

Life histories and autobiographies in teacher education and teaching profession (Brazil, 1985-2003)*

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Abstract

The text offers a survey within the area of Education of the works that make use of life histories and autobiographic studies as a scientific research methodology in Brazil. The period between 1985 and 2003 is focused under two different slants, one temporal, and the other thematic: teacher education and teaching profession. The main purpose here was to map out the national production, seeking to identify the themes that have emerged with greater strength, pointing out deficient aspects, and suggesting directions for future studies in this field. Several sources were utilized: abstracts of theses and dissertations from the CAPES database; complete texts of theses and dissertations presented to the graduate programs of the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo – PUC-SP – and of the Faculty of Education of the University of São Paulo – FEUSP; books; and scientific journals. The analyses have shown that the use of these approaches has grown significantly in Brazil since the 1990s but, in a very disperse manner, they have been used more as a source of data for the development of a wide spectrum of studies, and only timidly as formation devices. Nevertheless, it has become apparent that the rise of these methodologies has contributed to a renewal in the studies about teachers, at the same time that it has fostered the interest in new issues and themes, such as those developed, for example, in the researches about profession, professionalization and teacher identity.

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Keywords

Autobiographies – Life histories – Teacher education – Teaching profession.

The use of life histories and autobiographical studies as methodologies of scientific investigation in the field of Education has gained visible impulse in Brazil in the last fifteen years. In comparison with the previous period, the 1990s brought expressive changes, displaying a dizzying growth in the number of studies that make use of these methodologies, collectively named as autobiographical.

Signs of this growth could soon be seen. In 1996, for example, at the time of the organization of the *1st Seminar on Teaching, Memory and Gender* at the Faculty of Education of the University of São Paulo – FEUSP –, forty works were submitted, between ongoing and completed studies coming from institutions spread throughout the country¹. A few years later, when developing a study for the National Association of Research and Graduate Studies in Education – ANPED –, we identified 40 complete works presented to its meetings between 1991 and 2001², and 35 works presented at the National Meetings of Didactics and Teaching Practice – ENDIPE – from 1998 to 2000, including communications, roundtables, panels and posters. The expressive number of institutions represented in these events (32 at the ANPED Meetings and 21 at the ENDIPE Meetings) was revealing of a process of widespread acceptance of autobiographical and teacher life history studies that was taking place all over the country, but whose features were still unclear. At that time, we thought it opportune to quote a passage by António Nóvoa (1995) on the direction that the studies with life histories were taking. It was the year of 1995, and he said:

In 1988, when I published *The autobiographical method and the formation with Mathias Finger*, the biographical approaches were little known in Portugal and their use in teacher education had no meaning. In 1992, when the first edition of *Teachers' lives* came to light, the situation was considerably changed, leading me to warn against the existence of practices with

poor consistency and methodologies with no rigor. Today, in 1995, the warning must be printed in even larger letters. (p. 9)

This warning, added to the observations that such studies were gaining ground in Brazil, has prompted the development of the present work, with the objective of mapping out and characterizing the national production on the basis of a more comprehensive assessment. By analyzing the use of autobiographical methodologies and life histories in the investigations about teacher education and teaching profession, the text seeks to characterize the trends that have emerged more forcefully, identifying neglected aspects, and trying to point to directions that in our view are more fertile for future efforts in this field.

Considering the growth of the academic production, and the breadth and variety of the studies found, the survey was conducted along two lines, one temporal, and another thematic, focusing on a period of approximately two decades (1985 to 2003), and emphasizing two themes – teacher education and teaching profession. We also considered gender issues, because of their marked presence in the researches in Education along the analyzed period, in addition to being one of the focuses of analysis in our own studies on autobiographies/life histories.

The search for studies was carried out using the following descriptors: life histories, autobiographies, memoirs, remembrances, verbal testimonies, and narratives, intercrossed with this survey's two thematic axes. This type of search involves the risk of missing out some studies developed under the perspectives adopted in this survey, and that for two main reasons: the submission of inappropriate data by the graduate

1. See the Annals of the *1st Seminar on Teaching, Memory and Gender, FEUSP* (Catani et al., 1997).

2. This study was presented as an invited work to the Workgroup on Teacher Education at the 25th Annual Meeting, under the title of "Studies with teachers' life histories, an emerging research field: methodological questions and perspectives for training practices" (Bueno; Catani, 2002). The text was not published.

programs to the Coordination of Improvement of Higher Degree Personnel – CAPES, and the mismatch of the keywords used by the studies and our descriptors. Thus, the identification of studies otherwise missed out would only be possible after direct searches at the universities' libraries, which would make it unfeasible to retain the breadth of the assessment intended here. Considering that various sources were used, we believe that the analyses were not compromised as a portrayal of the broad features of the national academic production. The corpus for the analysis is then constituted by the following: 165 abstracts of dissertations and theses, from which 155 were gathered from the CAPES database, and 10 from the theses database at PUC-SP and FEUSP catalog³; 39 complete texts of theses and dissertations presented to the graduate programs of PUC-SP and FEUSP (two of the most productive institutions); 11 books, selected from the catalogs of some of the main publishing houses in the area of Education, with the help of the above-mentioned descriptors⁴; and 39 articles published in eight different scientific journals among the most relevant in the field of Education.

The assessment realized revealed that this academic production is characterized by huge thematic and methodological dispersion, as a result, among other factors, of the multiplicity of theoretical frameworks used in the studies. The theorists that supply the basis for these studies have been sought in several disciplinary fields, and concepts are borrowed and combined in the most varied ways, not always free of ambiguities as to the methodological terms used. With no attempt at completeness, we mention here some of the terms employed by these authors: memory, memoirs, remembrances, life story (*récit de vie*), testimonies, biographies, educative biographies, educative memoirs, life histories, verbal life histories, thematic verbal history, narratives, memorialistic narratives, biographical method, autobiographical method, psychobiographical method, autobiographical perspective. It is worth noting that many studies use more than one denomination, implying the idea that

they can be taken as synonymous. Some other studies try to complement one meaning with another or one approach with another, making it difficult to categorize them. In view of these difficulties to classify the studies, we have adopted an exposition guided by the chronology of the studies, in which we have tried to identify and highlight the trends and themes that more aptly characterize each decade/period. In proposing to conduct this work, we have not attempted to exhaust the many analyses that this corpus allows; on the contrary, the perspective here has been one of offering a first map in the hope of proceeding to an initial organization of this academic production, and thereby encourage new studies.

Background

The information collected for this survey revealed that the 1980s were not a prolific period with regard to researches with autobiographies and life histories. The academic output of graduate programs expressed in terms of abstracts (1985 to 1990) records only four works using these methodologies, and still not specifically focused on the themes of this survey⁵. A single book was located – *Experiments with life histories (Italy – Brazil)* – a collection of texts organized by Olga von Simon (1988) under the socio-historical perspective of education⁶. The analysis of the academic journals confirms the paucity of studies.

3. This addition was made because of observed discrepancies between the abstracts as available at the CAPES Theses Database and those found in studies from PUC-SP and FEUSP, when the full versions of the abstracts were compared.

4. The following publishing houses were included (in alphabetical order): Arte & Ciência, Artmed, Ática, Autores Associados, Cortez, DP&A, Escrituras, Mercado de Letras, Papirus, Pioneira, Unesp, Unijui, and Vozes. Some of these books were originally written as theses. The specific references for each case are presented ahead.

5. Three of these studies were presented as theses to the Federal University of Minas Gerais – UFMG – and one to the Federal University of Pernambuco – UFP. Their subjects were school failure, the teacher-pupil relation, literacy and reading.

6. Among the chapters of this book there are two texts that became references for many other contemporary and later studies: that of M. Isaura Pereira de Queiroz (1988) – “Verbal reports: from the unutterable to the utterable”, and that of Zeila Demartini (1988) – “Life histories in the approach to educational problems”. In the following paragraphs other observations shall be made about this theoretical-methodological approach.

The scant presence of articles on the history of the teaching profession or teacher education based on methods of autobiographies/life histories or memories of school life is intriguing, both in this period and in the following decade. In a collection of 363 issues inspected, only thirty works were found – less than 10% of the whole material researched – as shown in Table 1.

Periódicos selecionados e número de artigos localizados (1985-2003)

| Periódicos | Exemplares examinados | Artigos selecionados |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos | 56 | 03 |
| Cadernos de Pesquisa | 76 | 07 |
| Educação e Pesquisa* | 41 | 02 |
| Educação e Realidade | 37 | 04 |
| Educação & Sociedade | 71 | 01 |
| Educação em Revista | 38 | 07 |
| Psicologia USP | 20 | 02 |
| Revista Brasileira de Educação | 24 | 03 |
| TOTAL | 363 | 30 |

* Revista da Faculdade de Educação até 1999.

However, it must be remarked that the texts examined approach unevenly the axes chosen for the analysis – most of them make use of life histories, memories, remembrances, teaching, and teaching profession to produce contributions to the field of History of Education. Among the works published in the 1980s in five out of the six academic journals then existing there is a dominance of contributions based on verbal and written reports, with a view to complement and/or link to information obtained from other sources. Investigations seeking to retrace teachers' formation and professional trajectories are the most noticeable. This observation anticipates the signs of interest that certain groups of researchers would display during the 1990s, and that can be seen in the registrations to congresses and events, for example, in the groups from Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul⁷.

The place foretold by the text “Os alunos e o ensino na República Velha através das memórias de velhos professores” [Pupils and the teaching in the Old Republic through the memories of old teachers] (Demartini; Tenca; Tenca, 1985), published in the *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, is definitely secured with Zeila

Demartini's work in the field of the historical-sociological research linked to the educational studies, which in this case unveiled the daily life of rural school in the State of São Paulo through the memories of old teachers and pupils. In 1989 the author publishes a text on the *colonelism* and the expansion of the education system in São Paulo, with transcripts of oral passages by teachers (Demartini, 1989). Later, in 1993, she publishes again in the *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, another article that unfolds from her research in the 1980s with the memories of old teachers, whose work at primary teaching took place until the end of the First Republic (Demartini, 1993). In this text the issue of gender is particularly considered, but resorting to theoretical frameworks dealing with women's labor (Michael Apple, Cristina Bruschini etc). Considering the history of the teaching profession, the work supplies valuable information, based on verbal reports/testimonies, about the working conditions of female teachers (teaching as a profession) when compared with the benefits and privileges enjoyed by male teachers (teaching as a career)⁸.

During this period, *Educação em Revista* (Federal University of Minas Gerais – UFMG) also brings relevant contributions to the history of the teaching profession, but differentiated between themselves. One of the texts adopts a perspective that constitutes a history of the disciplines (in this case, academic) by examining the Psychology of Education as a discipline in teacher education courses. Fragments of life histories of 18 teachers are used to analyze the work with this discipline

7. A preliminary analysis of the academic production published in the journals was presented at the *International Symposium Writing Life. New approaches to a theory of autobiography*. São Paulo, University of São Paulo, FFLCH, September 2005 (Sousa; Catani, 2005).

8. Titles in this Table would translate as follows: *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos* [Brazilian Journal of Pedagogical Studies]; *Cadernos de Pesquisa* [Research Fascicles]; *Educação e Pesquisa* [Education and Research]; *Educação e Realidade* [Education and Reality]; *Educação & Sociedade* [Education & Society]; *Educação em Revista* [Education in Review]; *Psicologia USP* [USP Psychology]; *Revista Brasileira de Educação* [Brazilian Journal of Education]; *Revista da Faculdade de Educação* [Journal of the Faculty of Education].

from 1925 to 1984 at the Minas Gerais capital (Goulart, 1986). In 1989, a text that appears in the Communications section of the journal highlights the trajectory of a teacher from the rural area – Mestra Iraci – who after being interviewed by two students from the Pedagogy course decides to write her own narrative. The material used for the article was a requisite of a discipline and part of the research by Lea Pinheiro Paixão from UFMG who, in the early 1990s, published an article in this same journal about primary teachers from Minas Gerais that had started their careers between 1924 and 1938 (Paixão, 1991). In the case of this particular article, Paixão used 35 interviews with teachers, examining their social belonging, their formation, and professional situation. There is no doubt that, on this theme, this study owes much to the pioneering work of Zeila Demartini.

Still in the 1980s, the journal *Educação e Realidade* (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul – UFRS) publishes a text that refers directly to the research on women's education in that State through the study of school and pedagogical practices of a century-old public institution of the City of Porto Alegre (Louro, 1986). Among other resources, the author made use of testimonies/verbal reports of women who, in the past, had been part of that school universe as pupils and teachers. The author Guacira Lopes Louro, who would later produce many other works under the perspective of the social relations of gender, put much emphasis on the issue of male dominance, as well as on the strategies of resistance of women, a novel approach in socio-historical educational studies.

Only one – and quite peculiar – article using this perspective was located in the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos* in the 1980s. It is a text written in the first person, in which the author (Soares, 1984) takes the opportunity of the preparation of her academic memoirs – part of the requisites for obtaining the title of full professor – to present her academic trajectory. It is, therefore, an article

based on a professional life trajectory, in which the childhood and first school experiences are not included, but just the academic activity, and the ideology that influenced her intellectual work.

In congresses, scientific meetings, seminar, dissertations and theses these themes appear more frequently. Although it is possible to see in the works published during the 1980s a fairly widespread effort to defend the use of sources associated with memories and life histories, through the nature of the information to which such sources/procedures can give access, the gender issue – a still incipient approach in educational studies – has not been considered in the analyses, despite the fact that several of these texts did refer to the relations between work and women's condition.

Another consideration springs from the above: that the 1990s were the scenario of the increase in the production of works around the major axes presented here.

The 1990s: the Brazilian context and the European influences

One can not understand the trajectories of the educational research, insofar as the movement towards the autobiographical approaches is concerned, without a few observations about the Brazilian context of the 1990s, and also about the influences that come from abroad and reverberate here in that period.

A first point to be noted is that in Brazil the discussions around the education of teachers and their professionalization intensified in the period preceding the approval of the Law of National Education Bases and Guidelines (LDBEN 9394/96), in which teachers and pedagogues began to be called professionals of education (Art. 61 to 67). This emphasis was not, however, isolated. Indeed, it echoed a wider movement that emerged and spread widely, both in developed and developing countries. Latin America staged many reforms in the 1990s, all, without exception, highlighting the

role of teachers in the construction of the new school that was then coming into view. Although in Brazil the movement around the professionals in education started in the 1970s, we emphasize here the debates of the 1990s because we assume they contributed to heighten the interest for autobiographical and teacher life history approaches which, precisely at that time, multiplied swiftly, as this survey demonstrates.

Olinda Evangelista and Eneida Shiroma (2003) show that bodies such as the United Nations Children's Fund - UNICEF - and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO called attention to the problems of teacher professionalization since the early 1990s, and that proposals on this were already present in documents of the Economy Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean - CEPAL - and of the Main Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean - PROMEDLAC - also since the beginning of that decade. These authors note that in 1993 professionalization was the central concept of the education reform discussed in that Project, next to discussions about the redefinitions of the profile and formation of teachers.

In their analysis of the works of ANPEd's Workgroup on Teacher Education in the 1995-2002 period, those authors observed that the use of the phrase *professionalization* grew significantly in that period to refer

[...] to the person of the teacher, to the teaching practice, to the qualification of the teaching category, to qualities inherent to the function, to professional re-qualification, to initial training, to continued education, to the professional model, to the radical change of teacher profile. (p. 27-28)

Among other considerations, they draw attention to the fact that the works analyzed were based "on an international literature largely of European and North American origin" (p. 31), without a dialogue with Latin America proper.

The context described by Evangelista and Shiroma and the data they present explain, to a large extent, the emergence of autobiographical studies in Brazil, as well as several of the features of its production. In fact, the access to texts published in Portugal and distributed in Brazil collecting collaborations from Portuguese, French, Swiss, and Italian authors on theories and investigations about the autobiographical method as a methodological and research resource was one of the defining aspects of the scenario that takes shape in the 1990s. The publication in Portugal in 1992 of *Vida de professores* [Teachers' life] and *Profissão professor* [Profession teacher], two selections organized by António Nóvoa (1995a; 1995b), had enormous repercussion in Brazil. These selections had the participation of authors from several countries - Ivor Goodson and Peter Woods from England; Miriam Ben-Pretz from Israel; José Gimeno Sacristán and José Manuel Esteve from Spain; Daniel Hameline from Switzerland; Michäel Huberman from Canada; among others - who later became references to many works in Brazil. Before that, in 1988, Nóvoa had organized with Mathias Finger another work, *O método autobiográfico e a formação* [The autobiographical method and the formation] (1988), which had already attracted much interest within the Portuguese-speaking universe, and had also reached Brazilian researchers⁹.

The creation in 1994 of the *FEUSP Study Group on Teaching, Memory, and Gender (GEDOMGE-FEUSP)* also dates from that period. This group's conceptions owe much to the works spearheaded by Gaston Pineau, Pierre Dominicé and Marie-Christine Josso at the University of Geneva¹⁰, which at that time already constituted a wide network of researchers covering several countries - France, Italy, Canada, and Portugal, among others. As

⁹. Evangelista and Shiroma (2003) when commenting on the works of ANPEd observe that António Nóvoa tops the list of the most cited authors with 23%.

¹⁰. On this, see: Dominicé, 1988; 1990; Josso, 1988; Pineau, 1988.

coordinators of GEDOMGE, and following along the lines proposed by those researchers, we placed the autobiographical method under a double perspective: as a formation device, and as a research instrument¹¹.

The conceptions of the group of Geneva had their roots in problems that emerged in the human sciences, especially by the late 20th century (Josso, 1999). What has been observed in the last 30 years is that the transformations of the social model of this period are accompanied by forms of socialization in which the processes of individualization and subjectivation occupy an ever increasing space. The prominence of these forms of socialization is tied to social transformations that include the passage from national, industrialized and centralized societies to forms of society whose political, social and economic bodies lose their central role, in which institutions no longer have the same ability to integrate, and in which 'individuals' are compelled to display more and more initiative and autonomy, and to find within themselves the resources and strengths for their conduct.

It is within this context that the 'question of the subject' comes back through the social sciences after its demise in the 1960s and 1970s. In its comeback, it reenters the sociological scene as a subject deprived of the essentialist and timeless dimension attributed to it by the classical philosophy, but is now strongly immersed in a socio-historical reality, itself changeable and unstable. The sociological discipline can now develop a theory of the 'social actor', construction the meaning of its experience and turning itself into the 'subject' of its action (Delory-Momberger, 2003). According to Christine Delory-Momberger, life narratives will experience renewed interest in Europe around the mid 1970s. Oriented towards the professional fields, the biographical approach encourages works of critical sociology from the compilation of life narratives that serve to establish trajectories and professional paths. In the 1980s, the object of research moves from the gathering of information that helps to reconstitute

the practices of a single socio-professional category to the consideration of the singularity of the narratives obtained and treated in themselves (Catani; Mazé, 1982). This evolution is accompanied of a double reflection: that related to the status of life history and its value as a scientific document, and that which concerns itself with the report as object of the language and with its dimension of self-creation and autopoietic practice (Le Grand; Pineau, 1993).

As part of this process, life histories also appear in the field of formation, which employs them as *existence-forming art* (Pineau, 1996). The narrative is no longer regarded under the perspective of an ethno-sociological research, but as a field of experience and an instrument of formative exploration. Delory-Momberger (2003) points out that it is necessary to distinguish among the research procedures, because from them will issue quite distinct research materials. According to her,

The autobiography and the verbal life report do not operate on the same level: the former is a solitary introspective activity, while the latter is carried out in interaction; it is a word addressed, observant of the effects it produces on its addressee. (p. 5)

In similar fashion, Josso (1999) distinguishes life histories as 'knowledge projects' from life histories 'at the service of projects'. In the former case, the oral or written report tries to encompass the totality of life in its different levels, as well as in its duration, but in most cases the latter case will happen, in which the history produced by the narrative is limited to an entry intended to supply useful material to a project. In other words, if the intention is to produce knowledge about a given theme or situation using narratives (oral or written), works will be produced which, placed under a new

¹¹ Information about the history of the creation of this study group can be found in Catani *et al.* (1997) and Bueno (1998). About the line followed by the group, see Bueno *et al.* (1993); Sousa *et al.* (1996); Catani; Bueno; Sousa (2000); among others.

paradigm (that of the subject and rehabilitated actor), are very distinct from the works where the autobiographical method is used as an instrument of formation, and in which it operates as project of global knowledge of the subject.

These aspects and differentiations as to conceptions and ways of putting the autobiographical method into action, by gaining growing support and becoming widespread in Brazil, acquired their own features in this country. It was surprising, however, to observe that, despite the fact that several of these European authors were at the origin of the motivations that led so many researchers to develop works with autobiographies and life histories, the perspective of research/formation espoused by them had little resonance in Brazil, as we shall see now.

The 1990s: growth, diversity, trends

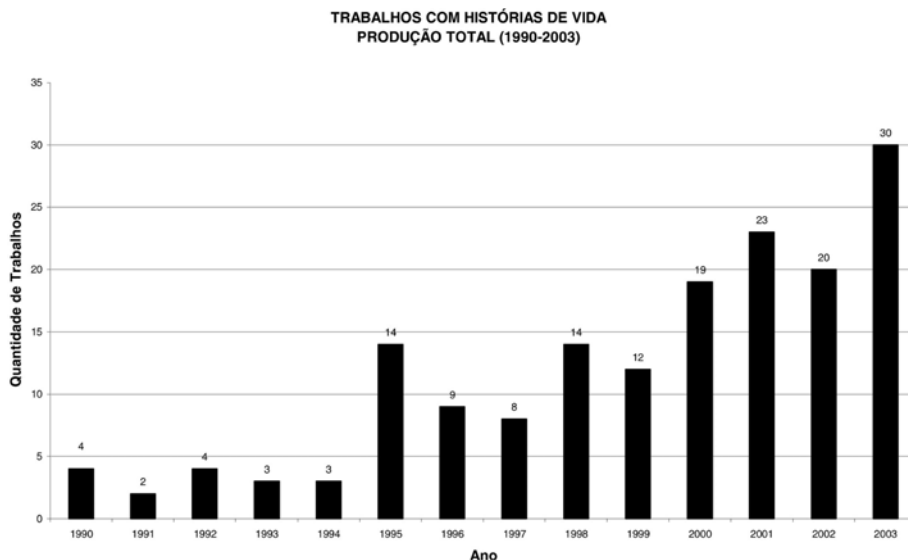
The analysis of the material gathered related to the 1990-2003 period was revealing not just of a considerable growth in the researches, but also of a significant diversification of the modalities and uses of autobiographies and life histories. These studies spread beyond the domain of the socio-history of education – the

hallmark of the previous decade – to explore new themes and to construct new objects. Such diversity and the more noticeable trends in this production shall be examined in what follows. Before that, however, it was deemed important to present a few quantitative indicators to offer a general view of the growth of the studies, and to help indicating the role played by the graduate programs in this process.

Theses and dissertations: the role of the graduate programs

The data collected from the CAPES Theses Database showed that the year of 1995 represented a milestone in this movement of growing adoption of studies with life histories. From a production oscillating between two and four works per year between 1990 and 1994, there is a leap in 1995 to the mark of 14 works: 10 master dissertations and 4 doctoral theses. This figure corresponds to almost twice the number of works produced during the five previous years, as shown in Picture 1.

From that point on, with small oscillations, the graduate researches making use of this approach increase their number continuously, reaching the figure of 30 works in



the year 2003 alone. In the 1990–2003 period 165 works were located, 128 master dissertations and 37 doctoral theses presented to institutions all over the country, including 21 federal universities, apart from state universities, PUCs (Pontifical Catholic Universities), and other private institutions (Table 1). This figure would probably be even larger if direct searches at the various universities libraries were conducted.

The University of São Paulo displayed the largest number of studies (24), followed by the Federal University of Santa Maria – UFSM – in Rio Grande do Sul (16 studies), and by PUC-SP (15 studies). Among the private universities, the University of the City of São Paulo – UNICID – and the Methodist University of Piracicaba in São Paulo – UNIMEP – stand out with six studies each¹².

In the 1990s at FEUSP, Elza Nadai was one of the pioneers in developing studies about teachers and their memories, working under a perspective that, derived from the oral history, was close to the studies with teachers' life histories that were to multiply along that period. In 1990, under her supervision, Ricardo Ribeiro presented his master dissertation *Inspeção e escola primária em São Paulo: trabalho e memória* [*Caretaking and primary school in São Paulo: work and memory*], and in the following year Nadai herself presented her *livre-docência*¹⁴ thesis *A educação como apostolado: história e reminiscências* (São Paulo, 1930–1970) [Education as apostolate: histories and reminiscences] using what she called *récit de vie* (Nadai, 1991). In that work, in which the author combines several procedures and sources, a group of teachers of the old secondary school was studied through a wide array of questions – representations, memory, discourse, formation, school, society, and professionalization. Grounded on a number of authors – Paul Veyne, Le Goff, Bosi, Halbwachs, Thompson, M. Isaura P. Queiroz –, this work joins the history of the teaching profession, just as already included by Denice Catani (2000).

Also pioneering, albeit along very different lines, is the work conducted by M.

Ignez Joffre Tanus in her thesis presented to FEUSP in 1992 entitled *Mundividências – história de vida de migrantes professores* [*Mundivoyances – the life history of migrant teachers*]. Later published as a book (Tanus, 2002), the work explores the worldviews, and the subjectivation and identification processes present in the profession, trying to understand the imaginary and the reality of a group of migrant teachers, starting from two basic questions: that of identity, and that of the construction of the notion of reality. The author seizes the opportunity of the fieldwork to gather testimonies of the interviewees about their life histories, realizing what we called a 'sensitive listening' (Tanus, 2002).

These studies indicate not just the movement toward autobiographies and life histories that in the 1990s was beginning to take shape, but also its diversification. Indeed, that decade will be characterized by the recourse to life histories and memories, whose uses extended way beyond the limits of the socio-history of education, as we have already noted. There is then a search to understand specificities of the action of groups of professional teachers from various areas and disciplines through the path of life histories as research procedures. Likewise, there is an expansion of references to autobiographies and the genre is then valued for its contribution to the comprehension of specificities of the school life, of the exercise of the teaching profession, of the construction of representations and relations with the school and knowledge, among others¹³. And aspects like these are precisely those that will be underlined by the texts of the period that introduce, through articles published in journals

12. An analysis of the data obtained from the CAPES Database was presented to the International Symposium Writing Life. New approaches of a theory of autobiography. São Paulo, University of São Paulo, FFLCH, September 2005. That work contains other tables that help to visualize the distribution of studies among the Brazilian institutions (Bueno, 2005).

13. On this, see the text by Denice Catani (1991) "Pedagogia e museificação" [Pedagogy and museumification], in which she explores the potentialities of the memorialistic work of Elias Canetti – *A língua absolvida* [The absolved language] – to the understanding of education, of formation, and of school life. See also the works indicated in the next footnote, in which the use made of this work in courses and projects of teaching education is explained.

and books, the hypothesis of the recourse to memory/life histories/autobiographies as procedures of formation. By inserting themselves in an expressive international movement, noticeable through the educational production from France, Canada, Portugal and Switzerland, the texts that defend the formative character of life histories also present themselves as sources for the understanding of the peculiarities of formation and specificities of the formal and informal educative situations¹⁴. If a feature common to the texts published in the 1990s can be identified, it may be that of the effort to multiply the explicative/formative potential of memories/life histories/autobiographies. In this sense, the recourse to them is invoked to allow the understanding of the process of change and development of teachers, producing a proliferation of interests brought about by the wave of life histories and their extension to diversified educative universes.

In fact, the ensemble of works analyzed here revealed a considerable broadening of autobiographical studies, characterized by a wide range of themes and analysis perspectives, but also with some convergence. For example, studies trying to understand specificities of the action of groups of professional teachers from different areas and periods were recurrent, as observed in graduate studies, books, and articles.

Although they are scattered in the ensemble, it was possible to identify some studies with shared features, such as those derived from oral histories, which are placed at the intersection with the perspective of teachers' life histories. Several of these studies were presented as graduate works at FEUSP, such as the master dissertation and doctoral thesis by Ricardo Ribeiro (1990 and 1996) – the former on the activity of old school caretakers in the 1930-1945 period, and the latter on old primary school teachers in the 1925-1945 period; Eleny Mitruilis' (1993) research, also on school caretakers, but covering the beginning of the activities of school supervisors; and on a more recent period, the dissertations by Daiane Vieira (2002) and Elza Pino dos Santos (2003) – the

former on the activities of old school principals, men who developed their careers between 1950 and 1980, and the latter on the work developed by primary teachers working in the 1960-1980 period. Outside the sphere of graduate studies, there were other studies along these lines, as showed in the book by Sanches (1999) – *Educational supervision and the adolescent*. In it, the author works with ten (oral) life histories to understand the work of the educational supervisor, making use also of a narrative of her own experience during her undergraduate years.

In other studies, the activities of groups of professionals were examined based on other characterizations, such as, for example that of Black or afro-descendant teachers (Rofino, 1996; Ribeiro, 2001), that of teacher who had been political activists (Dobbeck, 2000), and that of lay teachers (Rodrigues, 2001), among others.

Alongside this theme, others also proved to be recurrent, particularly among graduate studies. Analysis of the abstracts showed, for instance, that teachers from fundamental education and from the areas of Literacy and Mathematics were the focus of attention, while in higher education the emphasis lay on History of Education, with an output of 25 studies. Although a significant portion of these works were devoted to the study of the old Normal Schools, it was interesting to observe that the theme of the gender issues did not receive the weight that could be expected. This happened not just with respect to the issue, but also in the whole group of studies, since only five of them indicated the use of the category of gender, two of these in combination with the category of ethnicity, to exam the issue of the Black teacher. It is important to record that this theme is becoming more noticeable in recent years, as we shall discuss ahead in this text.

The theme of professional identity surprised by its high recurrence, closely followed

14. These characteristics are typical of the studies developed by the researchers from GEDOMGE-FEUSP. Among other studies, their theses of *livre-docência* also dealt with autobiographies and life histories. See: Catani (1994), Bueno (1996), Sousa (2000) and Chamlian (2004).

by two other themes: teacher knowledges, and continuing education. This recurrence was observed mostly in the abstracts. Among the complete works selected, we note that of Carmen Lúcia Pérez (2002), presented to FEUSP, which used oral and written narratives. The question of the construction of identity (as the theme is more often described) appeared more frequently in the works presented to PUC-SP among the works selected for a full reading; but when considering the abstracts, this was a theme investigated in all institutions. Professionals from the most varied areas were studied under this focus, notably teachers. Some of the titles appearing in the abstracts since 1995 serve to give the gist of this group of works: *Memória e identidade: a travessia de velhos professores através de suas narrativas* [Memory and identity: old teachers' passage through their narratives]; *A professora alfabetizadora: caminhos e descaminhos na construção de uma identidade* [The literacy teacher: tours and detours in the construction of an identity]; *A representação identitária no professor de história: um estudo com depoimentos orais* [The identity representation in the History teacher: a study with oral testimonies]; *Identidade, culturas e memórias de ex-professores* [Identity, cultures, and memories of former teachers]; *Autoformação, histórias de vida e construção de identidades do/a educador/a* [Self-formation, life histories, and construction of identities of the educator]; *Identidades musicais de alunas de pedagogia: música, memória e mídia* [Musical identities in female Pedagogy students: music, memory, and media]; *Identidade do diretor da escola pública: compromisso com a transformação do cotidiano escolar* [The identity of the public school principal: commitment with the transformation of the school daily life.].

Apart from teachers, interest was also observed on the study of the identity of Black teachers (Rofino, 1996), afro-descendants (Oliveira, 2001)¹⁵, and of ageing retired teachers (Stano, 2001a)¹⁶. This theme was present in a series of studies that look at the identity

question from other angles. Such is the case of the researches that analyze the processes of professional choice (Enge, 2004) and those investigating the formation paths. Some of these works are interested in examining the way in which the professionals have become teachers (Hage, 1997); others are concerned with how they have ceased to be teachers, as in the case of the study by Flavinês Lapo (1999), who analyzed the professional life histories of teachers who had left teaching and/or the public school. Still under this perspective, another group of studies examines the construction of identities based on the meanings attributed by teachers to profession and the teaching work. A recent modality of studies, mostly master dissertations, following the theme of identity is one in which the authors analyze their own professional trajectories. Mostly, they seek to understand how they became the teachers they are – Arts, History, Biology, Special Education, Literacy¹⁷, among others. In the final section of this text, some additional comments will be made on the issue of identity and on this type of studies.

The books

The examination of the books reinforced some of these themes, but also brought others up, especially because not all of them were originally written as theses or dissertations. Several of the books resulted from projects developed by a research team, and in many of them the authors use narratives as raw material for analysis, focusing the profession from diverse angles.

Selva Fonseca (1997) authors the book *Ser professor no Brasil* [Being a teacher in Brazil],

15. This work was presented to the Institute of Psychology of USP. At the ANPEd, works on the theme of the identity of Black teachers increased after the creation of the Workgroup on Afro-Brazilian Studies and Education. Between 2002 and 2003 four studies were located with this focus.

16. This doctoral work, supervised by Mere Abramowicz, was soon after published as a book (Stano, 2001b).

17. Two doctoral studies in this category were identified: Pereira (1997), and Warschauer (2000), presented to PUC-SP and USP, respectively.

making use of oral life histories through the angle of the individual history of the subjects that make and teach history. This made possible to produce documents and interpretations in which the characters exhibit and attribute different meanings to their experiences, showing how their productions and professional actions are intimately related to their personal way of being and living. The book by Geni Vasconcelos (2000) – *Como me fiz professora* [How I became a teacher] – is a collection of articles about teachers' life histories, some of them dealing with themes relative to the construction of the professional identity, others based on narratives of the teachers about the histories of their own formation. According to the organizer, the objective was to try to rescue the respect for the teaching category, *giving voice*¹⁸ to teachers; and also to show that a teacher's identity is weaved with many threads. In close proximity to this work is a chapter by Cynthia de Souza (1998) "Fragmentos de histórias de vida e de formação de professores paulistas" [Fragments from life and formation histories of São Paulo teachers], in which she presents results of a research based on interviews with one hundred women belonging to urban middle class; her objective was to analyze the choice of teaching as a profession through the recovery of aspects of their family and professional memory.

The book *Identidade do professor no envelhecimento* [Identity of the aging teacher] (Stano, 2001b) selects the issue of identity with the objective of investigating how the exercise of a profession determines, collaborates and marks the quality of the aging of teachers. In this sense, by listening to life histories of retired teachers, it tries to capture what is left, what has determined their way of living the old age, as a product of historical and cultural singularities. Through the narratives, it was possible to observe the correspondence assured by the *habitus* between the before and the after, because once the teacher is removed from the school and from the whole group of associated professionals, the set of practices

and ways incorporated during the professional activity is preserved. Teachers elaborate their aging keeping their time of 'being-teacher' through their contact with former/new pupils. When asked about their profession, they answer: I'm a retired teacher, thereby avoiding, according to the author, the 'dissociation of the Me' in retirement, and guaranteeing a teacher-like aging.

Under this view, the book by Isabel M. Bello (2002) *Formação, profissionalidade e prática docente*¹⁹ [Formation, professionalism and teaching practice] can complement that of Rita Stano's, investigating the teaching profession by using the professional life cycles as a basis (Huberman, 1992). In it, she analyzes, from the viewpoint of the teachers, behaviors, aptitudes, attitudes and values necessary to the professional formation through the life histories of three teachers she interviewed. With that, she aimed at understanding the aspects of teacher formation and professionalization. From the standpoint of the life cycles, Bello focuses phases that anticipate that presented by Stano (2001a, 2001b), when teachers are no longer in the profession, but still feel and see themselves as teachers.

The issues of professionalization and formation were focused, through other lenses, in other books published in the period analyzed, some of them centering on the pedagogical practice of teachers with a view to their formation, others on the self-knowledge and knowledge about the teacher, the constitution of their subjectivity and formation.

Under a Bakhtinian perspective, the issues of formation and professionalization were investigated in two collections that resulted from a joint research on reading and writing of teachers. One of them is *Histórias de professores – leitura, escrita e pesquisa em educação* [Teachers' histories – reading, writing, and research in Education] by Sonia Kramer and

18. The phase was used by Ivor F. Goodson (1992) in the collection *Vidas de professores* [Teachers' lives] (Nóvoa, 1992).

19. Originally the work was presented as a master dissertation to UNIP – São Paulo University.

Solange Jobim e Souza (1996), and the other is *Narrativas de professoras: pesquisando leitura e escrita numa perspectiva sócio-histórica* [Teachers' narratives: researching reading and writing under a socio-historical perspective] by M. Teresa de Freitas (1998). Kramer and Souza use life histories as an alternative to the studies about the pedagogical practice, emphasizing the role of the active and creative subject and the production, through narratives, of a knowledge that places itself at the crossroads of several knowledges. The interview is like a construction of intertexts, and the speeches, more than answers, are a dialogical action through which the subject constructs and reconstructs meanings. Freitas (1998) investigates how teachers read, write, and how they constructed this relation throughout their lives. The group considered that the effects of the autobiographical method were noticeable, both for the one that narrates, as for the researcher who, by reaping the interview, identifies with the researched²⁰.

In close proximity to this theme is the book by Ana Chrystina Mignot and M. Teresa Santos Cunha (2003) *Práticas de memória docente* [Practices of teachers' memories], whose texts focus on the writing of teachers, seeking to enrich the discussions about the practices of teachers' memories constructed on and about the school. The work is organized in groups of texts; the first group examines teachers' 'ordinary writing' produced under the most varied pretexts, revealing the school as a space of valuation of the writing and of search for freedom of expression²¹. The second group of texts is dedicated to works that deal with the autobiographical writing of teachers who "have made use of writing to register, demand, propose, resist, in short, to eternize their own lives" (p. 13)²².

The work organized by M. Helena Barreto Abrahão (2001) – *História e histórias de vida. Destacados educadores fazem a história da educação rio-grandense* [History and life histories. Eminent educators make the history of

education in Rio Grande] –, besides presenting the life histories of twelve educators, brings "historical-social elements of the context of insertion of these histories as a whole [...]" (p. 29). According to António Nóvoa, who wrote the preface, this book is not limited to biographical records, because the authors sought contrasts to illuminate their interpretations, accepting that life history is always a 'construction' in which the researcher also takes place. The three categories that served as analytical matrix for the analysis and interpretation of these life histories – formation, personal/professional life and construction of identity – constitute, according to him, "the precise limits of a sensible interpretation" (p. 9).

Under the category of works that report mainly experiences of research/formation making use of the autobiographical method, and that differ, in this sense, from the works described so far, only three works were found: the two collections organized by the coordinators of the GEDOMGE-FEUSP: *Docência, memória e gênero: estudos sobre formação* [Teaching, memory and gender: studies on formation] (Catani *et al.*, 1997) and *A vida e o ofício dos professores: formação contínua, autobiografia e pesquisa em colaboração* [The life and work of teachers: continued formation, autobiography and research in collaboration] (Bueno *et al.*, 1998); and the book *Como nos tornamos professoras?* [How do we become teachers?], by Roseli Cação Fontana (2000), whose research is close to that work perspective.

20. On this theme, the thesis by M. Catarina Curi (2001) *Memórias de leitura de professoras primárias no estado de São Paulo: uma história contada por professoras* [Memories of reading of primary teachers in the State of São Paulo: a reading history told by teachers] presented to PUC-SP should be noted.

21. In a certain way, this thesis goes against the conclusions of Kramer, Souza (1996), who affirm, based on their interviews, that the school seems to act more on the formation of non-readers than on that of readers.

22. The book organized by Celso Martinazzo (2000) - *Histórias de vida de professoras: formação, experiências e práticas* [Teachers' life histories: formation, experiences, and practices] – is another collection with histories of memories, experiences and unforgettable moments in the lives of a group of teachers, but it is not very analytic, mostly restricted to reporting.

The first two publications resulted from a project on continued education developed by the GEDOMGE between 1993 and 1997, in which female (and a few male) teachers from the public school system took part, conducting a study that, through the use of autobiographical writing, had as its objective to make teachers understand and incorporate their own history. Teaching, memory and gender, as the title of the group suggests, constituted the triple focus of the study, which makes use of the memorialistic work of Elias Canetti *A língua absolvida* [The absolved language] as a pretext to the autobiographical production of these teachers. In the chapter “História, memória e autobiografia na pesquisa educacional e na formação” [History, memory and autobiography in educational research and formation] the authors emphasize, on one side, the line of investigation that the autobiographical method brought about in the experience of formation; on the other side, the potential represented by the work of memory and counter-memory in the field of the teaching profession. The other collection, *A vida e o ofício dos professores* [The life and work of teachers], brings new research results, both from a theoretical point of view and from that of the practices of formation developed by the group. The second part of the book includes the texts by eleven teachers who reached the conclusion of the experience, as a more authentic way to make clear the results of this project of research/formation and production of (self)knowledge by the group.

The work by Roseli Cação Fontana (2000) *Como nos tornamos professoras?* [How do we become teachers?] derives from the transcription of the discussions within a study and research group that convened for two years as a group of researcher-teachers with the purpose of investigating their own professional condition. The major investment of the study was the analysis of the characteristics of the teaching work in its daily life. The life histories appear in a complementary fashion to clarify

one of the aspects – the professional choice – present in the analysis of the constitution of the professional being. The reports of six teachers between the ages of 20 and 45 bring the opportunity to raise some of the main themes present in the choice of the teaching profession, such as: talent, vocation, joining/identification, learning, and learning with the other.

The journals

If in the 1990s we witnessed a period of expansion and increase of studies about education that make use of life histories/autobiographies, as made clear by the production of graduate monographs and books (considering that most of the latter are collections having the participation of several authors), this does not mean that the number of articles in journals have followed suit. The paucity of studies with autobiographies/life histories published in journals, already noted with respect to the previous decade, remains virtually unchanged, although some growth is observed in absolute numbers.

Between 1990 and 1993, following the same trend of the graduate studies and books, the production circulated by journals cover themes that include issues related to different segments of the teaching category, but the tone of the efforts seems to be the exposition of specificities of the teaching profession and work. Coinciding with the perspective showed in the 1990s, namely, of the interest in the socio-historical studies about the teaching profession, the trend to resort to memories/life histories seems to reassert itself in this domain by its potential of knowledge/research.

Works representative of the socio-historical studies of education appear in four of the published articles. Two of them, already referred to, were published in the early 1990s: that of Lea Paixão (1991) about old primary school teachers in Minas Gerais who worked between 1924 and 1938, published in the

Educação em Revista [Education in Review], and that by Zeila Demartini and Fátima Antunes (1993) on primary teaching as a women's profession and a men's career, published by the *Cadernos de Pesquisa* [Research Fascicles]. Apart from these, two other articles were located, published by *Educação e Realidade* [Education and Reality] and *Educação em Revista* [Education in Review], both in 1994. The former, by Rosa M. Silveira (1994), brings an analysis of the book by Helena Morley *Minha Vida de menina* [My life as a girl], in which she examines the representation of the figure of the teacher in the late 19th century, and emphasizes aspects such as the ambivalence professionalism/proletarianization, feminization of the teaching profession, and teaching knowledges, among others, although the main interest is the socio-historical conditions in which the literary work is produced. The other article, by M. de Fátima Fortes (1994), examines the characteristics of the rural school in Minas Gerais in the early 20th century (1918-1939) starting from the testimonies of twelve teachers of varied social origin, born in different regions of the state between 1898 and 1920. These testimonies were selected from a group of 35 used in the study "Trajetórias escolares e profissionais de professoras primárias mineiras que iniciaram carreira antes de 1940" [School and professional trajectories of primary teachers of Minas Gerais who started their careers before 1940] coordinated by Lea Paixão.

Next to this trend, another line of autobiographical studies appear in the journals analyzed, represented specifically by the works of the GEDOMGE. These texts clarify the conceptions of the group in the perspective of research/formation, dealt with under different lights in each one of the three texts published. The first one, which has the same title as the group itself, was published in *Psicologia USP* [USP Psychology] in a special issue on memory (Bueno *et al.*, 1993). In it, the authors seek to analyze the theoretical foundations and the practical potential of teaching education, based

on autobiographical interpretations and reports of intellectual formation. They also deal with theoretical questions related to individual and collective memory, to the traditional processes of teacher education and to the gender studies, in particular on the feminine condition and the teaching profession, highlighting the fertility of the proposal to create a professional counter-memory through the production of autobiographies and reports in the process of teacher continued education. In the second text - "Memória e autobiografia: formação de mulheres e formação de professoras" [Memory and autobiography: women formation and female teacher formation] (Sousa *et al.*, 1996) - published in *Revista Brasileira de Educação* [Brazilian Journal of Education], the analyses cover the specificities, constitution and recovery of individual memory and feminine memory, trying to examine the vestiges and configurations of these specificities in the narratives of female teachers about their life experiences. From this point, some new possibilities are put forward about the pedagogical relations and processes of school formation. In "O amor dos começos: por uma história das relações com a escola" [The love of the beginning: for a history of the relations with the school] (Catani; Bueno; Sousa, 2000), published in *Cadernos de Pesquisa* [Research Fascicles], the author attempt to discuss and clarify, also based on written autobiographical narratives, the peculiarities of the relations that the individuals (men and women, pupils and teachers) keep with the school and with the various disciplines, and also the meanings of these relations in histories of schooling and in the formation of teachers' identities. The objective, as in the previous texts, is to propose new modalities of formation that stimulate dispositions favorable to knowledge.

Another theme, based on studies with life histories, that was also present in the journals had as its focus the reading and writing of teachers. Two of these articles were published by Sônia Kramer, a researcher from

the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro – PUC-RJ –, following the line she has been developing since 1993 based on the theories of Walter Benjamin and Bakhtin, as already described with respect to the book *Histórias de professores: leitura, escrita e pesquisa em educação* [Teachers' histories: reading, writing and research in education] (Kramer; Souza, 1996). The article that appeared in *Cadernos de Pesquisa* [Research Fascicles] tries to analyze reading and writing experiences of teachers, constructed throughout their working and life histories, examining the process of construction of knowledge to understand how their relation with writing was constructed, and in what way this relation influences their school practice (Kramer, 1999). In the next text, which appeared in *Educação em Revista* [Education in Review], the author presents a synthesis of the production of her research group, taking up again the theme around which the group articulated during the 1990s (Kramer, 2000). A little earlier, in 1998, this same journal published an article by Antonio Augusto Batista (1998), a researcher from UFMG. The text deals with the relations of teachers of Portuguese with reading, and was based on studies of sociology of education, of family, and of cultural practices. In it, the author analyzes teachers' reading practices, drawing from data collected by a variety of instruments, among which the remembrances written down by teachers about their own process of formation as readers.

The issue of identity, so recurrent in the graduate studies and books, appeared in journals in a limited fashion. Only three articles could be located: one of them in the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos* [Brazilian Journal of Pedagogical Studies]; another in *Educação em Revista* [Education in Review]; and the third in *Revista Brasileira de Educação* [Brazilian Journal of Education]. Lea Paixão (1995), in her article “Cátedra e hegemonia da prática docente na Faculdade de Medicina da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais” [Chair

and hegemony in the teaching practice at the Faculty of Medicine of the Federal University of Minas Gerais], examines the social identity of biologists on the basis of testimonies from teachers, former teachers, and former students, showing the conflicts and tensions that combine in the emergence and institutionalization of Biology as an academic discipline in the syllabus of that school of Medicine. In the second text, Anna Maria Caldeira (2000) uses fragments of the life history of a teacher of rural origin who taught in a public school of Barcelona as a resource to understand the process of constitution of her identity. The history was collected within an ethnographic study, in which the researcher focuses on the teacher's pedagogical practice. Considering the contexts in which this identity is built, she shows that its constitutive traits were constructed and reconstructed along the teacher's professionalization, from the moment she chose her profession and engaged in initial training to her professional insertion and practice. Based on this study, Caldeira states that the construction of identity cannot be seen as an atemporal, permanent and stable process. The third text, which appeared in *Revista Brasileira de Educação* [Brazilian Journal of Education], is authored by Isabel Lelis (2001). The theme is the social identity of the teaching category, whose analysis is made based on life histories of teachers from Rio de Janeiro who worked in public and private fundamental schools. Using the narratives, Lelis analyzed the social and instructional trajectories of the teachers, considering various aspects, among which their families and social identities, the rhetoric of the mission of priesthood and vocation, and the questions of gender as an important category to understand the entry into the profession (which must be articulated with social class, ethnicity and generation).

Of an eminently theoretical-methodological character, and dealing with life histories and autobiographies, two articles were published by *Educação e Pesquisa* [Education and Research]

in 1999 and 2002. The first of these articles is by Marie-Christine Josso (1999), a researcher of the University of Geneva, who offers a wide view of the European and international scene of authors working in this field, in an exposition that is based on her own trajectory toward life histories. In it, Josso highlights “life histories as a project of learning thematic biographical perspectives as applied to specific projects”. The other article also gives a general view of the various uses that the autobiographical and life history studies were having in 1990s based on collections organized by Nóvoa (1992a and 1992b) and Goodson (1992).

The theme of teacher profession and professionalization appeared in just two articles. Derived from a research that investigated teacher dropout from public schools in São Paulo in the period between 1990 and 1995, both studies are based on the professional life histories of sixteen teachers, and examine the issue of quitting the profession and the disenchantment of the teachers with the public school under two aspects. The first text, published in *Psicologia USP* [USP Psychology], examines the links and ruptures with the teaching work based on considerations about the meaning of work from social, psychological, and personal viewpoints (Lapo; Bueno, 2002). In the other article, which appeared in the *Cadernos de Pesquisa* [Research Fascicles], the focus is on the trajectories and circumstances that led the group of teachers under study to leave the public school and/or the teaching profession. By analyzing the stages that characterize the process of dropping out, the investigations call attention to the stress and burnout that beset teachers in such processes (Lapo; Bueno, 2003).

A single text examines the professional development of the teacher, a theme hitherto not identified in other studies. Published in the *Revista Brasileira de Educação* [Brazilian Journal of Education], the article makes use of the life history of a Mathematics teacher, as a research methodology, to identify the perceptions of teachers about the changes that took place in their

thinking and/or *practice* throughout the years, focusing also on their perceptions about experiences and/or challenges that might have influenced them in these changes (Poletini, 1998).

Finally, three texts should be mentioned that deal with assorted themes, and in which life histories or biographical narratives were used only marginally. One of them appeared in *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos* [Brazilian Journal of Pedagogical Studies], another in the *Cadernos de Pesquisa* [Research Fascicles], and the third in *Educação e Realidade* [Education and Reality], and their respective authors examined the following themes: Yolanda Lôbo (1996) examines the life and formation trajectory of Cecília Meireles, with emphasis on her thesis “O espírito vitorioso” [The victorious spirit], presented as part of the examination to the Normal School of the Federal District; M. Isabel Cunha (1996) dealt with innovative teaching experiences of higher education teachers, using testimonies and emphasizing their systems of value, representations and cultural symbols, including those of an affective nature; and Nádia Souza (2000) discussed the body-identity representations under a Foucaultian perspective. In her research, this author uses, among other strategies, photos and narratives of Biology teachers to induce them to speak about the practices experienced in their families and their implications to the production of their body-identities. It is relevant to notice the points of contact between this study and the dissertation by Gercina Santana Novaes (1995) *O corpo da aprendizagem: um estudo sobre representações de corpo de professoras da pré-escola* [The body of learning: a study about body representations of preschool teachers], in which the author investigates, within an ethnographic study combined with memories, the body representations of preschool teachers, with the purpose of analyzing the meanings of these representations to the pedagogical actions developed in the classroom, as well as of searching for the movements of constitution and (re)production of these representations.

Final considerations

The examination conducted in this survey, covering the use of autobiographies and life histories in investigations on teacher education and teaching profession, has afforded some conclusions. The first, and certainly the most relevant, is that the intensification of the use of these methodologies in Brazil, particularly since the 1990s, contributed to renovate the educational research in several aspects, notably with respect to the research and teacher formation, raising the interest for new questions and themes, such as those configured in the studies about profession, professionalization, and teacher identities. Although the main features of the academic production analyzed here have been pointed out along the text, some of them will be resumed here to allow us to comment on a few missing aspects, based on which we would like to offer suggestions for future studies in the area.

The fact that we have worked with several sources has precluded in-depth analyses, but on the other hand has favored a series of aspects. Firstly, the fact of affording a view simultaneously quantitative and qualitative of the works, allowing the identification of the spreading of the studies through regions and universities of the country, the growth along the years, and the characteristics and diversity of the works, from which it was possible to observe the main trait: the huge dispersion of this production. It also made possible to see that there was an unbalance in the forms of publication and circulation of the researches. Considering the number of works presented to graduate programs and congresses²³ in this period, it results that only a fraction of these have been published in books, mostly in collections and, more sparsely, as articles in journals. Observing that many of the books, chapters of books and articles resulted from the work of research groups, and not from theses and dissertations, it becomes even clearer that

the works generated by the graduate programs had only a restricted circulation.

This fact will perhaps account for another feature of the works analyzed: the almost complete absence of dialogue between the researches and the production of the area, which in many cases do not acknowledge the works produced in the researcher's own institution. Because of that, it was not surprising to see that most works make no reference to projects on teacher formation and professionalization, which have been developed nationally and internationally in neighboring countries. To put teachers at the center of the debate was not an idea that emerged here by accident, for it has been contained for more than a decade in the reforms that proposed the redefinition of their profile and the construction of 'a new teacher'. Authors in several countries have even suggested a 'reinvention of the teaching profession'²⁴. Certainly, all this turns the expectations about this professional even bigger. Therefore, autobiographies should not be taken without proper care, as if they were a panacea that could, on their own, transform teachers and schools.

What is meant by this is that it is not enough to dialogue with works that have used the same methodological approaches. It is necessary to exchange ideas with the productions from other contexts, going beyond the theorists of Europe and North America. Due to the similarities among the educational problems and the ongoing reforms in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, it is desirable that the questions proposed here are also referenced to them. Even more so when we work with memories and narratives, and when we uphold that autobiographies afford the individual an incorporation of his/her history that is not just individual, but also collective. We could ask ourselves 'What collective history is this, today?' Maybe this is one fruitful way ahead to discuss and problematize the question of identities/alterities.

23. Based on the assessment made in 2002 (Bueno; Catani, 2002).

24. Mello; Rego (2004), when referring to this discourse, mentioned authors from various countries – Portugal, Brazil, Argentina, Spain, France – among those that reiterate and subscribe to such ideas.

Another feature that stands out from the scrutiny of the works is the conceptual imprecision. Notwithstanding many authors clarifying the meaning of the terms employed, the terminological imprecision persists in the academic production as a whole, and that for two interrelated reasons: first, due to the enormous diversity of expressions employed, many of them used synonymously, as if there was consensus about them²⁵; then, for the fact that there is a tacit disregard for the history itself of the life histories, its origins, its progresses and retreats, and also for the conceptions and uses made of them today in different fields – History, Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Literature, among others²⁶. It results that the assumptions of the perspectives adopted in the works are not always explicit, quite the opposite, they are often ambiguous and even contradictory. Contributes to this the looseness with which the theoretical appropriations are often made, without the proper care that the transport of concepts from one area to another requires. Thus, if on one hand we can accept that this freedom indicates a revival of the area of Education, which cannot survive or grow without conceptual borrowings, on the other hand it must be seen as an alert against misuse and carelessness, which end up weakening the area and reducing the reliability and value of the results of studies.

Along the same lines, we must include an additional question to the forms of incorporation of the autobiographical procedures in regard to the first person narratives – frequent in theses and dissertations –, often used to illustrate, exemplify, tell, and offer testimonies about the formation and professional trajectories of teachers. These works, while having the merit of echoing the voices of the subjects, actors of the educational field, end up constituting an inventory of isolated cases, open to endless interpretations, waiting for the readers to come by themselves to the already classic statement by Ferrarotti that:

[...] our social system is entirely found in each one of our acts, in each one of our

dreams, delusions, works, behaviors. And the history of this system is entirely contained within the history of our individual life. (1988, p. 26)

Perhaps, going deeper into these aspects, particularly into the conceptual appropriations and a more precise definition of the theoretical frameworks and research procedures pertaining to the field of autobiographies and life histories, can help to point the ways ahead, to proceed with appropriations without turning it into a reinvention of the authors at each moment, turning potentialities into limitations. This is not a simple issue, especially when we want to uphold that first person narratives are fruitful modalities for education and formation.

Another observation that could be made here is that, paradoxically, – and despite the huge diversity of uses that the works display – what is seen is the prevalence of a single model, characterized almost exclusively by the idea of life histories ‘at the service of projects’, to use Christine Josso’s (1999) expression. In the research/formation modality, besides our own works carried out along the lines of the ‘autobiographical process in formation’ (Dominicé, 1990; Josso, 1988; 1991), we have identified only one other work close to this category: the book by Roseli Cação Fontana (2000) *Como nos tornamos professoras?* [How

25. We would like to refer the reader to the text by Gaston Pineau, in which he builds a map of expressions used by different authors, taking as an entry point the word ‘life’ (biography, autobiography etc). His list does not include, therefore, many expressions and denominations that we found in the works analyzed in the present survey.

26. See, for example, the lists of works and authors that appear at the end of two compilations: that of Olga von Simson (1988) *Experimentos com histórias de vida* [Experiments with life histories], and that organized by Nóvoa and Finger (1988) *O método autobiográfico e a formação* [The autobiographical method and the formation]. Two other works should be mentioned here, in which the authors offer valuable contributions about the conceptual work indicated here by describing their theoretical trajectories in the work with life histories: “História de vida e projeto: a história de vida como projeto e as ‘histórias de vida’ a serviço de projetos” [Life history and project: life history as a project and the ‘life histories’ at the service of projects], by Christine Josso (1999), and “Autobiografias, pesquisa histórico-sociológica e educação” [Autobiographies, historical-sociological research, and education], by Zeila Demartini (2005).

do we become teachers?]. Thus, surprisingly, the model of educative biographies developed by the group of Geneva – whose ideas inspired so many works with life histories in Brazil – did not flourish amongst us. And, however, the great potential of the autobiographical studies resides precisely in their explicative/formative power, apart from constituting sources for the understanding of the peculiarities of formation and specificities of educative situations. In what concerns the graduate production, this criticism must be relativized by the consideration of the short time available to conduct the courses, added to the lack of experience of most young researchers, which do not give reason for much methodological daring.

Concerning the issue of identity, having in mind that it was the most recurrent theme in the works, we would like to make a few comments. The identity question is certainly one of the outstanding themes of our times. For this reason, we can say that this large number of works is part of a trend that has been intensifying for more than a decade in other countries, particularly in francophone contexts, in which the notion of identity has been adopted by those who want to understand, in the field of Education and Formation, how individual and collective changes take place. Jean-Marie Barbier (1996) considers that the notion of identity is a paradigm particularly useful to think and follow the social mutations and recompositions that happen these days. However, as its uses have been too varied and, besides, often followed by theoretical and epistemological imprecision, the notion of identity, according to him, has generated much confusion, to the point of putting its fecundity into question. That is why it becomes necessary and important to examine theoretical and conceptual aspects involved in this category. Considering these aspects and thinking in future works, some questions can be put: what makes teachers ask themselves so much about teacher identity, about their own identity? Would these questions be evidence of

a crisis in the profession, to which life histories seem to offer some hope? Why would be teachers asking so recurrently about their choices, their place, and the meanings they find in the profession? Could it be a search for the (re)invention of themselves? In such case, with which theoretical instruments?

Along the same lines, we believe that it is worth calling attention to a modality of research that has become frequent in the last years: the study by the researcher of his/her life history. In the case of the works analyzed in the present survey, mostly of the master level (with the two exceptions already mentioned), what could be observed was that this modality seems to have been used more to facilitate producing a work in a short space of time than to a theoretical choice based on theoretical convictions and clear assumptions. Having been involved in an autobiographical process, these works certainly brought dividends to their authors, but from an academic point of view few of them have anything to say. It is not, therefore, the case of denying the possibilities or the wealth that such works can bring, but of insisting on the need of dealing with theoretical instruments that only intellectual maturity can offer. Some exemplary cases can be mentioned: *Cheminer vers soi* [Trudge toward oneself], the thesis by Christine Josso later published as a book (Josso, 1991), and *Ensaïos de ego-história* [Essays of ego-history], a collection of texts by various historiographers – Agulhon, Chaunu, Duby, Girardet, Le Goff, Perrot and Rémond – which, encouraged by Pierre Nora, were led to narrate their own histories and their own trajectories using to that end the theoretical resources with which they had studied and analyzed other people's histories (Agulhon *et al.*, 1989). These are counterpoints perhaps too contrasting, but necessary to speak of the exigencies of a work of this nature.

These were some of the reflections that seemed to us to be worth pointing out in these final considerations, more within a spirit of openness to new analyses than of closure or ultimate conclusions. The intention here was to add new elements about the ways to conceive

and utilize the methodologies under study. In this sense, it is not too much to reaffirm once more, and despite the observed gaps, that the intense use made of autobiographies and life histories brought important data to the debate and deepening of questions about the educational research with regard to teacher formation and teaching profession, the focus of analysis of this

survey. The same cannot be said about gender issue which, contrary to the significant presence it had in the same period in other areas, did not appear as an important focus in the studies with autobiographies and life histories. This is, therefore, another indication we would like to register, among others that deserve to be carried further and explored in future studies.

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