmful and destabilizing. In the early years following the establishment of the New State, primary education was the one that received the most attention from the regime, as illiteracy was indeed a problem that needed solving. Primary education represented the appropriate foundation for the formation of nationalist values in the school system. The result was the choice of

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a minimalist educational policy, aimed at bringing schooling to the largest number of children, but without triggering new social expectations and minimizing the effects of a potential use of educational capital as a factor of social mobility (MARTINS, 2014).

From Veiga Simão's reform (Marcelist period) to April 25, 1974, and in the subsequent decades (including the 1986 Education Act and the expansion of compulsory education) and related educational legislation, the Portuguese education system transformed and began to play an important role in the democratic process. This transformation changed the country's sociocultural landscape, bringing it closer to other OECD countries. The introduction of public pre-school education and special education, the continued unification of schooling, changes in programs and pedagogical methods, and, above all, the increased access of children and young people to education (with longer years in public schools and compulsory education) completely altered the Portuguese education system from elitist to mass schooling. This shift provided almost all children with equal opportunities for access and contributed to its democratization.

Despite the substantial increase in secondary and higher education attendance, social, cultural inequalities, and regional development differences between coastal and inland areas (asymmetries) never allowed universal access for all school-age children to exceed 80% for successful completion of the 9th grade, or 65% for the 12th grade, with stagnation occurring from the mid-1990s. At that time, it was believed that education should be tailored according to social status to fulfill one's role in society, with values such as simplicity and humility being emphasized. Thus, primary education was seen as a means to "revitalize" one's place in the social order, in an integrative dimension. In this context, the Education Act outlined the following structure: Primary Education- Elimination of the transitional regime from the 1st to the 2nd learning phase, progressive extinction of all complementary preparatory courses (except those operating under pedagogical experimentation), provided that students could be integrated into direct education, along with the introduction of new programs (1978-79). Secondary Education -The 8th and 9th grades were part of the unified general course, while the complementary course of unified education was organized into 5 areas, integrating a common core of subjects with specific and vocational components. The complementary course (10th and 11th grades), created in 1978, continued from the general course, providing vocational training in the chosen area with a view to further studies.

Higher Education -Resumed diversification in 1977, creating short-cycle higher education aimed at training technical specialists and higher and intermediate-level education professionals (MARTINS, 2014).

2. Methodological Context of Life Stories – Biographical-Narrative Approach

The biographical-narrative approach to life stories of teachers emerged after the hermeneutic turn, establishing itself as a specific research perspective within qualitative methodology concerning the lifeworld: the teaching profession. The new potential of narrative text and discourse, in this recent narrative turn, highlighted the discursive dimension of individuality, ways of experiencing, and meanings of the lifeworld ('lebenswelt' of Husserl) through narrative language (GOODSON, 2012). We based our study on the relationship between life narratives in their contexts, focusing on the voices and representation of the primary teaching profession.

According to Ferrarotti (2007), it is necessary to link the text and context, i.e., to combine the life story with the contextual characteristics within the objective socio-historical framework where this life story developed. Igor Goodson (1995) emphasizes the relevance of understanding the interrelationships between the contextual structure and the agent, noting that life narratives refer to life singularities and times that reflect the social collective, allowing us to read a society through biographical narratives. The interaction between the agent (narrator) and the external structure is transactional, as Ferrarotti (2007) describes a reciprocal conditionalism where the agent operates within a contextual framework, an essential premise in analyzing and understanding life stories. We recognize that narration stems from the public space and a social (historical and political) environment that is not solely the agent's, but is contextualized or situated, explicitly or implicitly (BOLÍVAR, DOMINGO & FERNÁNDEZ CRUZ, 2001). In other words, the narrative has both individual and institutional histories within the socio-historical context of educational and professional experiences and learning (BIESTA et al., 2011). The lives and contexts of the interviewed teachers were 'interwoven' with each other, creating a crucial interactive relationship between the lives of these 7 teachers, their perceptions, pedagogical experiences, contexts, and historical and social events (GOODSON, 2001). The focus of life stories is personal reality and the biographical-narrative process, with historical interest for substantive reasons (professional knowledge) and epistemological

Life reports of Portuguese primary teachers (Before and after 1974): Rescue of memory in life stories and political reasons (teachers' voice in the right to be represented) (BOLÍVAR, 2014). Thus, the aim of the life story is to produce the narrated life and shape the primary teacher's professional identity (NÓVOA, 2005).

3. Epistemological and Methodological Concerns in Life Stories

The creation of life stories for 7 retired primary school teachers presented significant challenges. We encountered four key issues in the interplay between narration and interpretation during the (re)construction of these teachers' life stories:

(1)- Concerns about the Fidelity of the Life Narrative (Filters) and the Credibility of the Narrator: This involved the authenticity of the teacher's life story (credibility), where we, as co-writers of these life stories, faced different positions those of the narrator, the listener, and our own interpretative biases. Who sets the limits on the other's story, especially when this story intertwines with our own experience of being a teacher? Fidelity and credibility do not aim to conceal objectivity but to offer a review and interpretation from the perspective of the other and others, respecting their life story (narrative referentials).

(2)- The Reconstruction or Transformation of Life Narratives into Life Stories: This process requires dialogue with the history of education, situational context (socio-historical), narrative versions of the historical moment in which the life story is situated, educational policy, and cultural landmarks. A life story transcends the individual, leading us to analyze, understand, and rediscover a past era, perspectives on the teaching profession, the role of women in primary education, and the extent to which the researcher allowed the history to follow its own narration. The limit was the focus of the study; the more comprehensive and contextual understanding of the narrated story, the broader the processes of constructing the teaching profession. In other words, understanding the socio-historical era, recovering the memory of being a teacher whose professional identity was shaped within a political-ideological, social, and cultural framework, where the role of women was predetermined in this profession?

The limit was the focus of the study; by reconstructing these identities, and the more thoroughly we understood the contextual framework of the narrated story, we could generate broader processes

of constructing the teaching profession itself. In other words, understanding the socio-historical era, recovering the memory of being a teacher whose professional identity was shaped within a political-ideological, social, and cultural framework, where the role of women had a predetermined place in this profession allowed for a more comprehensive analysis and construction of the teaching profession.

(3)- Several concerns arose during the construction of life stories as narrative texts: How do we build a life story that respects the life of the individual who narrated it, and that can be read as more than just a simple chronological account of events?

We decided to base the life story argumentation on 'evidences' or records of relevant narrative clues. Methodologically, the interviews with the teachers were interesting as they involved a back-and-forth approach, which revealed a complex and intriguing dialectic. The teachers focused on 'moments' that combined the present and past issues with current ones. Thus, we followed a 'temporal' and 'situational' sequence in the construction of the life story (interview topics): primary school students, secondary education, and primary teaching training; and then as a teacher (professional identity) in the practice of their teaching profession. It was a comprehensive narrative, telling the story from the beginning through an ascending and descending movement, considering the historical time and lived experiences as students and in their profession. We were concerned with capturing from the narrative the appropriate interpretation for the (re)construction of these primary school teachers' life stories.

(4)- The interpretation of the narrated text, or life story, from the research objectives was not just about interpreting the histories of the seven interviewees by reconstructing their lives to understand the complex process of professional identities. These identities changed (before and after April 25th) or varied according to context, or were static or continuous at many moments, but they flowed with historical time. Each interviewee was a co-author of their accounts and participated in the interpretation processes (Huberman, 1993). This led to the development of narrative analysis categorization, knowing that the interviewees did not take part in this discussion (intersubjectivity) and gave us free rein for the interpretation performed. This aspect allowed us to open other dialogue avenues for the interpretation process, with historical grounding. The diversity of logics (the logic of primary teachers during the Estado Novo period and after 1974), their direct pedagogical experience in the classroom, the schools where they practiced, and the logic of the researcher with their processes

Life reports of Portuguese primary teachers (Before and after 1974): Rescue of memory in life stories of abstraction and understanding, constituted a challenge for a shared interpretation. This challenge is reinforced by the versions of the interviewed teachers regarding their role, place, and position as teachers at the historical moment.

4. (Re) construction of Life Histories: Categorical Methodology and Evidence

We adopted a qualitative research paradigm, utilizing a case study approach (exploratory, analytical, and interpretative), focusing on the life narratives of retired primary school teachers (sample N=7) who experienced school, teaching, and their profession before and after April 25, 1974. This methodology reflects a kind of dialogue between the researcher and the study subjects, as they were not approached neutrally (Bogdan & Biklen, 1999). Narrative biography—life stories—is a highly valuable technique in social sciences, as it consists of representations of personal life experiences. According to Vidigal (1996), oral testimonies obtained through interviews can be explored and interpreted within the educational time and space they are embedded in. Transporting ourselves to a past time and historical events in education and the professional journey (identity) of the 'teacher in other times' allows us to relive a process of metamorphosis in the representations of the narrator as they reconstruct the memory of the past (Pujadas, 1992). The life stories enabled us to understand primary school teachers both as professionals and individuals, in a historical approximation to concrete reality, based on the narrated accounts of the time, the reconstitution of lived and acquired events. Methodologically, the study, conducted between late 2019 and early 2020, was guided by phases based on dialogue (narrative interviews) and the stated objectives. Let us review these methodological phases of the study's design (application period between 2019-2020):

1st Preparatory Phase. This phase involved obtaining contact information for teachers, arranging and formalizing invitations with an explanation of the study's objectives and purposes, and detailing the intentions for the (re)construction of teaching identity. It also included outlining the interview topics, setting the date and norms, and providing a protocol and consent form for the interviewees to sign.

2nd Phase -Fieldwork. This phase involved conducting in-depth interviews, which were audio-recorded in the interviewees' homes. The interviews were conducted as open dialogues, considering historical, social, and cultural references, while adhering to the sequence of topics, establishing good

rapport, and taking field notes (participant observation). Narrative interviews are one of the most utilized tools in educational research, allowing information to be gathered through the dialogic relationship between two or more people and facilitating understanding (BOGDAN & BIKLEN, 1999). This approach enabled us to delve into the teachers' professional journeys, their experiences, and the various valuations of being a teacher in different school contexts, thus assuming an interactive character (REIS & CLIMENT, 2012). Although there were initial topics, questions emerged from the interplay of past, present, and future, differentiating the times while acknowledging the continuous interrelation in life and professional trajectory. We paid close attention to the narrative provided, offering signs of understanding and encouragement for the (re)construction of the narrated memory, intervening as minimally as possible to avoid disrupting the flow of thought. Each interview lasted between two and a half to four hours, depending on the interviewee's availability to express, recall, and relive the historical context.

3rd Phase- Analytical and Interpretative. This phase involved transcribing the narratives and constructing the life stories based on content analysis, establishing coding and categorization (analytical categories/subcategories), with evidence drawn from text segments. This was followed by interpretation through triangulation using grounded theory and field notes (participant observation). Recording the interviews allowed us to transcribe the entire content of the subjects' narrative speeches, facilitating the adaptation and coding of the collected data for analysis. The field notes for each interviewee aided in interpreting the narrated representations and the identity of being a teacher, as illustrated in the record for E1:

Field Notes Record of the Narrative – Interview with E1

The interview took place at the teacher's home, specifically in a room that served as her "mini-library," where she kept all her didactic materials from her student days to her teaching career. This space was filled with books and teaching materials from her profession. E1 chose to have the interview by the window, where there was a table and a chair. She made us comfortable by inviting us to sit on the sofa and said, "I sit in the chair because I prefer it; I have always been used to chairs." From the very beginning, she was very enthusiastic about the fact that we wanted to interview her and that it would be useful for historical memory and the field of primary education

Thus, during our first visit, she requested that we provide her with the topic of our work and the objectives we aimed to achieve with the questions we would ask. When we visited her home in November/December 2019 and January 2020 to conduct the interview, E1 was very comfortable and, having prepared in advance, first wanted to discuss with us to confirm whether she understood the purpose and if that was indeed what we intended. During this discussion, she provided us with some additional information for the interview, such as:

- She began by giving a general overview of the educational and professional journey, and then emphasized a particular school year;
- She mentioned that even before becoming a professional teacher, she received numerous compliments for her students' excellent learning outcomes and high grades;
- She noted that throughout her teaching career (both before and after becoming a professional), she only had four student failures;
- She always planned her lessons both short-term and long-term, with all lesson plans and teaching materials created by her;
- Classes started at 9 a.m., but she arrived between 8 and 8:30 a.m. to better prepare her materials and her day's work;
- She emphasized that in teaching reading and writing, she began with vowels, then diphthongs, and finally consonants, starting with the letter P;
- She had a unique pedagogical methodology, encouraging students to observe facts to better understand them, thus introducing the concept of interdisciplinarity, though she was not fully aware of it at the time;
- The book she used for her primary training was the same as the one used in the 2nd grade during her teaching;
- She spoke about some teaching methods she used that were innovative for their time;

Throughout the interview, E1 was very comfortable with herself but also very meticulous to avoid any mistakes. She used typical gestures of her profession, explaining things as she spoke. We understood that she was an innovative, creative, adventurous, and fearless teacher (she volunteered to teach in Madeira in her first year after formalizing her profession). This was evident not only from how she described her life experiences but also from the way she narrated them. The teacher was very pleased to talk about what she loved most and the joy it brought her teaching and her students so much so that she became emotional several times. However, her emotion was most apparent when she discussed the success of her teaching methods and the good grades of her "children." We also sensed a deep sense of nostalgia for her teaching years.

The interviewees were coded (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, and E7) and characterized using a respondent profile sheet (6 females and 1 male) and an audio recording sheet. All interviewed teachers validated their narratives, with some additions or clarifications of information. We maintained the confidentiality of the information provided, ensuring anonymity and that data were used solely for the study's dissemination.

In the content categorization process of the narratives, we established categories and subcategories for the 5 periods of narrative analysis: the image of primary school (10 subcategories: the school, teaching, teacher, activities, subjects, teaching materials, punishments, exams, class sizes, and recesses); secondary education (9 subcategories: school, teaching, teachers, activities, subjects, teaching materials, punishments, exams, and recesses); the Primary Teaching Course (10 subcategories: origins of becoming a teacher, the school, teaching, curriculum, teaching materials, teachers, pedagogical practices, teacher profile, training duration, and activities); the practice of teaching before and after April 25 (13 subcategories: competencies, first classes, contact with students, duties, schools where taught, teaching materials, teaching methods, classes, pedagogical relationship, exams/assessment, and activities); and the perception of current education and schools (6 subcategories: whether it was worth being a teacher, advice, if they would choose the profession again, memories/nostalgia, and the future of teaching). The interviewed teachers recalled their lived experiences (representations in context) and produced straightforward narratives, reflecting on the historical time of their professional lives. Their images and evoked memories were contextualized in

Life reports of Portuguese primary teachers (Before and after 1974): Rescue of memory in life stories the temporal transfer from past to present (HALBWACHS, 2004). This recollection and revival of the past led them to construct narratives imbued with sensations, perceptions, and emotions in their language. Each narrated story was linked to the subject of the action, creating both a personal identity and a unique narrative identity (RICOEUR, 1987).

1st Category: 'Image of Primary School'. The interviewees depicted primary schools during the Estado Novo as very poor and with limited teaching conditions: “It was a school with no proper construction” (E2); “The school differentiated between male and female” (E1); “Generally, primary school teachers were women, an evident feminization in education, to be integrated into the community” (E1, E3, E6); “They were strict teachers, they punished the students a lot” (E7); “austere” (E5) and “inhuman” (E4), using the five-eyed ruler and the donkey ears to punish for everything and nothing” (E3). E5’s narration is particularly notable: “And right in the first year, the teacher made me teach the others. At six years old (...). So, I would be given the stick to punish my classmates. But I was 6 years old, the others were older, they were already adults.” Furthermore, teaching was “very theoretical and many punishments were applied” (E6), or “(...) harsh, they demanded a lot from students, there were no indulgences, we were punished and beaten when we misbehaved or didn’t do our homework” (E4). School activities were limited to: “Arithmetic and problems” (E1); “Dictation, copying, reading, reciting multiplication tables, continental and overseas geography” (E2); “Sentences, conjunctions, prepositions, and also history, from Afonso Henriques to the establishment of the Republic (1910), where there were manual labor tasks, mathematics, problems with at least 3 operations, denominator reductions, fractions” (E4). The teaching materials used were “Textbooks, notebooks, and the infamous slate” (E1, E2); “It was very rudimentary” (E5); “(...) reading book, slate, multiplication tables, notebook for copying and writing” (E6); “The teaching material, besides the geometric solids that every school had, practically did not exist” (E3); “None, only books, maps, globe, metric box” (E4).

2nd Category – ‘Secondary Education’. The interviewees noted: “It was very demanding in terms of knowledge and very theoretical” (E1); “Like primary education, it was bookish and theoretical” (E2, E5); “We had to pass admission exams” (E1, E4, E6). Most of the interviewees recalled some of their teachers, and even when they did not remember names, they could recall their appearances. School activities included: “Listening to the teacher and taking notes to retain and clarify various concepts” (E7); “Full schedules” (E1, E5) “The schedules were not enough to prepare

exercises (tests) or the subjects where the teacher had scheduled individual oral assessments” (E3); but in general “We had to study compulsively” (E2, E6); “Sometimes we were called upon to answer questions to check if we were keeping up with the material” (E4). We observed from the interviewees' narratives a common preference for Mathematics or Sciences. Interviewee E5 stated:

“After finishing primary school, I enrolled at the Liceu de Lamego, where I remember having Portuguese, English, Geography, Mathematics, French, Natural Sciences, History, Drawing, Choir, Manual Work, and Religion and Morals. I took an admission exam to enter the Primary Teaching School in Castelo Branco, but I was not happy about it as my goal was to be closer to home (...)”

Regarding educational materials, it was common to use 'books and notebooks (notes).' Teachers practiced school punishments, though some said they were less severe, including "expulsions for bad behavior" (E1, E2, E7) and/or "being sent outside during class" (E4, E5).

3rd Category: 'Training in Primary Teaching'. The interviewed teachers described the Magistério period as follows: the schools were referred to as “buildings, sometimes degraded” (E2); the teaching was “like all previous education, bookish and theoretical” (E3, E5), though “in the last year, there were practical classes in annex schools” (E2); “The teachers taught well” (E3, E7); the study plan was “rigid, with many subjects that had to be covered. In the first year, exams were held in February, and then until June, we did internships with students” (E6), and “at the end of the internship, we had a state exam, where professors from Coimbra came to evaluate us; we could either lower, raise, or keep the grade given by the teacher” (E4). Regarding 'Being a teacher,' this inclination or vocation was instilled by the family: “My mother instilled in me the love for teaching” (E1), “With the living and fruitful example I had in my family and the natural and human environment where I grew up... it would have been difficult to have followed another path” (E1), “It was a calling to be a teacher. I loved the school and worked with professional seriousness. I dedicated myself to teaching and my students” (E3). On the other hand, E4 mentioned that “since childhood I wanted to be a teacher” or that this tendency for teaching came from a (good) teacher they had (E5).

The curriculum of the time included “purely theoretical lessons, with all subjects being covered, usually according to the guidelines of Pedagogy and Didactics” (E2) and subjects such as “Portuguese, didactics, psychology, drawing, gymnastics, manual work, choral singing, and moral education” (E4, E5). Almost all the interviewees highlighted that the teaching materials were created

Life reports of Portuguese primary teachers (Before and after 1974): Rescue of memory in life stories by them or “developed by teachers and students according to the subjects” (E1); “Maps, created by us for systematic classification, aimed at developing the Psychological and Didactic Profile of a student” (E4); “Materials prepared by the teachers themselves and by us students, as required by the subject and practice” (E3); and also “Just the books” (E1, E5, E6). Some noted the presence of common teachers in the Primary Teaching program (E3, E6, E7). All confirmed that the training duration was 2 years of *Magistério* with pedagogical practices in an annex school.

Category A: 'Being a Teacher - Profile Before 1974'. The teachers considered that the profession had a prominent role in the system, with a reputation recognized during the Estado Novo period: “A teacher was a highly respected person whom people turned to whenever they didn’t know something” (E1); “Teachers were diligent, with few material and human resources. The programs were very extensive” (E2); “The teacher was a respected figure in society, who needed to be well-trained as they were consulted and asked for help with all sorts of problems in the villages” (E3). Indeed, these primary teachers, in the context of the Estado Novo, reflected on many difficulties, being their first autonomous moment in their chosen profession: “I was a bit apprehensive, but I had confidence and knew I could teach well and had good teachers myself, being in my own village also gave me some confidence” (E1); “Today, I gave students a worksheet with exercises that I knew most of them would answer correctly” (E5), “I wanted to give excellent grades” and motivate them with encouraging messages (E4); “I still smile when I think of their expressions when they saw their grades. Some couldn’t even believe it!” (E7); “My classroom seems like a counseling office. At break time, students line up outside the door waiting for their turn to talk to me” (E3); “Often, students have nothing special to share, they just want to talk about anything... with me” (E1); “Other times, they want to talk about other kids who hit them, problems at home, or issues in the classroom. They share family episodes of little importance” (E6).

They indicated that inspections were quite irregular, as E5 noted: “They were more frequent in places where there were doubts about irregularities. School administrations controlled school life through final results and information from the community.”

Many of these teachers still maintain some contact with former students: “Yes, I do, many from all the towns where I worked. I left behind godchildren, godparents, and friends” (E4). At that time, primary school teachers had very specific and significant roles: “I was a school principal, deputy, and school delegate” (E2). They mentioned that classes had many students (“They were huge” -E1, E5,

E6) and there was a general consensus on the use of educational materials; most said that the school had: “The map of continental Portugal, the world map, and the map of the colonies existing at the time” (E1, E7), “The metric box, books, and the globe” (E4, E5). However, E3 highlighted: “More than material resources, the educational success of children and youth depends on stable teaching staff and the motivation of teachers. On school projects that unite teachers and value the participation of students and assistants in their implementation.”

It is worth noting that the pedagogical relationship was quite affectionate and demanding at the time. Some of these teachers showed a sense of mutual support towards students, especially those who were in need, poor, or struggling with learning: “I even gave some students lunches because I realized they didn’t have much to eat at home” (E1), in addition to sharing activities: “I sometimes played with them outside and helped with manual work inside the classroom” (E4). Regarding the teaching model, the interviewees followed the official guidelines (program and official book); however, one of them deviated from this norm: “...except that I deviated from this guideline and never used, for example, the standard book for the first grade. I used the *‘Álbum Infantil’* or followed this method when I started using the printed book at school” (E2).

Category 4B: ‘Being a Teacher - Profile After 1974’. The professional performance of these teachers changed after 1974 due to the democratization and reform of education, as well as educational and organizational changes in schools, teaching methodologies, and curricular activities, making schools democratic and mass-oriented. “After April 25th, the state began to provide support to schools; before that, it was up to parents to help, and this continued for many years. With the democratization of education, many aspects improved for the benefit of students” (E2). “After April 25th, changes were made in months that should have taken decades. Some improvements were for the better, others for the worse” (E3). “More schools were created, existing conditions improved, salaries were increased, and the number of students per class decreased. It was a period of change” (E6).

Education became the center of the democratic process after 1974, altering the country’s socio-cultural landscape. The education system became more liberal and aligned with students’ interests, with an extension of compulsory education to 9 years. Preschool and special education were introduced, continuing the unification of education, and there were curricular changes (programs) and pedagogical methods introduced, in response to the massification of public schooling and the

Life reports of Portuguese primary teachers (Before and after 1974): Rescue of memory in life stories educational system reform with the 1986 Basic Law. Simultaneously, schools adopted democratic management, leading to a policy of decentralization and an increase in the number of primary schools across the country.

Significant moments in the careers of these 7 teachers were marked by pedagogical innovations and teacher training, providing opportunities to expand knowledge, methodologies, and teaching strategies: “After April 25th, I was able to completely distance myself from the officially prescribed method” (E5), and we began to “Combine school activities with extracurricular ones” (E1). E5's narrative is particularly expressive when referring to the post-1974 period:

(...) there was more freedom (...); the children were interested in school (...); (...) the school newspaper was one of the wonderful things at Escola do Pendão. We managed to get a reprographic machine with the profits from the money the children earned from their performances and from selling the newspaper, because we sold the newspaper at the station (...). The newspaper and school parties allowed us to buy a duplicating machine and a photocopier (...)” (E5)

During this historical period, the interviewees placed great importance on collaboration with the families or parents of the students, as indicated by E2: "The involvement of the entire community, including parents. For example, at one of the end-of-year parties, which was always open to the entire community, we opened the classrooms in the last two years".

Or, as the very enlightening statement by E7:

But the greatest involvement I had from parents was after April 25th. They invited me to organize a party; there had never been a school party before. I brought my orchestra, and another teacher brought the folk group. We organized a very fun party, always a true feast, and we invited the parents. We went there, and the children really enjoyed it.

5th Category: "View of Education Since Retirement". When reflecting on their current view of education/teaching, the interviewees offered different perspectives. Although all of them felt that their professional choice as teachers was worthwhile in the context in which it developed, they struggled to align with the rapid evolution of the educational system and the methods of educating/teaching new generations. As a result, most of them exhibit a certain degree of negativity towards contemporary education, describing it as "deficient" (E3), unless there is a "revolution" (E1).

Professor E2 stated: "Unless there is the courage to completely sweep away synthetic and theoretical methods, to recognize the school we have and seek the school we want." Despite this, they all cherish numerous memories: "I have beautiful memories that would make a great book" (E3), and they unanimously agree that they would choose the teaching profession again. However, E4 mentions that they would not currently recommend following the same path "due to the lack of respect between parents and teachers." It is also worth noting the opportunity they had to reminisce about their professional experience and pedagogical practices (IMBERNÓN, 2005), including a noteworthy quote from E7:

There were days when I felt an immense longing to be back in my classroom, to share with my students their world of play and smiles, often overshadowed by the sadness of some of their experiences. Receiving letters, responding to them, being surprised with a flower, returning that hug—the hug given to someone deeply loved and who already has a special place in our heart. There remains a sense of longing, the longing of leaving behind a piece of oneself that cannot be reclaimed. I will carry with me every moment, every funny phrase, and every hope I saw in the faces of my boys and girls.

Or, as E4 stated on the day they retired and ended their teaching career:

(...) Today, I felt that I closed the door of my classroom for the last time. It is empty. I sorted out the students' files and felt that it was the end of this chapter. I cried, feeling a tremendous tightness in my chest because I know I still had much to give to these students. Now, that the end has come, I feel like I left the work unfinished, that I needed more time... I left with the sense that a part of me stayed behind, and this will always be the school where I began the journey of what I know to be my calling.

Memories and recollections lost in the context of their profession and school, but still vivid in the present time (evocation), through biographical narration and nostalgia of 'Being a Teacher' (LINDE, 1993; NÓVOA, 1995; WOODS & JEFFREY, 2002).

Closure of Some Ideas

The life stories narrated and transformed into life histories constitute a privileged methodology for (re)constructing knowledge about how individuals have lived their personal and professional lives. Through biographical-narrative methodology, it is possible to gain insight and understanding into the

Life reports of Portuguese primary teachers (Before and after 1974): Rescue of memory in life stories life process and the practice of teaching (professional identity) of 'Being a Teacher' (BOLÍVAR, 2014). One of the main characteristics of life histories is that they constitute a language, as life is expressed through narrativity, which is specific to each person at the moment they evoke and retrieve their past experiences. By studying the life stories (narratives) of retired teachers, we were able to identify the relationship each interviewee had with moments and historical contexts over time, thereby understanding the intersection between their life history and the (social) history of education (LINDE, 1993). In other words, the stories helped make sense of the episodes narrated within the various life contexts of these teachers, while history serves as a reconstruction of this individual memory into a collective one, guiding the historian towards understanding and interpreting these personal life stories as students and as education professionals (BOLÍVAR; DOMINGO & FERNÁNDEZ CRUZ, 2001).

Indeed, life histories fit within the framework of the narrative turn in research, which demands reflexivity and interpretation, specifically in placing teachers' biographical narratives within historical time and their social and educational context (NÓVOA, 2003). The revaluation of the importance of meaning and interpretation in human processes, activities, experiences, and behaviors, and the rediscovery of the value of subjectivity, has led to the development of studies in the history of education based on life (biographical) stories (GOODSON, 2004). Our intention was to relate the collected life stories to their context, bridging voices and their representations in the professional practice of teachers. These voices transform into contextualized life stories, as they create interactive or reciprocal relationships between these voices, narratives, ways of life, and educational contexts, to provide interpretation and constitute (inter) textuality. The narratives of actions and life stories become genealogies of context and life histories (GOODSON, 2012). The life stories served as a means to discover and express the personal and professional identity of the interviewees through narratives (DENZIN, 1989), where *“yo es un producto de nuestros relatos y no una cierta esencia por descubrir cavando en los confines de la subjetividad”* (the self is a product of our narratives and not a certain essence to be discovered by digging into the confines of subjectivity), as Bruner (2003, p. 122) states. Indeed, when analyzing the teachers' narratives, we did so in a triple sense: the framing of the phenomenon analyzed (narrative as a written or oral product or production); the qualitative research methodology through interpretation, where narratives are forms of constructing/analyzing the evoked content; and finally, the use of these narratives to promote, through reflection, the

representation of being a student (primary, secondary, and teacher training) and the pedagogical practice of teaching (teaching identity), in socio-historical contexts (before and after 1974).

We aimed to shed light on the narratives, memories, and experiences of the interviewees, which revealed their appropriation of moments and situations from their teaching practice and (re)constructed the identity of 'being a primary school teacher' in the historical context before and after 1974 in the Portuguese school system. Their narratives, according to the temporal cut, redefined the moments experienced in their personal (school education) and professional trajectories. They evoked their memories through a dynamic interplay between the individual and the social, delving into their life path, informed by the educational policies of the time (BIESTA et al., 2011). We observed that, being predominantly female teachers with a common initial training (Primary School Teacher Training), there are many coinciding characteristics of action (teaching model) in their professional trajectories, but also some distinctions between knowledge and teaching practice detected in their narratives and memories. The teachings from the 'school' of the Estado Novo carry sociocultural contents and memorable pedagogical methods from a time of rigid instruction, morality, corporal punishment, obedience, and a single textbook. They received or disseminated, as students and/or teachers, the knowledge touted as a remedy for the social ills of the time and the historical period in which they lived, even though they witnessed the evolution and changes in the school system, educational thinking, and how they experienced the school (GOODSON et al, 2010).

The interviewed teachers considered the construction of their teaching identities and the representations of the school where they were educated and trained. They highlighted the classroom as a space of life with the dilemmas of content and teaching methodologies, the pedagogical relationship model they developed, the institutional organization they followed, and their professional performance in response to changes, with inherited and emerging views after 1974. This encompasses the continuities and ruptures in teaching and being a teacher, each with its own specific forms of teaching tasks. In other words, the reconstruction of their life stories navigated between what was envisioned by the era (socio-historical time), what was lived, what emerged, and what was produced by their profession (identity) (GOODSON, 2015).

There was, therefore, a dual evocation (memory triggered by the time and historical context) that operated in two worlds: the world of action in the profession and school—material aspects of

Life reports of Portuguese primary teachers (Before and after 1974): Rescue of memory in life stories education; and the world of consciousness, where thoughts, feelings, and secrets were represented, as in the case of E4.:

It turned out to be a day very different from the others. Looking back, I feel that the hours passed in a different way. After today, it will be hard for my relationship with my students to be the same. They shared experiences with me that I never imagined they had. Perhaps now I might better understand those lost looks in the middle of an explanation of some content.

In all the interviews with the teachers, we noticed the pride in having been a teacher and their teaching identity, clearly expressed in their narratives, and especially in everything they accomplished and for their students, as evidenced in E6's account:

“I even took the weaker students home to teach them without pay,” knowing that “(...) the children were reprimanded and restricted,” and therefore “(...) the most memorable moments in my career were the farewells where we held a party and also when the students received good grades in their exams”.

These and other moments are remembered by the interviewed retired teachers, having been comforting for their professional identity, as they remain recorded in their memory.

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