



## Biographies of educators in Brazilian “dictionaries of people” (19th-21st centuries)<sup>1</sup>

Biografias de educadoras em “dicionários de gentes” brasileiras (Séculos XIX-XXI)

Biografías de educadoras en “diccionarios de gentes” brasileñas (Siglos XIX-XXI)

Ana Raquel Costa Dias

Universidade de Brasília (Brazil)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4534-0354>

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/8902645603057041>

[profa.anaraquel@gmail.com](mailto:profa.anaraquel@gmail.com)

Juliano Guerra Rocha

Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (Brazil)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7101-0116>

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/1944535179478135>

[professorjulianoguerra@gmail.com](mailto:professorjulianoguerra@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This article aims to analyze the biographical writing about Brazilian female educators, who occupied distinct spaces and times and were involved in cultural, economic, political and social projects. To this end, we selected the biographical entries of women who worked between the 19th and 21st centuries, the vast majority of whom were in teaching, and whose biographies were written about in “dictionaries of people”, two of them in particular: 1) *Dicionário de Educadores no Brasil: da Colônia aos dias atuais*, organized by Maria de Lourdes de Albuquerque Fávero and Jader de Medeiros Britto (2002) and 2) *Dicionário de Educadores e Educadoras em Goiás: Séculos XVIII-XXI*, organized by Diane Valdez (2017). The analysis demonstrated that, in addition to being reference material, biographical dictionaries participate in and constitute a facet of historiography, uncovering and revealing facts and people from our Brazilian history.

**Keywords:** Women educators; Biographies; History of Education.

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<sup>1</sup> English version by Ana Maria Dionísio. E-mail: [dionisio.anamaria@hotmail.com](mailto:dionisio.anamaria@hotmail.com).

## Resumo

Este artigo objetiva analisar a escrita biográfica sobre educadoras brasileiras, ocupantes de espaços e tempos distintos e inseridas em projetos culturais, econômicos, políticos e sociais. Para tanto, selecionamos os verbetes biográficos de mulheres que atuaram entre os séculos XIX e XXI, em sua grande maioria no magistério, e que foram biografadas em “dicionários de gentes”, em especial dois deles: 1) *Dicionário de Educadores no Brasil: da Colônia aos dias atuais*, organizado por Maria de Lourdes de Albuquerque Fávero e Jader de Medeiros Britto (2002) e 2) *Dicionário de Educadores e Educadoras em Goiás: Séculos XVIII-XXI*, organizado por Diane Valdez (2017). A análise demonstrou que, para além de material de consulta, os dicionários biográficos participam e constituem uma face da historiografia, descortinando e revelando fatos e pessoas da nossa história brasileira.

**Palavras-Chaves:** Mulheres educadoras; Biografias; História da Educação.

## Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la escritura biográfica sobre educadores brasileños, ocupantes de diferentes espacios y épocas e insertos en proyectos culturales, económicos, políticos y sociales. Para ello, seleccionamos las fichas biográficas de mujeres que actuaron entre los siglos XIX y XXI, la gran mayoría de ellas en la docencia, y que fueron biografiadas en “diccionarios de personas”, especialmente dos de ellas: 1) *Diccionario de Educadoras de Brasil: da Colonia hasta la actualidad*, organizado por Maria de Lourdes de Albuquerque Fávero y Jader de Medeiros Britto (2002) y 2) *Diccionario de Educadores de Goiás: Séculos XVIII-XXI*, organizado por Diane Valdez (2017). El análisis demostró que, además de ser material de referencia, los diccionarios biográficos participan y constituyen una faceta de la historiografía, descubriendo y revelando hechos y personajes de nuestra historia brasileña.

**Palabras clave:** Mujeres educadoras; Biografías; Historia de la Educación.

## Introduction

Dictionaries were created to organize the lexicon of a language, while also making an inventory of its words and expressions, as well as their meanings, in a given historical and geographical context. We agree with Orlandi (2006, p. 18) when she states that “[...] the dictionary has a history, it constructs and updates a memory, reproduces and shifts meanings, inscribing itself in the horizon of historically constituted sayings”.

Through dictionaries, a mode of lexicographic discourse and some “reading protocols” of these books were constituted. Chartier (1996), when discussing the “reading protocols” of a work, demonstrates that they are constructed through the intentions and achievements of the authors and editors, but they are made, especially, from their readers. Reading, for him, is a “[...] creative, inventive and productive practice [...]” (CHARTIER, 1996, p. 18). When it comes to reading a dictionary, this is even more evident, since the public generally seeks it out not for linear reading, but for random readings, provoked by demands that arise in their daily lives.

This type of book and its protocols have been appropriated throughout history by various areas of knowledge, so we cannot say that dictionaries are only in the domains of linguistics. Today there are various dictionaries, among which we can mention, for example: of engineering terms and expressions; of recipes; of botany; of literature; of history, including the biographical dictionary, the main source of this article.

It is essential to reiterate in this text, in an introductory way, the value of these dictionaries with biographical entries, also called by Valdez and Alves (2019) as “dictionaries of people”. These books group together stories of illustrious, notable and prestigious people, as well as little-known people, less socially and economically distinguished, more modest and long-unnoticed. These dictionaries are characterized as leading and supporting sources in various scientific investigations, by offering basic and unexpected knowledge about Brazilian or foreign people.

These materials contain multifaceted elements that associate historical biography with other themes and fields, as they are studies prepared “[...] with great methodological and scientific rigor, with comprehensive and plural content, aimed not only at peers – researchers, professors and students of history, but also at the general public” (AZEVEDO, 2021, p. 218).

These writings, inserted, most of the time, in time, space and theme segments, have the capacity to give visibility to intellectual and personal narratives, constructing and revealing stories. Abreu (1998) explains that dictionaries of biographical entries are made up of a sum of information and a wealth of data, made available to all people, with the ability to disseminate knowledge in a democratic manner.

It is interesting to highlight the ability of dictionaries about humans to socialize historical understandings, avoiding stereotypical and standardized compositions, authorizing an initial construction in the historiographical study, imposing themselves not as brief summaries, but also as indicators of productions and actions carried out by various people. Thus, there is a growth in the construction of materials that sought and seek to problematize the lives of black people, indigenous people, women, workers, and prisoners, beyond elitist and heteronormative structures. However, there is still much to be done to reveal stories of lives that are in the footnotes or not mentioned in the pages of history books.

Valdez and Alves (2019) warn that, since the 1990s, biographies compiled in dictionaries have been reconsidered, mainly because they are written by academic experts. The researchers emphasize that the number of materials of this nature is broad, segmented into areas of knowledge (philosophy, literature, psychology, history, natural sciences, music, etc.), regional sections (names by state, city, family, etc.), specific themes (names from the press, characters from works/periods of literature, athletes, military personnel, presidents, etc.), among others.

Therefore, there is a historiographical exercise that is growing, taking up space in digital repositories of academic research, extending to bookstore shelves, and establishing itself as scientific writing. The history portrayed in these books is generated by different people, who speak of other people, who did not act alone and are representative of a historical context. Biographical entries, organized in dictionaries, books, and encyclopedias are ways of teaching history, that is, in addition to being established as a historiographical practice, they also have a pedagogical property. Le Goff (1999, p. 20) had already stated in the biography he wrote of São Luís: “[...] I was thus convinced of this frightening evidence: historical biography is one of the most difficult ways of doing history”.

Although it is not the central objective of these materials, which are still didactic, historical biographical production challenges biographers to face some issues, as explained by Azevedo (2021), such as the role of the entry, its normative power and the ability to crystallize parameters; the position assumed by the historian in the selection of historical events and facts, considering the discarding of themes, the silence; thinking of the entry as an invitation to the reader, in order to lead him/her to reflect about the character being written about.

Therefore, the “dictionaries of people” are a way of organizing and systematizing these historical biographies. Many of these could be presented here, with their own characteristics and revealing notions; however, we selected two dictionaries of this genre for this study, which presented educators’ life stories and work active in Brazilian teaching. One of them was national in scope, launched at the end of the 20th century, and the other was regional in scope, with its first edition eighteen years later. We are talking about the *Dicionário de Educadores no Brasil: da Colônia aos dias atuais*, organized by Maria de Lourdes de Albuquerque Fávero and Jader de Medeiros Britto, published in 1999 (with a 2nd edition in 2002) and the *Dicionário de Educadores e Educadoras em Goiás: Séculos XVIII-XXI*, organized by Diane Valdez and published in 2017. The criteria for choosing both dictionaries are due to the fact that the work by Fávero and Britto (2002) is one of the pioneers in this mode of production, which brings together biographical entries on Brazilian educational figures, involving researchers linked to the academic world, and was one of the references that guided the work undertaken by Valdez (2017), which stands out, as we will see later, due to the volume of biographies at a regional level.

Aware of the various dictionaries published, we prioritized dictionaries that problematized, through their entries, life stories of people involved in the educational field, considering a temporal difference between both materials, in order to observe the growth or not of female biographical entries, in addition to the need to value regional scientific efforts.

The aforementioned dictionaries have a temporal scope that covers the period from the sixteenth century to the twenty-first century. The dictionary with a national scope has one hundred and forty-four entries and the one with a regional scope has one hundred and four entries. Of this production as a whole, we were particularly interested in the entries on women, which total sixty-eight. Therefore, this article assumes as its objective: to analyze the biographical writing about Brazilian educators<sup>2</sup>, occupants of distinct spaces and times and involved in cultural, economic, political and social projects.

Similar to what Nobre (2007) proposed, we understand that the names presented in the dictionaries analyzed include a significant number of people who worked in the Brazilian educational universe in the period preceding the publication of the works, but not only that, it is a historical record that involves social agents and productions of different genres. But we must understand that educational practice and experience are not limited to monumental actions and work proportions, because history must be written and spoken through multiple characters and situations.

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to clarify that, even though some of the people in the biography are not Brazilian nationals, we have given them this title, as they moved to Brazil and contributed to the country's education.

The history of humanity is marked by great events and, linked to them, by great characters. For the observer who does not care about details, the story spoken only from these great events and great names is enough. There is, however, much to be added to these great events. It is the small parallel events, isolated or not, that contributed to their strengthening. As for the great characters, naturally they were never alone (NOBRE, 2007, p.319).

Historical biographical records allow us to explain all these people, both known and unknown, giving them historiographical value, since they are all important and active in the construction of the history of Brazilian education. Dictionaries that focus on the biographies of educators allow us to record a broad movement of ideas, domains and representations. Therefore, it is important to recognize:

the contributions of women who occupied public scenes in different historical periods, promoted empowerment and inspired future generations of educators to be present, in body and voice, whether through the productions created, training given, teachings, speeches, resistance. By writing their biographies, critical reflections were constructed on the conditions they experienced, overcame and fought against, understanding that such situations generated challenges and directly interfered in the changes they sought to create. It is interesting to highlight the intentionality of the biographical exercise of educators, involving a gender discussion about the educational and everyday realities of women active in individual and collective spaces. The investigative power lies in the existence of a theoretical adjustment capable of revealing historical educational practices, considering their complexities, weaknesses and the characters behind them. Studying and writing biographies of educators means problematizing, in accordance with the beliefs, opportunities and influences that affected not only the teaching trajectories, but also the entire professional and personal development of the participants and the related community (DIAS, 2023, p.114).

Furthermore, the proposal is to reflect about the educational potential that historical biographies have, especially those focused on women, with their social role often forgotten. The notion of contribution to historiography has a lot to do with Beloch's (1978) justification for the creation of the *Dicionário Histórico-Biográfico Brasileiro*, in which he warned about the lack of knowledge about the history of contemporary Brazil. The glaring lack of information pointed out by the author, the difficult location of sources and the precarious access supported the proposed biographical composition. From this, we affirm that the originality of biographical entries lies in the writing based on varied documentary sources, with awareness of inaccuracies, but still producing a necessary and plural history.

For our purpose, it is important to clarify that the use of the word educator/s is based on what Valdez (2017) explains about a meaning that goes beyond the hermeneutic, taking into account the historical, social and cultural contexts.

The term is associated with profuse meanings, a vocabulary that moves through concepts such as: instruct, teach, transmit, advise, explain, train, guide, train, form, indoctrinate, tame, pontificate,

lecture, accompany, etc. Following the historical complexity, those responsible for this group are named: teacher, mentor, master, trainer, wise man, reader, sir, aunt, mistress, preceptor, advisor, counselor, teacher, layman, instructor, professor, priest and other designations that time and practice impose (VALDEZ, 2017, p. 16).

We thus outlined an investigation into sixty-eight biographical entries, published in two dictionaries, taking as reference the following problematization: what are the similarities and dissonances among the historical biographical writings about Brazilian educators active between the 19th and 21st centuries?

In this sense, we considered for the analysis, especially, the thematic categories “social and geographical origin”, “education” and “performance” of the biographies. That said, we organized this work into three subsequent topics. In the first, we present in a comprehensive manner the two dictionaries, specifying how many and which women are the biographies. In the second item, we made some approximations between the biographical entries selected in the dictionaries of Fávero and Britto (2002) and Valdez (2017), allowing not the construction of models about being an educator in Brazil in the period under study, but the understanding of women’s historical writing aspects – educators and Brazilians –, through a national dictionary and another regional one. In the final considerations, we present a reflection on the issue of the use of historical sources to create biographies, pointing out issues that it needs to be further explored in the elaboration of biographies.

### **Educators profiled in the dictionaries by Fávero and Britto (2002) and Valdez (2017)**

The dictionaries of biographical entries organized by Fávero and Britto (2002) and Valdez (2017) sought to narrate the participants’ lives in the history of Brazilian education, men and women who produced teaching materials for school use, were principals of schools, writers, politicians, among other occupations. They received awards, occupied spaces in urban and rural areas, walked among structures of domination and power relations, they were resistant and/or suffered influences in line with their actions.

The entries present a diversity of valuable characteristics that deserve reflection, but, for this article, we decided to problematize the women present in the dictionaries in question. We warn the reader in advance that they are not the majority, but they are present. Deciding to talk about them is due to a certainly evident conception, which is the fact that they are the predominant participants in our Brazilian education, which leads us to the notion of feminization of teaching, very well discussed by other researchers<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, in addition to the circumstances that characterize them as protagonists of different educational spaces, problematizing them also means denouncing the existence of silences about women. Despite being combated, as can be seen in works that bring women as the object of research, silences still persist and need to be confronted. Navarro-Swain (2008) points out the deception that permeates the suppression of writing about women; for the researcher, political silence is the worst of all, as it feeds invisibility. And when we speak of silence, we are also speaking of choice, as Veras and Pedro (2014)

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<sup>3</sup> Regarding this issue, see Nogueira and Schelbauer (2007); Yannoulas (2013) and Werle (2005).

clarify when they point out that political choices, inherent in historiographical work, end up selecting to the detriment of other themes, other subjects and other stories. Regarding this issue, Fávero and Britto (2002), in the presentation of the 2nd edition of the dictionary they organized, clarify that, from one hundred and forty-four entries, only twenty-three are about women, who are listed in the table below.

**Chart 1.** Biographies in the *Dicionário de Educadores no Brasil: da colônia aos dias atuais*(FÁVERO; BRITTO, 2002)

Biography	Date of birth	Year of death
Ana Maria Poppovic	1928	1983
Anna Amélia Queiroz Carneiro de Mendonça	1896	1971
Antonia Ribeiro de Castro Lopes	1874	1971
Aparecida Joly Gouveia	1919	1998
Armanda Álvaro Alberto	1892	1974
Bertha Maria Júlia Lutz	1894	1976
Branca de Almeida Fialho	1896	1965
Cecília Benevides de Carvalho Meireles	1901	1964
Helena Antipoff	1892	1974
Heloisa Marinho	1903	1994
Henriqueta Martins Catharino	1886	1969
Iracema Furtado Soares de Meireles	1907	1982
Isabel Urbana de Albuquerque Gondim	1839	1933
Júlia Lopes de Almeida	1862	1934
Juracy Silveira	1898	1991
Luíza Ribeiro Machado	1902	Not informed
Maria Clara Machado	1921	2001
Maria Nilde Mascellani	1931	1999
Nísia Floresta Brasileira Augusta	1810	1885
Noêmia Saraiva de Mattos Cruz	1894	1987
Noemy da Silveira Rudolfer	1902	1980
Otaíza de Oliveira Romanelli	1944	1978
Zilah Mattos Totta	1917	1997

**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

The twenty-three entries about women in the Fávero and Britto dictionary, in the 2002 edition, represent a very high number when compared to the first edition of this dictionary, in 1999, which had only five women and sixty-nine men. The organizers reiterate the desire that the material may continue to serve as a reference for the study of Brazilian educational thought, understanding that “[...] education integrates both the sociocultural, political and economic processes with its protagonists, as well as their manifestations in terms of knowledge and power materialized in social conflicts”. With this, they demonstrate the ideological plurality that permeates the protagonists of the Brazilian educational scene “[...] in the face of concrete situations they experience when facing specific circumstances and problems [...]” also revealing the “[...] creative ingenuity and tenacity in the attempt to solve emerging problems” (FÁVERO; BRITTO, 2002, p. 26). Valdez (2017), in turn, organized a dictionary with one hundred and four entries, of which forty-five are about educators, as recorded below.

**Chart 2.** Biographies in the *Dicionário de Educadores e Educadoras em Goiás: Séculos XVIII-XXI* (VALDEZ, 2017)

Biography	Date of Birth	Year of Death
Aldaíza Maia da Silva Viana	1958	2003
Aldenora Alves Correia	1917	1982
Amália Hermano Teixeira	1916	1991
Amélia de Castro Lima	1900	1971
Anna Lins dos Guimarães Peixoto Bretas	1889	1985
Augusta de Faro Fleury Curado	1865	1929
Aurora de Freitas Teixeira	1903	1991
Dalísia Elisabeth Martins Doles	1937	2000
Edna de Roure Aguiar	1922	1960
Ely Camargo	1930	2014
Flora Augusta de Alencar	1924	2008
Floracy Alves Pinheiro	1929	2002
Floracy Artiaga Mendes	1912	1978
Graciema Machado de Freitas	1906	1985
Haydée Jayme Ferreira	1926	1999
Irmhild Wüst	1945	2014
Joiza Pereira de Oliveira Camilo	1942	2010
Laurentina Murici de Medeiros	1918	2010
Ledonias Franco Garcia	1947	2015
Lenice Alves Teixeira	1950	2015
Leodegária de Jesus	1889	1978
Lívia Abrahão do Nascimento	1954	2012
Luisa Joaquina da Silva Marques	1858	1945
Maria Barbosa Reis	1896	1981
Maria Cristina Fungaro Baragatti	1950	2009
Maria de Lourdes Silva	1928	2007
Maria do Rosário Neto de Velasco Figueiredo	1894	1959
Maria Emília Martins Soares de Mendonça	1919	1988
Maria Leal Lúcio	1921	2009
Maria Lucy Ferreira	1933	2013
Maria Revy Veloso de Andrade	1929	2005
Maria Romana da Purificação	1800	1873
Maria Victória de Moraes Brandão	1842	1911
Marietta Telles Machado	1934	1987
Marlene Teixeira Figueiredo	1947	2001
Ofélia Sócrates Nascimento Monteiro	1900	1986
Ondina da Cunha Bastos Albernaz	1905	1994
Pacífica Josefina de Castro	1846	1933
Regina Hermano de Brito	1949	2014
Regina Lacerda	1919	1992
Silvina Ermelinda Xavier de Brito	1848	1920
Terezinha Vilela Rezende	1944	2010
Verbena Moreira Soares de Sousa Lisita	1965	2007
Yêda Oscarlina Schmaltz	1941	2003
Zilda Diniz Fontes	1920	1984

**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

Valdez (2017) warns of times when the past seems to have no importance and historical facts are distorted and distanced from true knowledge. He invites us to read the biographical entries of men and women through the lens of History. He also warns that “teaching is a political and social act. Education does not happen in a hidden, harmonious, idyllic and romantic place; it is exhausting, demanding, surprising and full of contradictions. Good and bad. That is life!” (VALDEZ, 2017, p. 22-23).



The justifications presented for the organization of these works demonstrate how the biographical exercise can be constructed from different intentions and at the same time reveal various itineraries of the History of Education. Avelar and Schmidt (2018), regarding what biography can do and be today, explain that it can tell someone's life in thousands of pages, but the reader will never be convinced of an accurate image of the character being read. That said, they explain the dispensability of a linear biography, with characters that offer conduct models.

By problematizing the construction of biographical materials, we endorse what Le Goff (1989) proposed that a biographical exercise should be above all history, the narration of a life. For the author, it is truly necessary to respect the flaws and gaps, the discontinuities and disjunctions, because the historical biography is not only the collection “[...] of everything that can and should be known about a character” (LE GOFF, 1989, p. 21).

Based on the concepts explained, we reiterate the value of historical biographical writing for understanding the History of Education, since the individual “[...] does not exist except in a network of diversified social relations, and this diversity also allows him to develop his game” (LE GOFF, 1999, p. 26). In other words, the historical biographical proposal about educators allows us to uncover demands and relations, in a kind of mutual bet between what is individual and collective, but capturing influenced and influencing orders. Reflecting about the educators’ life stories is to understand a historical educational web, made up of an immense amount of advances, setbacks, omissions, and resistance. “Knowledge of society is necessary to see an individual character being constituted and living in it” (LE GOFF, 1999, p. 26).

Biographical research presents a unique opportunity to give visibility to the actions of anonymous social subjects, including teachers at all levels, including lay people with little or no training in the intellectual field, since what is investigated are their educational practices and the social reality of the delimited context. In fact, biographical research brings to light specific actions and performances of these subjects, especially in places not covered by the actions of the government linked to public education policies. In several spaces of this nature, one can find a vast amount of educational practices of these workers, who, despite being helpless and unassisted by the State, performed and perform their functions overcoming adversities of all kinds. Thus, the use of educational biographical research about these professionals not only makes their identities visible, but also clarifies and raises awareness among all those who become aware of this research regarding the social and political function of these subjects, who until then were “anonymous”, workers and promoters of an indispensable social good: education (XAVIER; VASCONCELOS; XAVIER, 2018, p. 1026).

Therefore, even though the materials are different in terms of time and space, and published with different objectives and with their own methodological precautions, we observe in the dictionaries of Fávero and Britto (2002) and Valdez (2017) a considerable increase in the number of women biographies, indicating an effort that also involves the search for regional sources. Growth, in itself, explains a theoretical and methodological change that has driven a production on women, certainly from the process arising from reactions that permeate the field of history and historiography of education, due to the effervescence of gender studies in Brazil and in the world, especially at the end of the 20th century and during the 21st century.

The importance, among other possibilities, is mainly in what Boldorini and Meira (2019) explain about women's history as a significant act of breaking a patriarchal society, placing female memories in a space of centrality.

Soihet and Pedro (2007) analyze this movement at national and international levels, warning that studies of women's history and gender cannot be understood as isolated approaches, as they interpenetrate and reject the universal notion of human being, postulating the existence of “multiple identities”. The authors point out that “multiple black, indigenous, mixed-race, poor, working-class women, many of them feminists, claimed a ‘difference’ – within the difference” (SOIHET; PEDRO, 2007, p. 287).

Our choice for this paper is to address women educators, a difference of a social and professional nature, so that we understand teaching not as something that imprisoned or defined their stories, but as a particularity that brought together the stories of the women biographies in the selected dictionaries.

We therefore agree with Soihet (2003), when he says that the biographical approach to women can “[...] help restore the multiplicity of female experiences, the multiplicity of ways in which they live their constraints, the multiplicity of paths they follow to assert themselves as full individuals”. Based on this concept, we believe it is essential to reflect on women's life stories and how they are being constructed “[...] as a group capable of becoming a collective subject of its own liberation, seeking to participate in humanity according to its own terms” (SOIHET, 2002, p. 48).

Based on this perspective, seeking to gather individual and collective traits and possibilities of approximation and separation among the educators whose biographies are in the dictionaries in question, in the next topic we will explain who are the women who occupied the educational scene in Brazil. We warn that our purpose is not to endorse the stories of exceptional women, since they have already been written about. We even consider it fair to move away from this idea of exceptionality, which ends up excluding and omitting. Vergara (1999) explains well the dangers of such a notion, which calls as exceptional any woman who resists the norms of a certain time.

By choosing to work with this notion of exceptionality, we risk reproducing the hegemonic vision that has, up until now, reduced women's historical experiences to a normative or essentialist femininity, outside of which what exists is an anomaly and a transgression of the natural order (VERGARA, 1999, p. 227).

We will now present mainly the data on our object of study, women educators, and an analysis of the historical writing about them, based on our sources, the biographical entries in the Brazilian “dictionaries of people” by Fávero and Britto (2002) and Valdez (2017).

### **Similarities among biographical entries about educators in the dictionaries by Fávero and Britto (2002) and Valdez (2017)**

As we have noted, the *Dicionário de Educadores no Brasil: da Colônia aos dias atuais* (FÁVERO; BRITTO, 2002) is made up of twenty-three biographical entries on women, while the *Dicionário de Educadores e Educadoras em Goiás: Séculos XVIII-XXI* (VALDEZ, 2017) presents forty-five.

Valdez (2017) points out that the dictionary by Fávero and Britto inspired the organization of a regional production. The people portrayed in the biography, as he warns, “[...] come closer and further apart in time (more than three centuries), places (cities, countryside, towns), spaces (school, library, social movements, unions) and practices (methods, perspectives, movements)”

(VALDEZ, 2017, p. 15). It is interesting to highlight the effort not to prioritize periods, spaces, or a genre, however, “[...] biographies were numerically concentrated in one time (20th century), two places ( Goiás City and Goiânia) and more biographies of male educators (fifty-nine) than female educators (forty-five)” (VALDEZ, 2017, p. 15).

The greater number of women in Valdez's dictionary (2017) compared to Fávero and Britto's (2002) can be explained by two main reasons: 1) the editor's focus, who, as we have previously warned, opted for the terminology “educators”, not restricting herself to men and women who were teachers in formal schools, working with a concept of non-formal schooling and the many ways of providing education, not limited to a school space and teaching; 2) the 15-year time gap between the two productions is considerable to confirm the movement in the History of Education, which began to contemplate studies about women and gender issues with greater effervescence.

The women biographies in both dictionaries worked predominantly in the 20th century. Educators who were born and lived in the 20th century, and this may be a sign of the greater exposure and availability of sources. Care should be taken to ensure that the notion of scarcity of sources is not used or endorsed, since, according to Veras and Pedro (2014), “[...] after all, aren't the sources themselves the product of the interpretative and inventive process of the historiographical operation, resulting from the selection and classification made by historians?” (VERAS; PEDRO, 2014, p. 96). The period considered may also mean an era of greater production of pedagogical publications, as well as a greater number of women working in teaching, factors that have a strong connection with the economic and social scenes characteristic of that period.

Regarding the difference in biographies of men and women, Valdez (2017) expressed discomfort, highlighting the historical feminization of teaching. This reality was mitigated, with the aim of considering names beyond the school environment, “[...] heading towards the interior of artistic, literary, union, social, journalistic and other movements, where educational processes also take place”. Along with this, the organizer attests to the concern in talking about, recognizing and illuminating anonymous people, who frequented different terrains, contributed to the formation of generations, overcoming the projection of the “great figures”, “[...] who, generally, are men belonging to a local elite to which, naturally, the responsibility for countless individual and ‘benevolent’ deeds is attributed” (VALDEZ, 2017, p. 16).

Despite the educators, laywomen, teachers, pedagogues, writers, coordinators and public leaders, there are stories that broke with the male monopoly in literature and that “[...] refute the place of silence imposed by history, because in their time, each of them was constituted in the confrontations that became teachings. They are numerically smaller (here), but always, extraordinarily, brave, determined and courageous!” (VALDEZ, 2017, p. 19).

Next, based on the reading of the sixty-eight entries of educators in the dictionaries in question, we record the similarities and discrepancies between the biographies, not with the intention of shaping a profile of the women who occupied the Brazilian educational scene between the 19th and 21st centuries, but of approximating their trajectories and the way in which biographical writing about them was constituted.

Regarding the origin of the subjects of the biography, they were mainly women born in urban areas, on Brazilian soil: Bahia, Goiás, Maranhão, Mato Grosso, Minas Gerais, Pará, Paraná, Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Norte, Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo; and abroad, such as Argentina and Russia, but who made their careers in Brazil. There is a predominance of women who were born in one location, but who migrated to another, which occurred for various reasons. As the biographers record, most of them, while still children, moved due, predominantly, to the work demands of their parents, in search of better living conditions. The issue of women's migration to accompany their husbands appears in some

biographies, but it is not imperative among the educators' trajectories. In Valdez's dictionary (2017), the work of educators is concentrated mainly in the interior of Goiás, while in Fávero and Britto's (2002) dictionary, it is concentrated in the capitals of southeastern Brazil, especially in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

Many categories and possibilities could be problematized here, such as the studies carried out by these educators, positions occupied, positions held, publications produced, speeches given. However, it is important to highlight that some entries have a wealth of details and historical clues that are invaluable, characterizing the subject of the biography in an almost absolute way, with specifics about education, training, performance, personal life and other valuable details.

On the other hand, some others present few details. The difference in content of sources and notions is typical of historical biographical writing, especially when it comes to women. We cannot forget that historical writing itself, for a long time produced exclusively by men, sought to speak and record the stories of men, and this directly affected the organization and collection of sources about women.

If the historiographical operation is governed by a problem posed by the historian himself, based on the motivations of his own time and the new horizons of understanding history that it opens up, every historical fact consequently becomes a construction of the historian. What can establish as a historical fact this or that piece of information, that piece of data or this other aspect of the lived reality that was recorded in different sources, is the problem proposed by the historian, the historical outline he constructed, not to mention the theoretical horizon constituted (BARROS, 2012, p. 318).

Amidst a possible lack of clues, we demonstrate the value of the effort and dedication in writing biographies of these educators. It is not the number of pages that defines or will define the historiographical value of a given narrative, but the writing itself, recording them in a significant and essential way. Some stories, especially from the 19th century, have few documentary sources, which results in a writing with gaps, typical of the biography genre. What remains are the small clues, the family origins, especially of the male figure – father, brothers, grandfathers, uncles.

Therefore, we clarify that the data highlighted caught our attention because they are present in a substantial number of writings. Some entries do not mention initial studies, only their performance; some highlight training for teaching, others the productions materialized in books, magazines, newspapers. The need for this excerpt is inherent to the historiographical operation and is intrinsically linked to the availability of sources in their various forms.

As for social and economic origins, the educators in the biographies were daughters of politicians, landowners, merchants, farmers, teachers, etc. There are also those whose official documents do not record their filiation. Considering that most women, as shown in Tables 1 and 2, were born and spent part of their youth between the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, problematizing the educational context, especially the school context, is of utmost importance.

Concerning the Brazilian imperial period, Cunha and Silva (2010) state that among the various difficulties that exist, in the historiographical core, the most distressing is the “[...] absence of official records on education during this period; the archives that exist are already known to be imprecise and marked by the conventional generalization of the masculine, making it difficult to identify the number of female students” (CUNHA; SILVA, 2010, p. 98).

Cunha and Silva (2010) also clarify that, after the consolidation of the country's independence process, there began to be a strong concern about the educational system that would serve the colonial elite, which included women, establishing the obligation of primary education. Amid the scarcity of schools and the low demand for them in more remote areas, the tradition of female education being provided by the family was maintained. However, later, with the creation of royal schools, a new perspective began to exist for girls, “[...] who would have a differentiated education, in separate classes, with the teaching of teachers of the same sex” (CUNHA; SILVA, 2010, p. 99). However, the requirement for female teachers exposed another real problem:

the situation of female education was more serious than the already precarious primary education, so that the filling of teacher vacancies would be through public examinations and by people of the same sex as the students. The fact is that women had difficulty passing these examinations, although the level of requirement for primary school teachers was only the mastery of reading, writing and the four arithmetic operations. This orientation created a vicious circle, in which women had no space to expand their classes precisely because of the lack of qualified teachers (CUNHA; SILVA, 2010, p. 99).

In the exposed context, in order to train teachers to work in primary education, the *Escolas Normais* emerged, a space frequented by the majority of the biographies in the regional dictionary. That said, the identified data endorses the historical issue of female education, which became a social and economic concern only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Louro (2015) clarifies that the creation of *Escolas Normais*, the processes of urbanization and industrialization, the presence of immigrants, the growth of different social sectors, the expansion of commercial activities, the establishment of new habits and behaviors, among other factors, they were decisive in the origin of the well-known feminization of teaching, a process also observed in other countries. The author explains that this process occurred beyond the simple lack of interest of men in teaching, who sought other professions. Today seen as natural, women's activity in Brazilian classrooms was the target of disputes, controversies, and defenses, based on arguments from feminine and child psychology, religious dogmas, hygienist discourses, the idea of vocation, the need to control female bodies destined solely for marital relations and motherhood, and the concept of femininity. As Louro (2015) explains, this process allows us to think that the history of women in classrooms is also a history of social power relations, so that this process produced not only “ideal” teachers, but also “deviant”, “adjusted” and “inadequate” teachers, and that these women:

In Brazilian classrooms and other social spaces, they lived with men, children, and other women in different and intricate relations, in which they suffered and exercised power. Thinking of them only as subjugated may impoverish their history too much, since, even in the moments and situations in which they were most intended to silence and subdue them, they were also capable of creating discordant discourses, building resistance, and subverting behavior. Constructing a history in reverse, exclusively based on the trajectory of those who were revolutionary, may also result in a reduced and idealized construction (LOURO, 2015, p. 478-479).

Tambara (1998) reflects on the process of feminization of the teaching profession in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in the 19th century, but which can be extended to a national perspective, in which he states that the profile of public education teachers is predominantly characterized by women and teachers. The thesis proposed by the researcher, in addition to demonstrating that women were the protagonists of the movement for the creation and implementation of the *Escolas Normais*, allows us to understand that being a teacher was a way of authorizing Brazilian women to occupy public spaces.

By analyzing the entries, we can see this situation in which, over the decades, a notable presence of women in other school environments appears in the historical record, such as in extension and improvement courses, something that is contemporary, but proves how biographical writing follows and is symptomatic of a time and a historical space. In the materials, we find everything from the educator who did not attend any official school environment to the one who attended a doctorate course. Santana (2014) explains that it was in the midst of a sandy terrain that women took their first steps

in the institutionalization of an effectively legitimate education that did not limit women to the private sphere of home care, making it possible for them to enroll in more professional courses that also included women in the public sphere of a society that was so stratified with roles already established for each gender (SANTANA, 2014, p. 145).

Still regarding this space, within the state of Goiás, Santos and Abreu (2022) explain that the *Escola Normal* had the duty to disseminate knowledge standardized by the current government, resulting in the teachers' training "[...] in accordance with the profile required by law for primary schools, especially for school groups" (SANTOS; ABREU, 2022, p. 111). They also explain that, in Goiás, the organization of the elementary education system and the teachers' training occurred after the Additional Act of 1834, with the enactment of Law No. 13 of 1835. The first *Escola Normal* in Goiás was effectively installed in 1884, in the capital of Goiás, today's City of Goiás, and with the advent of republican Brazil, there was the consolidation and expansion of these schools throughout the state (CANEZIN; LOUREIRO, 1994).

Religious choices are also present, especially in the women's narratives born and raised in an imperial country, in which control of social life was the responsibility of the Church. We are talking about women who lived with local elites, but also experienced poverty up close, and throughout their lives many upon reaching adulthood, distanced themselves from religious congregations and activities that they had attended since childhood, revealing that devotional activities were imposed for many years in childhood and youth controlled by the family and the Church. Nevertheless, there are educators who attended religious institutions for basic education.

A key point is the school group. It was part of the educators' history, whether as a space for study or teaching. This is no coincidence, since this institution was an option and a new model of school organization created at the end of the 19th century. Initially intended to educate the sons and daughters of the elite, it began to serve the popular masses especially from the 20th century onwards.

Regarding this issue, Souza (2004) clarifies that school groups emerged in a national cultural project that had a clear conception of teaching focused on character formation "[...] through learning social discipline – obedience, cleanliness, order, punctuality, love of work, honesty, respect for authorities, moral virtues and civic-patriotic values necessary for the formation of the spirit of nationality" (SOUZA, 2004, p. 127).

According to Abreu (2018), within the state of Goiás, between 1919 and 1930, sixteen school groups had been created, located in the cities: Campo Formoso, Rio Verde, Ipameri, Pirenópolis, Jaraguá, Cidade de Goiás, Morrinhos, Bela Vista, Catalão, Trindade, Porto Nacional, Santa Rita do Paranaíba, Caiapônia, Anápolis and Jataí. The researcher explains that it was only in 1925, however, that the groups were regulated by the government, through Decree No. 8538, of February 12th.

The dictionaries by Fávero and Britto (2002) and Valdez (2017) also highlight the presence of female professors and researchers, active in scientific events in the area of education at a national level and some with international projection. They were speakers, invited guests, defended theses, with criticality and clarification about different knowledge, did speeches about the problems of rural education, the guidelines for primary education, illiteracy, infrastructure, school organization, the education of people considered to have disabilities, school theater, etc.

The women's presence in leadership positions, such as directors, secretaries, etc., is also noteworthy women, directors of public agencies, etc. The data shows educators who are active not only in the school environment, but also in public and private administration, at national and regional levels.

Productions such as poetry, novels, journalistic records, translations, theater, school publications, academic books, among other exercises, also draw attention, revealing, among many views, the women's actions who occupied the public scene and educated through activities beyond the classroom, through words. These were women who wrote about themselves and about others, including as an act of resistance in different historical times and spaces.

## Final considerations

We understand that the biographical entries present not only in the dictionaries presented, but in others available, are a way of explaining tensions, interactions and mutual adjustments of the individual and social planes with their confluences, because, after all, “[...] individuals are only constituted as such from multiple social mediations and, in the same way, society results from varied and contradictory relation among individuals” (SCHMIDT, 2017, p. 21).

As Dias (2023) explained, such intellectual projects are consolidated, despite uncertainties and questions, because they are scientific efforts willing to share knowledge not yet addressed by another way of writing history. Associating the History of Education with the biographical writing of women has the intention of “[...] telling stories about educators, producers, teachers, directors and contributing to the historiographical work based on contradictions, hesitations and perceptions, in addition to a narcissistic satisfaction” (DIAS, 2023, p. 41).

The dictionaries used here as sources reveal different inquiries, evidencing a profound quantitative difference between women and men who are biographed. Thus, although it is possible to identify and affirm an increase in biographical research on women, much still needs to be done, especially in the intersectional context.

The study carried out revealed that the categories of race and ethnicity do not appear in most biographical entries, denouncing some possibilities: a) the theoretical and methodological difficulty on the biographers' part in articulating the biography in an intersectional historical dynamic; b) the absence of sources or the impasses in accessing them, which attest to these characteristics; c) the objection to understanding that phenotypic characteristics, such as skin color, and characteristics such as tribal affiliation, religion, and tradition need to be considered in an indispensable way in historical biographical writing.

In this regard, in the *Dicionário do Movimento Operário*, Batalha (2009) warns about the lack of indication of data on ethnicity/color in the sources investigated for the preparation of the entries, attesting that with the exception of police records, most documents are silent about a person's color. The *Enciclopédia Negra*, organized by Gomes, Lauriano and Schwarcz (2021) brings more than four hundred biographical entries, of black people, of different sex, gender and sexual orientation. The organization of the work justifies that there is a great and embarrassing silence, in the archives, manuals and textbooks, about the immense black enslaved population, in the same way about freed black people and their descendants.

Therefore, biographical entries are a way of presenting aspects of people's lives and are written based on historical sources. Regarding this topic, finally, we would like to highlight the sources used by authors to write about educators in the dictionaries of Fávero and Britto (2002) and Valdez (2017).

Aware that the traces used to write history need to be viewed with caution and criticality, we understand that bringing the perspective presented serves to explain where the clues about women are found and how biographical writing can be diversified and constructed in different ways.

The sources referenced in the entries range from bibliographical sources, including other entries, to periodicals, pedagogical press for school purposes, to filmographies, interviews, among others. There is a predominance of periodicals, which fit into the profile of documentary sources and have their own characteristics that enrich historical writing, dealing with both the personal and professional aspects of a person. An example of this is the emphasis given to the writings of educators, demonstrating that often the approach to biographical research occurs first through the productions of the one's biography.

The discussion about the production of biographical dictionaries involves challenges that deserve recognition. It is a tedious exercise, at the very least, constructed by several voices, which demands intellectual investment, intrinsic dedication to research and the use of a diversity of sources. There is, at the same time, a concern with dissemination, updating and socialization, with the main purpose of producing relevant historical knowledge. After all, as Abreu (2014, p. 96) asserts, "presenting a set of biographies covering a long historical period places us before different social phenomena and allows us to compare how individuals reacted in different situations".

The research undertaken demonstrated, above all, the cyclical movement of political, economic, cultural and other developments and developments, directly interfering in what we know as historical writing. It is necessary to uncover more stories, so that biographical operations can be constructed regularly, revealing more and more Brazilian educators, inserted in diverse scenarios and amidst influenced and influencing orders.

We hope, above all, that the movement of historical biographical construction continues to expand and reveal and record other stories, especially those still unimaginable, but which are out there and need to be told. It goes beyond duty and merit, imposing itself through the certainty of the need for a plural historiography. We need writing that reveals different women, whether black, white, *quilombola*, indigenous or others, poor or elite, Brazilian and foreign, outside of heteronormative standards, public and private spaces, etc.

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