



**Public school and memory: retired teachers' experiences from the municipality of Portão
(Rio Grande do Sul)**

Escola pública e memória: vivências de professoras aposentadas do município de Portão
(Rio Grande do Sul)

Escuela pública y memoria: experiencias de docentes jubilados del municipio de Portão
(Rio Grande do Sul)

Sandra Maria Costa dos Passos Colling
Universidade Feevale (Brasil)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3094-1111>
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/8700010415114079>
sandracolling@gmail.com

Magna Lima Magalhães
Universidade Feevale (Brasil)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9661-4178>
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/8030701386970471>
magna@feevale.br

Ana Luiza Carvalho da Rocha
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (Brasil)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2294-5932>
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/5633849867865936>
miriabilis@gmail.com

Abstract

This article presents moments and reflections on of the careers of teachers, now retired, who worked in elementary education, in public schools in the city of Portão/RS. This is an excerpt from the interdisciplinary doctoral thesis on Cultural Processes and Manifestations, bringing together ethnographic studies with seven women. The memories of these women bring to life the ways they entered work with contracts and competitions, the challenges of the classroom and the occupation of positions and other sectors at school. These paths allow us to observe the public school from different angles and the processes that occurred throughout the professional career in education, considering that each choice allows ways of learning from the challenges presented.

Keywords: Retired teachers; Public School; Career.

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta momentos e reflexões sobre a carreira de professoras, hoje aposentadas, que trabalharam no ensino fundamental, em escolas públicas no município de Portão/RS. Este é um recorte da tese de doutorado interdisciplinar em Processos e Manifestações Culturais, reunindo estudos etnográficos com sete mulheres. As memórias destas mulheres trazem os modos de ingresso no trabalho com contratos e concursos, os desafios da sala de aula e a ocupação de cargos e outros setores na escola. Estes percursos permitem observar a escola pública por vários ângulos e os processos que ocorreram ao longo da carreira profissional em educação, considerando que cada escolha possibilita modos de aprender com os desafios apresentados.

Palavras-chave: Professoras aposentadas; Escola Pública; Carreira.

Resumen

Este artículo presenta momentos y reflexiones sobre la carrera de profesores, ahora jubilados, que actuaron en la educación básica, en escuelas públicas de la ciudad de Portão/RS. Este es un extracto de la tesis doctoral interdisciplinaria sobre Procesos y Manifestaciones Culturales, que reúne estudios etnográficos con siete mujeres. Los recuerdos de estas mujeres reviven las formas en que ingresaron al trabajo con contratos y concursos, los desafíos del aula y la ocupación de puestos y otros sectores en la escuela. Estos caminos nos permiten observar la escuela pública desde diferentes ángulos y los procesos ocurridos a lo largo de la carrera profesional en educación, considerando que cada elección permite formas de aprender a partir de los desafíos presentados.

Palabras clave: Docentes jubilados; Escuela Pública; Carrera profesional.

Introduction

The retired teachers from the public school system in the municipality of Portão¹/RS, who participated in this research², share their life stories and memories of their pedagogical practices, going through significant moments in their careers. They tell us about contracts, competitions, experiences in different positions within the school and the evolution of the educational sectors through different perspectives. Throughout this research journey, which moves among memory, affection and history, we seek, beyond individual narratives, an interweaving of concepts that go beyond formal education, incorporating discussions on culture, power, government technologies and research. These intersections are fundamental to the analysis we propose, guided by the idea of Nóvoa's triangles (1999), which suggest that educational practice should not be seen in isolation, but in relation to different spheres that intersect and influence each other.

The ethnographic methodology, with its ability to insert us deeply into the realities experienced by the participants, is essential to the construction of this study. Ethnography, understood as a continuous process of discovery and reinterpretation, allows us to "listen" to these women's stories, but also to unearth the silences, absences and oblivions that mark their memories, invisible but equally significant aspects. This approach is inspired by the work of Eckert (2012), when studying the situation experienced by coal miners in France in the face of the disappearance of their world of work, proposed that the loss of a significant space generates a reconstruction of identity and belonging. In a similar way, the teachers investigated here remember a school that no longer exists in their daily routines, but whose memories are still powerful and shape their identities.

The focus of this research is not limited to a normative analysis of the historical or legislative data of the profession. Instead, we seek to understand how these educators, when revisiting their trajectories, reveal to us the complexities of their experiences and their relationship with school. This study is not limited to what was regulated by law or made official in municipal archives, but rather to what is recorded in the personal narratives of these teachers. As Halbwachs (2003) points out, the memory of a group is a reflection of the social and emotional dynamics that permeate the interactions of individuals in their context, and it is through this memory that we can glimpse not only the individual "I", but also the social changes and transformations in the school itself. In this sense, the stories told by the teachers, which emerge from these conversations, also become the history of public education in this municipality.

The process of remembering their teaching experiences therefore implies a continuous reconstruction of memories, not only of what was experienced, but of what was forgotten or silenced. Here, we use the contributions of Chartier (2011) on the relationship between history and memory, which teaches us that the past is not just a set of facts to be remembered, but something that is actively constructed in the present. The statements of these educators³ reveal how education is permeated by emotions, affections and social meanings that make pedagogical work not just a technical or administrative function, but a practice full of lived stories and memories. Each statement brings a unique image of this trajectory, but also connects with the

¹ Municipality in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre/RS.

² This article is an excerpt from the thesis "*Olhares e movimentos com o que resta de giz nas mãos: memórias do mundo do trabalho de professoras aposentadas da rede pública de ensino e o patrimônio cultural escolar do município de Portão/RS*", defended in October 2022, in the Postgraduate Program in Cultural Processes and Manifestations, by Feevale University, Novo Hamburgo/RS, under the supervision of PhD. Magna Lima Magalhães and co-supervision of PhD. Ana Luiza Carvalho da Rocha.

³ Namely, Adreane, Rosaura, Leila, Mariângela, Cândida, Marisa and Eoní. These retired teachers signed a Letter of Assignment and authorized the use of their images and narratives.

collective – including with the teaching associations present in the work in multi-grade schools, with the history of the school and local public education.

In addition to enabling a deeper look at the experiences of these educators, ethnography also favors the narrative of experiences, placing memory as the protagonist. As Mejía (2015, p. 93) states, "ethnography understood as a writing process activates fabulation". The act of writing, in the ethnographic context, is also a way of weaving and reconstructing stories that were lived, interpreted and now shared, becoming a collaborative process between the researcher and the research participants. This writing aims not only at reconstructing a personal story, but also a melody that resonates with the experiences and trajectories of the teachers. Each conversation and each narrative, in this context, is an invitation to the reader to enter this universe, with its feelings, challenges and achievements.

1. A career in education: “I got into the white *Fusca* and went to see the school.”

This research, through ethnography, made it possible to meet with retired teachers who recalled episodes of their careers in education. It is worth noting that, according to the legislation, even with the current reforms, each education professional can have two or three retirements (registrations⁴), and can retire under the specific pension scheme and the general scheme, depending on whether they meet the requirements in both schemes. Thus, throughout the narratives, it is possible to observe that the teachers work in two or more places, in the municipal and state government, or even in the private education system.

Adreane tells us that she was invited to work at a school in a rural area and that the Director of Education at the time, Rosina Strieder, took her to the school. “I got into the white *Fusca* and went to see the school” – she recalls. But, after all, what is a career? And in education?

The study of careers was addressed by many researchers in the 20th century. In the beginning, careers were related to organizational structures and professions. Later, socioeconomic issues and their contexts were observed, in addition to the behavioral aspect of the individual, in constant transformation to meet the demands arising from society. The American researcher Everett Hughes, after several studies, suggests that the career should be understood, objectively, as the sequence of roles, *status*⁵ and positions held by the individual in the structure of society and, subjectively, as “a dynamic perspective through which the person conceives his life as a whole and interprets the meaning of its various characteristics, actions and things that occur to him” (HUGHES, 1937, p. 409-410).

When paying attention to these conceptualizations about career, which were later recontextualized, in the approaches, conflicts and movements of this dynamic, interactionism is always present. The arrangements that occur in the field of work are part of a “complex game of negotiating reality” (VELHO, 1986, p. 51), and allow us to remember the writings of Simmel (2006), thinking about society as a whole, about mobility and the static, about rhythm (MAFFESOLI, 2005) and about the “polarity between objective life and subjective life” (ROCHA; ECKERT, 2009, p. 108).

Some researchers, both in the history and sociology of education, point to the fact that, with the project of modernity, the organization of the school itself contributed to the hierarchy of professions (DÁVILA, 2006), in addition to accentuating social and political hierarchies (ROSSI, 2003). This fact is not the focus of this article, but it can and should be observed through narratives about professional careers.

Looking specifically at the career in education at the end of the last century, researcher António Nóvoa presented a survey of data and some trajectories on the teaching profession, the way he understood the career and what he envisioned for the future. He presents the history of

⁴ Up to 3 registrations of 20 hours of work each, for a maximum of 60 hours per week.

⁵ *Status* as a prominent position.

the teaching profession in Europe, with challenges and perspectives, but touches on issues that can be observed in other countries, as well as in Brazil. The author's summary reveals many questions and some warnings about the role of the teacher. Nóvoa states that:

Ultimately, what is at stake is the possibility of professional development (individual and collective), which creates the conditions for each person to define the rhythms and paths of their career and for teachers as a whole to plan the future of this profession, which seems to be regaining, at the end of this century, new energies and sources of prestige (1999, p.30, author's emphasis).

For Nóvoa (1999), metaphorically, as in a game of bridge⁶, there are triangles with different formations that give clues to the path in education, in a simplified way, presenting two vertices with “a privileged relation” and the third vertex being considered the “place of the dead”. According to the author, the pedagogical triangle is formed by teachers, students and knowledge. The political triangle presents teachers, the State and the community. Meanwhile, the knowledge triangle is constituted by the knowledge of pedagogy, the knowledge of the disciplines and the knowledge of experience. All moving at the same time. The author reminds us that the teacher is present in all of them, but it is not always given the right to speak, thus being the vertex that brings the “place of the dead”, as in the game he mentioned (NÓVOA, 1999, p. 7).

2. Contracts and competitions: finally, work!

What does a professional want most when he finishes his training? Most of the answers to this question will certainly revolve around the word “work”. Some professionals get jobs in their fields before they even graduate. Others take longer to achieve this feat.

The work in the private sector can be achieved through a good resume, in addition to references from people about trust, competence and commitment. In the public sector, currently, in Brazil, admission to work is through public competition⁷. There are still some entries through so-called commission positions, by political party nomination, but these do not offer any guarantee of permanence in each election that takes place. Thus, since 1988, the path to entering the public service has been through a selection process, better known as a public examination. And this does not only apply to the area of education, but to all job positions. It is important to remember that, in the history of Brazil, debates about public examinations have had tense moments and that, currently, some legislators are making speeches and making plans to remove this requirement, which does not seem to be beneficial to the State⁸. Government technologies are means used to propose new paths, whether through programs, projects, legislation,

⁶ *Bridge* is a card game in which the use of the mind and communication are crucial to victory. It originated in England in the early 16th century.

⁷ It is worth noting that: with the Constitutionalist Revolution of 1932, Getúlio Vargas, who had dissolved parliament during the *Estado Novo* Coup, convened a National Constituent Assembly that voted and promulgated, in 1934, the Constitution of the Republic of the United States of Brazil which, in its art. 170, 2nd, transcribed below, established the use of an impartial mechanism for filling public positions. At this time, the civil service exam was born in the Brazilian legal system: “2nd, the first investiture in career positions in administrative departments, and in others that the law determines, will be carried out after a health examination and a competition of tests or qualifications.” See more at: <https://www.direitonet.com.br/artigos/exibir/868/O-concurso-publico-como-principio-constitucional-e-a-promocao-interna-para-cargos-organizados-em-carreira>.

⁸ A word that carries even greater weight when we think about the studies of Bourdieu (2014) and Rancière (2020).

provision of materials, among others. With issues of power, these actions are carried out for various purposes and are not always seen as guaranteeing the rights of the population.

Continuing, since most⁹ of the retired teachers in this research began teaching in public schools before the legislation¹⁰ requiring public examinations, the narratives they bring us are about people who nominated them to the Municipal Mayor and/or the Secretary of Education for certain periods. Some teachers were appointed by public examination. In any case, the main issue was to work. “Ah, to enter a classroom that was mine! That was my wish,” says Leila.

With the legislation, from the 1988 Constitution onwards, the competition for public service professionals who were already working was a novelty that came with uncertainties. For teachers, it was a written test containing questions on Portuguese, Mathematics, Legislation and General Knowledge, and, in addition, the qualification test that evaluated and scored according to initial and continuing education, valuing the workload of certified courses. Those teachers who were already working and failed the written test were fired. Some of them tried, through legal means, to remain in the job, but did not win the case. Other new teachers took the test and were thus appointed. It was no longer a contract, but rather an appointment. Since then, a lot has changed, and, since 2018, the municipality of Portão has even had its own Municipal Education System¹¹.

Adreane was invited to work at a municipal school by the same administrators as Rosaura, Leila and Mariângela at the time. She also took a public exam to work as a teacher at a state public school, teaching at the *Escola Estadual Portão Velho* and the *Instituto Educacional Paulo Freire*. Later, when there was a public exam for school supervision, with a 40-hour work schedule, in the municipality of Portão, she took the exam and had to resign from the state school system. “I returned to all the schools I had been to as a student as a teacher,” she recalls with satisfaction.

Eoní remembers that, according to the career chart, she was level two¹² at the state school. Later, a law was passed that eliminated the need for a public exam for those who had already worked for more than ten years. “Here in the municipality, people who had worked for more than ten years were also not allowed to take the public exam. It was considered a position that was being phased out, and they continued working until they retired under the CLT¹³, at the INSS¹⁴.” About the beginning of her work in education, Leila says:

I had a sponsor who got me a work contract as a teacher in the municipality. He talked to the mayor and sorted everything out. Then a specific law came along and had an impact on our lives. We had to prepare to take the exam. There was a course and I studied a lot. I was nervous about it. Wow, some people failed. But I did very well on the test. This course was important for me to have peace of mind and take the state public school exam later. Over time I realized that it only brought me peace of mind.

⁹ The partners in this research belong to two generations.

¹⁰ Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, enacted in 1988, art. 37, II: the investiture in public office or employment depends on prior approval in a public examination of tests or tests and qualifications, except for appointments to a commissioned position declared in law of free appointment and dismissal.

¹¹ See more at: <https://leismunicipais.com.br/a/rs/p/portao/lei-ordinaria/2018/272/2714/lei-ordinaria-n-2714-2018-cria-o-sistema-municipal-de-educacao-de-portao>.

¹² Level 2 in the Career Plan, in the 1960s, was for teachers who had a teaching degree.

¹³ The Consolidation of Labor Laws, popularly known as CLT, regulates labor relations, both in urban and rural work, and in individual and collective relations.

¹⁴ INSS is the acronym for the National Institute of Social Security, a public agency responsible for paying retirement and other benefits to Brazilian workers and other insured parties.

It is important to emphasize here that the research partner uses the word impact to reaffirm what the legislation caused at that time and, at the same time, how, later on, it produced a certain level of security for the performance of the profession. Similar to Leila's initial path, Mariângela emphasizes that, as soon as she and graduated in teaching, got a contract and then came the public exam.

At that time, Dolivar¹⁵ was a councilman, so he got a contract there at the *Escola Municipal São Jorge*, and I had a second year, right? What good times! I think there were about 30 teachers here in the municipality. How wonderful! I have been saving my second paycheck because it was so exciting to have my own money. The salary wasn't that good, I think it was half of what it is now. But, how good it was to work at that time. I remember that I prepared for the public exam. I think it was Marlene¹⁶ from the union who provided us with study time.

It is important to emphasize the presence of the union in the teachers' statements. Many of them say that they received clarification and support from this representative of the teaching profession. According to them, the *Sindicato Municipal de Professores de Portão* was important in the elaboration of the Teaching Career Plan, in addition to the achievements of the Health Plan and dialogue with the executive about salary adjustments, organization of planning hours and other benefits.

Most of the partners in this research were initially hired through a municipal agent linked to education or politics. Marisa and Cândida were hired by PRAD¹⁷ and then took the public exam for the municipal public school system.

"There was an advertisement, I applied and was called for a contract by PRAD. I worked with the 3rd grade at the *Escola Estadual Portão Velho*," recalls Marisa. The following year, she took on a class of 1st graders and explains that her biggest challenge was her own handwriting. "Since I was a regular student, I always heard from Carmen Schmidt¹⁸ that to teach 1st graders I would have to be more careful with my handwriting. There was even a misunderstanding with a student's mother because of my handwriting. Then everything was sorted out." In 1990, Marisa was called for the job for the exam she had taken in 1988. "I went to work at the João Scherer School, a multi-grade¹⁹ rural school. It was a wonderful experience."

Cândida was also hired by Pradem to work at the *Escola do Estadual do Portão Velho* and, later, at the *Escola do Estadual 9 de Outubro State*. "At that time, contracts for municipal schools were based on referrals, and I didn't get them." Of the seven retirees, only Eoní and Cândida started working in the municipal public school system directly through a competitive exam. Cândida says:

¹⁵ Dolivar Knipoff da Cruz was a teacher, principal of the Portão Velho State School and a city councilman in the municipality of Portão in the 1970s and 1980s

¹⁶ Marlene Luiza Corrêa was a municipal and state teacher. She was a founder of the Portão Municipal Teachers' Union and is currently retired.

¹⁷ PRAD is an agreement signed between the State and municipalities, in which the city government provides teachers and civil servants to work in elementary schools in the state network, when it is unable to call, hire or appoint civil servants. In addition to the mayor, the agreement may be signed by the acting vice mayor, with a copy of the minutes of the transfer of office, or by the municipal secretary with delegation of powers published by ordinance. See more at: <https://educacao.rs.gov.br/secretaria-da-educacao-realiza-assinatura-do-pradem-com-os-municipios>.

¹⁸ Renowned teacher at the Paulo Freire Educational Institute in São Sebastião do Caí.

¹⁹ Multigrade class includes students from 1st to 4th grade, who are now in the early years of elementary school. All students in a single classroom with a single teacher who, normally, was responsible for making lunch, cleaning and all the documentation for the school administration.

When I took the competitive exam in the municipality of Portão, I wasn't appointed in the first year. I think I came in twenty-first place, but at that time there were very few appointments, right? Few people were appointed, I waited a long time, and I was very afraid of starting the first grade. I was appointed and worked for two years with the 3rd grade at Mauá²⁰.

Teacher Cândida recalls that she was excited about the possibility of being appointed and took several competitive exams in nearby cities, such as São Leopoldo and São Sebastião do Caí. She passed all of them, but didn't take the job because of the hours and commutes she would have to make, since she worked in Portão and didn't have a car at the time. She emphasizes that the selection process was a win for the teaching profession. "After all, teachers take the exam and then take their place."

Eoní fondly keeps the Letter of Introduction issued by the Department of Education and Culture, which she presented at the *Escola Municipal Antônio José de Fraga*, where she took over as a tenured teacher. "I was happy with the 29th place, there were many vacancies and I got it."

One can think of the difficulties that teachers who were already teaching had when facing the selection process to keep their jobs, but one cannot deny the fact that job stability is something important, which allowed greater peace of mind to carry out the work. This fact was raised by all the retired women who participated in this investigation, who said that the exam was a way for professionals to work with continuity in mind, providing training and planning future actions.

3. From the classroom and about teaching: what they love to remember

The meetings we held over the course of a few months were interesting, with laughter when remembering funny events, some sighs when remembering sad moments, but all of them kept with great affection by these teachers. Here, the memories of one lead to the speeches of another, together with the memories of the researcher.

For our memory to benefit from the memory of others, it is not enough for them to present their testimonies to us: it is also necessary that they have not failed to agree with their memories and that there are many points of contact between one and the other so that the memory they make us remember can be reconstructed on a common basis (HALBWACHS, 2003, p. 39).

When thinking about the classes she worked with, Rosaura remembers that what she loved most was being with those children. "I felt fulfilled with them, and thinking that I was teaching, right? It is our responsibility to be teaching, that they were going to learn to read." She was a literacy teacher most of the time and, in her speech, she demonstrated her concern about teaching and the responsibility she had in front of each class. "I loved them. So, within what I had, I always did my best".

She remembers that she liked to plan and that she felt fulfilled doing that. "I remember that I liked when I was teaching phonetic acquisition, working on the sounds of letters, syllables, associating them with things we heard". Rosaura expresses a sparkle in her eyes when she remembers these moments. She demonstrates a passion for literacy. She also talks about

²⁰ *Escola Municipal Visconde de Mauá.*

activities that involve reading, and that she liked to create different ways of reading, such as jogral, in which each group in the class read a part of the text, for example. “Each time a different dynamic. Clapping their hands for the other to read, making a gesture, creating a sound, or doing it freely. That was what I liked the most. I miss it”. In the classroom, Eoní really enjoyed interacting with the students:

I loved chatting, listening to what they had to say, about their successes, their mistakes, their way of life, what life was like at home, their difficulties and joys. In short, I enjoyed listening to the students talk about their dreams and experiences, about what they would like to do in the future. These conversations that I had with the little ones were also very enjoyable with the group of adult students from *EJA*²¹. It was good because I taught and learned. I felt fulfilled as a teacher in the classroom and also working in the library. The world of books and reading still fascinates me today.

Adreane enjoyed using audiovisual and sound equipment, such as television, stereo, and recorder. She says that she always had lots of posters all over the walls of the classroom. And then she gives details about some moments:

I had several alphabets. I think what I liked most about teaching was the literacy process and also the story circle, right? In the story circle, we would bring the book and draw two books each day to read. Because then, whoever knows they are going to read will be able to prepare their story better [...] And the other thing is, we draw them at the time because everyone prepares. We changed this dynamic because of a student's idea. I was also drawn and I read. The selection for them was for smaller books. And my story was longer. So, it was a highly anticipated time. And the other subject that I really liked was Physical Education on rainy days. I had a repertoire of activities that I did in the classroom, we would move the chairs, the tables. But it was something that was never difficult [...].

By creating activities with the students, Adreane allowed the children to discover the ways of learning that suited them best. “Everyone learns in their own way and we need to provide opportunities for them to find themselves in their learning,” she emphasizes. This statement by Adreane reminds us of Kohan's (2013, p. 87) statement that “an interesting teacher, the one who makes a school, is not the one who transmits his knowledge, but the one who generates a desire to know, who inspires in others the desire to know”.

When Leila was working, she really enjoyed looking at those little faces eager to learn, changing the arrangement of the furniture in the room, the posters, the books, the decorations she put up, the environment with them, the exchange and the conversation.

I really enjoyed teaching math. Sometimes I had to watch myself so as not to give more importance to this subject than the others. I really enjoyed using different materials, making drawings, everything related to math and I think that concrete materials were essential for them to learn, especially the golden material. I also enjoyed telling stories and teaching geography and history.

²¹ Educação de Jovens e Adultos.

Mariângela highlights:

I love remembering the room with the two blackboards, one on each side, that movement I had to make to attend to all the classes. Also the soccer games during recess. The parties we organized together. I really liked teaching physical education, right? And at Cachoeira I met students who did really well at it: running, jumping, playing soccer. For the vast majority of them, this was a passion. This was one of the factors that made us feel a lot of empathy right away.

Teacher Marisa liked to have a circle of students sit on the floor and talk to them, during the so-called novelty hour, “always doing an initial reflection in class to understand how the student was doing that day”. Marisa's memories of the activities carried out in class bring moments of relaxation, lightness and art.

I liked to play games with them. My class had to be a fun class like that, one that would be a good morning or afternoon for the children. I still carry with me to this day how I feel in someone else's shoes. Sometimes it's good to have a little authority, discipline, but not to embarrass the other person [...]. In fact, I liked the school routine, the conversation when we arrived, the news hour, the content hour, snack time, sharing the snack, playing during recess. I also really liked getting to know the students' families. What I liked most about teaching was the arts. [...] I always took advantage of the opportunities and the new things, you know? I never wanted to stop at the time of just the board, the chalk and me. There were a lot of activities at Franke²²: we made murals, lots of images, lots of colors, lots of expression, music, that's what I like the most. If I could still work with that, I would want to.

The narrative about discipline brought by Marisa presents itself in the sense of deconstructing the idea of imprisonment of the body (FOUCAULT, 2014), which thinks, speaks and moves when learning in a freeway. It tries to find a way out to explore other ways of expanding itself, in an attempt to escape the rules, even though it is within a system of discipline, the school. Furthermore, she emphasizes the importance of seeking training in the area in which she most enjoyed working.

Cândida fondly remembers reading time, the playful aspect of listening to and telling stories. She liked reading to children and seeing their eyes light up. “The playfulness of poetry, talking about it, playing with the sound of the body, the games. So, I always liked that a lot. And regardless of the subject, right?” She gets excited when recalling some moments in the classroom:

I liked creating games, playing with them, creating games with them. Of and in the game, of poetry, of creating verses with them and encouraging them to create. I think that was what I liked doing the most. I also really liked the math aspect, because in teaching I really liked the math teacher and I believe that she worked well with us on the construction of numbers. Without working on the theoretical aspects, but she worked on that. So, I liked working with the students, using materials that existed

²² Escola Municipal Carlos Oswin Franke.

for that, having a systematic work, [...] I always really liked being a teacher of young children, right? I had already worked with teenagers, I got along well with them, but my goal was to work with little ones. And, really, it was a great choice, it has much more to do with me.

With these memories of the pedagogical experiences of these women, one can think of the classroom space as a place of exchange and learning, of knowledge and affection. Of the construction of the child as “being a student” and of the woman as “being a teacher”. These experiences go back in time and space, they are constitutive landmarks for both teachers and students and the community, they are the triangles mentioned by Nóvoa (1999), in movement – a synchrony in which matter creates forms, art is revealed, archaeologically, layer by layer. It is possible to say that the school is constituted beyond what is seen.

However, when we look more closely, we realize that, amidst so many expressions of enchantment with the teaching profession, there are silences that also speak volumes: there is little mention of fatigue, institutional pressures, overload or internal and external conflicts in the profession. While revealing a passion for teaching, these memories can also indicate a process of identity reconstruction, in which positive aspects are prioritized as a form of symbolic resistance and cohesion with a professional ethic centered on love, dedication and sacrifice. As Halbwachs (2003) points out, remembering is always remembering with others and in function of a group — and this group, in this case, seems to carry with it a narrative of silent dedication, often romanticized, which naturalizes harsh working conditions. Such gaps do not invalidate the accounts; on the contrary, they reveal the complexity of teaching memories, traversed by time, affection and a continuous struggle to give meaning to the experience. After all, as Ricoeur (2007) states, every memory is also, to a certain extent, a reinvention of the lived experience.

4. From other angles: the occupation of positions and sectors in the school

The vast majority of retired teachers participating in this research have held other positions in the school, in addition to teaching in the classroom. What does this show us? That education has a field of possibilities and that, as opportunities arise, turning points occur in their careers. It is important to pay attention to some of the rejections of opportunities and their reasons so that we can understand that these are also part of the arrangements in the school spaces, whether pedagogical or administrative.

Eoní says that, after retiring from the state public school system, she took a competitive exam to work in the municipal school system. She passed and worked with third grade for a few years at the *Escola Municipal Antônio José de Fraga*. Later, she was invited to teach adult literacy at night. “I worked at EJA²³ until they took the classes to the *Franke* School, but then I didn't want to go work at *Parque Neto*,²⁴ I preferred to stay at *Fraga*, where I was responsible for the school library.” She says she decided to take another exam to return to the state school system. Thus, in a new appointment at the *Escola Estadual Pedro Schuler*, she worked with the subjects of History and Moral and Civic Education²⁵ in the fifth through eighth grade classes, taking over the classes of teacher Edgar Strieder²⁶, who had to undergo emergency surgery. “It

²³ Educação de Jovens e Adultos.

²⁴ Neighborhood located in the urban area of Portão, close to the city center.

²⁵ Subject that, according to Decree Law 869/68, became mandatory in the Brazilian school curriculum as of 1969 (during the dictatorship period), and was eliminated from the curriculum in 1993 by Decree of then President Itamar Franco.

²⁶ Teacher in the state and municipal public schools.

was a huge challenge. At that time, the *DE*²⁷ authorized me to work without specific training because there were no teachers to come.” Eoní points out that she worked in only three schools, but that she worked in different classes and with different activities. She remembers that there was a change among the teachers at the end of each school year. “Look, at a certain time, even the students already knew who was in class A, and they went straight to teacher ‘x’. Then, after a while, the teachers were rotated.” She remembers that there was some revolt on the part of the teachers who didn’t like changing classes. When she was appointed teacher or specific to the subjects that Eoní was temporarily working on, she was invited to be a teacher in the computer room, and to assist parents in the office as well. “I had to update myself once again. Each new invitation brought new challenges, but I liked taking on these responsibilities.”

Leila worked as a principal for two years, but didn’t like the experience and asked to leave. “I really prefer the classroom.” Regarding the transfers, Leila points out that they happened as the opportunity arose. “Once I asked to transfer to another school and I didn’t get it, after that I didn’t ask anymore. Only to another class.”

Cândida worked for eight years in school guidance at the *Escola Estadual Portão Velho*. She specialized in management, supervision and guidance at *Unisinos*. “One advantage I had was to experience this, right? It was a wonderful experience. But in the State I lose a lot financially because I lost the value of the co-teaching²⁸.” She emphasizes that she made this decision, even though it meant losing money, because it was important to have a day off a week because her parents were getting older, and she needed to have time available to take them to the doctor and dedicate some time to their care. “I didn’t take on any position of this type in the municipality, especially because a specific exam is required for guidance and supervision. And I never wanted to either. I always wanted to be in the classroom.”

Adreane recalls that, since she began her career in the municipality of *Escola Estadual Portão Velho*, she has held a management position. First at the multi-grade rural school in *Bom Jardim*. Then at the new school in *Vila Aparecida*, where she taught a first-grade class, along with her management position. When the number of students increased, she worked only as a manager, due to the demand. During this period, she also worked at the *Portão Velho*, spending 20 hours at each school. She also worked at the *Escola Edmundo Kern* and, later, at the *Escola Paulo Freire*.

I left *Aparecida* to take on the supervision of the Department of Education. There, I really needed the supervision to be 40 hours. So, I had a contract with the State. I had taken a competitive exam in area 3 of the State. Later, I remember that the Governor was Brito²⁹ and he submitted a voluntary resignation request from the State. So I left. But going back, when I was working as a supervisor at *SEMEC*³⁰, Secretary Edmundo³¹ was dismissed due to a political dispute. We were in the Education Department, I think for almost two months without a secretary. [...] We didn't even know what we had to do. Then, to my surprise, one day I arrived at work and my colleague, who was Simone, gave me a message: "the mayor wants to talk to you". So I went, I remember that I

²⁷ Education Department.

²⁸ It is a salary bonus for teachers who have a classroom teaching position. Even Law No. 15,451 of February 17, 2020, which amends Law No. 6,672 of April 22, 1974, which established the Statute and Career Plan for Public Education in Rio Grande do Sul, maintains the bonus, according to Article 3, paragraph IV - the bonus for teaching single-teacher classes of the curriculum for activities referred to in art. 4th of Law No. 8,747, of November 21, 1988.

See more at: <https://www.estado.rs.gov.br/upload/arquivos/lei-15451.pdf>.

²⁹ Governor of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, Antônio Brito.

³⁰ *Secretaria Municipal de Educação e Cultura*, renamed SMEC.

³¹ Edmundo Strieder.

arrived at Beto's³² office and he said, "Sit here, girl, how is the department?" So I said that we were without a father there - and he laughed. We continue to do our work, but we saw that the beginning of the school year was approaching, and I said, "Look, there are many things to be done and we don't have a secretary of our own." And then he said, "I want you to take over the secretariat." I asked: until the secretary comes? "No, I want you to be the secretary." Then I said to him: How did you come up with my name, why? Then he said, "No, the education secretariat is my responsibility," that it was up to the mayor to appoint, not the party. Then I told him, I've never shied away from a challenge, that's not the issue. But there is one issue, right, Beto. I'm not a partisan. He said, "I have a lot of respect for you." So, to this day, I've never signed a party membership. [...] To this day, I can't believe that my country had a PT³³ President and a PMDB³⁴ Vice President. This ideological issue, if you think about the ideology of one party and the other. [...] So he said, "No, I will never ask you to sign with my party and political issues are not of interest to us, right?" So I said, under those conditions, that's fine. That's how I took over the secretariat.

During this period, Adreane did not know it, but this quick movement between invitation and acceptance would be a turning point in her career. Between comings and goings, the teacher was Secretary of Education for the municipality of Portão for 14 years. She started out leading a team that organized the work of around 40 teachers. With the transformations that occurred in the city, which caused demographic growth and, consequently, demand for schools, when she left the municipal secretariat (2016), the group of teachers already had more than 300 professionals.

The presence of partisan issues and the way this mechanism worked – which is how it works to this day – is very noticeable in Adreane's narrative. Power relations (FOUCAULT, 2013) dimension and redimension spaces, in a game of scales, in which the choices of those at the top alter and impact the work of those who are on the "school floor", teaching directly with students. She says that until 1991, municipal education secretaries were state school teachers and that, for the first time, a teacher from the municipal public school system was appointed to head the department.

One issue that Adreane points out is the fact that, in 1991, she was the only woman to head a department. "In the meetings between the secretaries and the mayor, at the beginning, everyone looked at me strangely. First, I listened to what they had to say and then I explained everything I needed to, always with lots of arguments. And I managed to get the mayor's approval." She recalls that it was a delicate path and that each achievement was celebrated in the department. "We learned together, my team and I."

The fact that Adreane is the only secretary in the municipal government is an indication of the lack of female representation in top-level public governance positions, whether at the federal, state or municipal levels. To illustrate the progress of women's rights in Brazil, participation in politics through voting was achieved by Decree No. 21076, of February 24, 1932, signed by then President Getúlio Vargas, that is, within the country's history, a fact that took a long time to be rectified by legislation. Currently, after debates in the Federal Legislature,

³² Carlos Roberto Ruthner, popularly known as Beto, was mayor of Portão from 1997 to 2000. Before that, he was deputy mayor from 1983 to 1996, with alliances with different political parties.

³³ *Partido dos Trabalhadores*.

³⁴ *Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro*.

there are laws³⁵ that indicate quotas of female candidates for each political party, for example. In relation to the Judiciary, we have some female judges, especially in the Supreme Federal Court, but still in small numbers. As for the Executive Branch, it depends on the political 'interest' of each manager. Not to mention the occupation of women in management positions in private companies, which is always unequal in terms of space and salary in our country. There is a long way to go to occupy and value women in the workplace.

It is important to note that CCs³⁶ and appointees who received FG³⁷, due to the fact that they assumed senior positions in the administration, had no guarantee that they would remain in their positions in each municipal election. Thus, many projects that had been drawn up did not come to fruition due to constant changes in the sectors.

When the administration changed, another very curious thing happened because at the end of October we knew that we would not continue. Homero³⁸ took over. It was one of the first moments that Mr. Dary³⁹ announced. Then Homero talked to us and said that we would not continue. And in November, before the end of the school year, I was invited to be the director of APAE⁴⁰ in Portão. I made a very good diagnosis within APAE. So, we created a project that would last four years. Then, one of the dissatisfactions I have in my career is that at the end of the second year, the seconded members of APAE were removed, all of them. So, a project that I had was left half-finished. The school was being implemented, and we had started a project called *Projeto Águia*, which was linked to the *Federação Nacional das APAEs*, which was an institutionalization and link with the SUS⁴¹ in the clinical area, and with the FNDE⁴², in the school area. We couldn't even start that, we were going to start in the third year. So I went back to the network and the network had launched a competition for supervisor.

Selection processes for other positions in education were held well after the competition for teacher. Thus, in 1994, the competition for school supervision took place in Portão, with its own notice and following standards linked to the guiding principles of the profession. Adreane recalls:

³⁵ About women's participation in Brazilian politics, read more at:

<http://www.mpf.mp.br/pr/sala-de-imprensa/docs/participacao-feminina-na-politica-1.pdf>.

³⁶ Commissioned Positions: employees hired according to the wishes of the administration that takes over the city hall after winning the election.

³⁷ Gratified Function: all levels, national, state and municipal, have employees appointed through a selection process, and these employees can be promoted to head a body within the government and, for this commitment, receive an additional amount as a benefit for this service provision. The amounts vary according to each level and are provided for by law.

³⁸ Homero Severo Pinto, during this period, a professor and Lutheran evangelical pastor, a trusted person of the elected mayor Dary Hoff. His death, while still young, caused commotion in the city, also due to the fact that he had contracted malaria on a mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the interior of South Africa.

³⁹ Dary Hoff, mayor of Portão.

⁴⁰ *Associação de Pais e Amigos dos Excepcionais*

⁴¹ *Sistema Único de Saúde*.

⁴² *Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação*: a federal agency created by Law No. 5,537, of November 21, 1968, and amended by Decree Law No. 872, of September 15, 1969, it is responsible for implementing the educational policies of the Ministry of Education (MEC).

There was a selection process and I came in first place in the supervision competition, and I had to be appointed, because the *Tribunal de Contas*⁴³ appointed, and Homero would have to appoint, first me, then Ivone⁴⁴, and we went to work in the secretariat – *and it was silent for a while*. Then when I went to talk to Mr. Dary I said, look, there must be a very strong destiny that connects us, right? Because I try to distance myself from you – and *I smiled*. That was the beginning of the supervision journey, through a public examination within the network. We were one of the first municipalities to recruit specialists, I am very proud to say that. Very grateful We had specialists. These changes ended up happening with each administration, the political issue was much stronger before that. I am very proud of Homero for having fought for the specialists through public examinations.

Later, when Adreane took over the secretariat again, she remembers the implementation of *FUNDEB*⁴⁵, the resources that came in and the work and care in allocating the funds. She is very proud of the achievements in teacher training, the acquisition of school materials and the implementation of projects that made a difference in the level of student learning and in the appreciation of teachers, and in education as a whole. “*Mente Inovadora*⁴⁶ came to put Portão on the educational map of Brazil and to be a global highlight⁴⁷, for example. But, more important than that, was the way the community started to look at schools” – says Adreane with her arms moving, making her enthusiasm and excitement noticeable.

The research partner Mariângela says that in her second year as a teacher, she was transferred to the Gonçalves Dias Municipal School, in the rural area of Cachoeira. Like all the other teachers, she had a multi-grade class, management, and the chores of providing lunch and cleaning the school. Time passed, and the school had a considerable increase in the number of students, which required more teachers. Mariângela continued as a teacher and director until it was no longer possible to teach and manage the school. When she was called to talk about taking on the role of director only, since there was a need for this, she saw it as a natural fit.

It was the continuation of the work I had been doing. The difference is that during the time I would be in the classroom teaching, I could have been taking care of other issues at the school, and I always had time. And we always tried to do everything in a very organized way. So, it took a

⁴³ Linked to the Legislative Branch, the audit courts are bodies that assist in carrying out external control (independent of internal control, exercised by the administration itself), embodied in the accounting, financial, budgetary, operational and asset supervision of the Public Administration, including direct or indirect administration entities and foundations established or maintained with public resources, with regard to legality, legitimacy, cost-effectiveness, application of subsidies and waiver of revenues. Currently, we have the Federal Audit Court (TCU), the State Audit Courts (TCE's), the Municipal Audit Courts and two Municipal Audit Courts.

⁴⁴ Ivone Winck, municipal teacher and, subsequently, supervisor appointed in Portão.

⁴⁵ *Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e de Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação* covers all basic education, from early childhood education to high school, and its main objective is to promote the redistribution of resources linked to education. Amended in 2020, according to legislation 14113/20. See more at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2019-2022/2020/Lei/L14113.htm.

⁴⁶ *Mente Inovadora* is a program focused on developing skills. Based on theories from educational thinkers such as Feurstein and Vigotsky, the Mind Lab methodology was created to train teachers and managers in the mission of preparing their students for life, through board games. See more at: <https://www.mindlab.com.br/menteinovadora/>.

⁴⁷ Portão is the four-time Brazilian champion (2016-2019) and three-time world champion (2017-2019) of the Mind Lab games, in category 1, with students from the *Escola Municipal Visconde de Mauá*. The *Escola Municipal Antônio José e Fraga* was the Brazilian runner-up, in category 2, in 2017.

lot of time and a lot of care. For example, the issue of transportation. I had to arrive at school very early to receive the students who came by bus from other locations and wait at the exit until the last student got on the bus. So, I stayed at school all day. There were demands on all professionals, and I had much more.

Mariângela then says that she had many happy moments, which were years of intense work, until she received an invitation to work at the Social Welfare Department in Portão and accepted. “I left there with a heavy heart, but I believed it was the best thing to do”. After four years at the Welfare Department, Mariângela was invited to be Secretary of Social Welfare in the municipality of Lindolfo Collor⁴⁸, and she says it was a wonderful experience. Since she was appointed in Portão, she managed to get a job exchange⁴⁹ and worked in this other municipality for four years. “I returned to the school in Portão when the mayor's term in Lindolfo ended, working at the *Escola Municipal Rosalino Rodrigues Coelho* until I retired”.

Marisa was the Director of a *Creche Municipal*, now called the *Escola Municipal de Educação Infantil Bem-me-quer*, in the Rincão do Cascalho neighborhood, for three years. She says that she left the directorship due to a problem related to the *Sindicato dos Professores Municipais*, of which she was an active member and President from 1999 to 2001. “I had a disagreement with the mayor at the time and it didn't take long for me to be asked to leave the school's directorship.” She remembers that it was difficult, but that it only increased some of the certainties she had regarding the administration. The career plan of the municipality of Portão does not provide for an election for the directorship position. Therefore, it is a choice, most of the time, of partisan political content, which ends up promoting changes due to this. Marisa recovered from this experience and worked in different schools because whenever she didn't feel comfortable at the school, she would ask for a transfer at the end of the year. And she was successful.

After my vocal cord health problem, and after being away for this reason, I came back and started working at *Escola Fraga* and *Escola Franke*, 20 hours each. So, I asked to stay 40 hours at *Escola Franke* and there I worked on an environmental project. Some time passed and I was called by the mayor, who at the time was Eloi Besson. He said, “I'm going to recommend you for environmental education, we need someone in environmental education.” During this period, there was a competition for biologists and engineers. The girls who passed mobilized the schools a lot. These people already knew me from the meetings at *Pró-Sinos*⁵⁰, we started planning, working with the entire municipality. [...] And since 2009, we have been organizing the environmental education collective, which is made up of representatives from municipal schools and also from all interested institutions. As is the incentive of the *Pró-Sinos* consortium that brought the idea that came from the Ministry of the Environment, with the methodology and so on, people learn by participating. We invite people from

⁴⁸ Municipality of Rio Grande do Sul, founded on March 6, 1992, has around 6,000 inhabitants and is located in the microregion of Gramado and Canela.

⁴⁹ Contract signed between two municipalities where an employee swaps places with another due to relocation and/or new duties. Mariângela was appointed in Portão and swapped “places” with Eliana Mattge who, appointed in Lindolfo Collor, took over a group in the municipality of Portão. This type of contract can be terminated or renewed at the end of each year.

⁵⁰ The *Consórcio Pró-Sinos* is a public association of an autonomous nature, part of the indirect administration that complies with the principles of public administration set forth in art. 37 of the Federal Constitution of Brazil. See more at: <http://www.consorcioprosinos.com.br/consorcio>.

*EMATER*⁵¹, unions, associations, agencies health entities, schools, to set up this collective that began in 2009. In 2012, we managed to formalize the group and then a representative had the objective of learning, participating, and teaching his community. Many things and fruits emerged from that. [...] Taxes related to the environment, everything was much more for *Caí* than for *Vale do Sinos* and we managed to bring *Portão* to *Vale do Sinos*, which generated more wealth and information. It is a merit, the result of a lot of work. This is something that I think is very positive that happened and I was able to participate in this process.

Professor Marisa took advantage of the opportunities that arose during the work of coordinating environmental education in the municipality to carry out training and share with the members of the collective, another example of female empowerment. “I always dreamed of being at UFRGS, studying.” Marisa holds a Master's degree in Water Resources from the IPH⁵², at the *Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul*. Her training was essential for the drafting and approval of the legislation that founded and regulated the Municipal Environmental Council of the municipality of *Portão*, as well as for the actions of the *Coletivo Educador Ambiental*⁵³ of the city.

It is important to emphasize the care that teachers must take when taking on certain roles in the public sector because, according to the legislation and the specific career plan, this can cause problems when calculating retirement. The service time for a teacher to retire in *Portão*, before the 2017⁵⁴ labor reform, was 25 years in the classroom and at least 50 years of age. Positions such as management, sector coordination and functions in the library and computer labs do not count as work in the classroom, with class teaching.

Rosaura recalls that, after working at *Visconde de Mauá*, her first school in *Portão*, she was transferred to *Escola Municipal 9 de Outubro*, as she had requested, because it was closer to her home. “I had a 2nd grade there, but later I got a 1st grade. Since I had colleagues with experience, I had to stick with them. One of them was Irene⁵⁵. She was my trainer, motivator and inspiration.”

Teacher Rosaura recalls that, at a certain point, there was a problem with *Escola Municipal 9 de Outubro*⁵⁶ and, as a result, the school was transferred to the state government. For this reason, all the teachers wrote a letter requesting two schools where they would like to work when they were transferred. During the summer vacation, she knew that she would not go to the school where some of her colleagues would be transferred; she would teach at *Escola Municipal Vila São Jorge*. So, she took the initiative to go to the Director of Education at the

⁵¹ Associação Riograndense de Empreendimentos de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural (Emater/RS), created on March 14, 1977. See more at: <http://www.emater.tche.br/site/>.

⁵² Instituto de Pesquisas Hidráulicas, which was created in 1953 and is currently the Water Institute of UFRGS, carrying out teaching, research and extension in hydraulics, water resources and the environment. See more at: <https://www.ufrgs.br/enghidrica/iph/>.

⁵³ See more at: <http://ceaportao.eco.br/>.

⁵⁴ Law No. 13,467/17 did not create labor legislation, but it made fundamental structural changes to the regulations in force until then, modernizing labor relations and causing different views on the content of the changes. Each sector needs to observe the calculation required for retirement and specific labor rights.

⁵⁵ Irene Mattge, the same teacher who was transferred and gave the place to Adreane, our research partner.

⁵⁶ A problem related to the fact that the school was located very close to the City Hall, and most of its teachers were labor activists, having created the *Sindicato dos Professores Municipais* in the late 1980s. The Board, even under pressure from the Department of Education, continued to support the teachers' struggles, which caused displeasure. Since the *Escola Municipal 9 de Outubro* (pre-K through 4th grade) was located in the same space as the *Escola Estadual 9 de Outubro* (5th through 8th grade), the administration decided to transfer the land to the State government, thus ending the municipal school's activities. There were protests from parents, teachers, and students, but it was not possible to reverse the situation that had already been signed and documented. As a result, the teachers were reassigned, most of them to different locations.

time, Maria Helena Lauxen⁵⁷, and ask to go to the *Escola Municipal Antônio José de Fraga*: “This was the school where some of my friends had gone and it was very close to my house” – she recalls with a broad smile.

There, teacher Rosaura took on a first grade class and continued her work in literacy, alongside her colleague Sandra Maria Costa dos Passos Colling, a partner teacher since the days of the *Escola 9 de Outubro*. Years went by, she worked hard and sought continuous improvement. Many changes of vice-principals occurred at the school until, in 2001, Rosaura received an invitation from the principal Edgar Strieder⁵⁸ to be the new vice-principal. According to her, there was a vote among the school’s teachers and she was among the ones who received the most votes from her colleagues. In fact, on the day she was to respond to the invitation, she was visited by the Secretary of Education at the time, Marcos Sperb⁵⁹, to be the Director of *Creche Gente Miúda*, in Vila Rica, today called a preschool. “I was torn, but my husband and I talked a lot and I decided not to leave the group that believed in me. I accepted to be the vice-director of *Escola Fraga*. I thanked them for the invitation to be the director, thinking that I had a mission within the school where I was working.” She recalls that Lourdes Weber took over as director of *Escola Gente Miúda*, while she went on to serve as vice-director of *Escola Municipal Antônio José de Fraga*, from 2001 until the director Edgar retired in 2007.

The director always told me, “I’m going to prepare you to take over as director of the school.” I said, no, absolutely not, that’s not my intention, right? “Then I’m going to prepare you, because I’m going to retire, one day I’m going to stop.” You won’t do that, you won’t do that. He retired

As soon as he retired, Rosaura was called by the Secretary of Education, Adreane Arnecke. She wanted to know about Rosaura’s intentions regarding the school’s management and asked that the school’s desire be formalized in a letter. And so it was done. But Rosaura ponders:

In the meantime, I also felt that I had to prepare myself, not only in practice. I lacked theory, I lacked that support there, so that I could continue working. So, I went back to studying, I went to college. At the time, I wanted school management. Then at Feevale there was school management, with school supervision. So, today it is at the postgraduate level. At the time, we could already graduate with a qualification. And then it was school management with supervision. But I wanted guidance, I saw myself more in the area of guidance than supervision. The administrative and bureaucratic issue was not really my thing, it was more that thing of dialogue, conversation, understanding the student, that closeness with the teacher. [...] So, I was the director at Fraga until I retired in 2017.

The need for theoretical deepening is present in the speeches of all the research partners. As the challenges increased, they felt a greater need for training. According to Rosaura, she progressed step by step in her professional career: teacher, vice-director, director. After retiring, Rosaura was invited to take over the leadership of the Department of Education by Mayor José

⁵⁷ Maria Helena Lauxen is a municipal teacher and was the Director of Education in three administrations.

⁵⁸ Edgar Strieder, a teacher in the state and municipal schools, was the director of the Antônio José de Fraga Municipal School (1997-2007). Interesting fact: he was the twin brother of the aforementioned teacher Edmundo Strieder, both teachers and active in politics, Edgar for the PDT and Edmundo for the MDB.

⁵⁹ State school teacher on loan, Secretary of Education of Portão (2001-2002).

Renato das Chagas. Since she had the freedom to assemble her work team, she accepted the invitation and worked as head of the department (2017-2020), continuing now, during the terms of Mayor Delmar Hoff (2021-2024) and this current one that began in 2025.

Well, I always remember what my director used to say, “because when you’re on the other side, you have a different vision, right, a different way of thinking”. And, sometimes, even a different way of putting things as well. When it comes to demands, you don't understand why you didn't get it, when you make a request to the principal. You make a pre-judgment without knowing. After you go to the other side, you understand many things. Why you act in a certain way. And he always said, "Look, everyone has to go through an experience of being a principal, you have to be here on the other side to know how it works." [...] In the case of the principal, it is necessary to understand the teacher who is making the request, what their expectations are and everything else. And it is also important to understand the principal. But it is much easier to understand when you have been there. I see this a lot now as a secretary. I understand principals much better. I understand that, many times, it is not just the bureaucratic or the pedagogical aspects. I understand when they bring their issues, we don't close ourselves off so much and we listen, we discuss what we can do to change, we do it together. [...] That is why I bet on dialogue, it has always been, since the classroom.

What can be affirmed with these paths is the centrality of the pedagogical, understood as a living experience and in constant construction. Far from being limited to techniques and prescriptions, the pedagogical is manifested in the way teachers make choices — whether in the selection of classes, in the methodologies adopted or in listening to the singularities that emerge in the school routine. These choices are not neutral or predetermined, but produced in relation to the context, with the opportunities that arise, with the affections that permeate the teaching work. It is a process that is always unfinished, in which each event (whether a difficulty or an achievement) demands an ethical and creative gesture of response. In the same way, the students' reaction is also part of this movement of continuous invention — they not only receive, but also co-produce learning situations, in dialogue with teachers, with the school community and with the materiality of the school itself.

In this sense, it is important to revisit Kastrup's (2001) conception, according to which learning is not simply appropriating content, but producing new meanings from experience: “learning is, above all, the invention of problems, it is an experience of problematization” (KASTRUP, 2001, p. 17). This idea dialogues with the notion of becoming in Deleuze and Guattari (1995), in which knowledge does not accumulate in a linear way, but is created in lines of flight, in rhizomatic and unpredictable processes. As Larrosa (2018) points out, educating is enabling experiences that touch the lives of individuals, and not simply offering organized knowledge. Biesta (2013), in turn, warns us about the risks of an education focused only on results, and proposes learning as a space of interruption, of exposure to the new, to otherness. Thus, the pedagogical is less in the products and more in the ways of existing that are updated in school relations. It is a practice of invention, resistance and openness to the unexpected, where one learns from both successes and setbacks.

Final considerations

The objective of this study was not to develop frameworks or demonstrative tables that offered data on careers in education in a quantitative way. The field of education already has a vast amount of production that addresses such aspects, with analyses of regulations, historical data and the structures that formalize the teaching career. On the contrary, the proposal here was to delve into the details, into the daily experiences that transcend what is formally recorded. The focus was not on what is regulated and publicly accessible — such as legislation or the histories of municipalities, widely available on websites, museums and online magazines. We sought to go beyond these sources, talking to retired teachers who, when revisiting their trajectories, allowed us to unveil what is hidden behind the regulations. Guided by their memories, their stories were unpacked, revealing that their careers are not limited to numbers or records, but constitute a vital part of the legacy of public education in the municipality of Portão/RS.

However, when considering memory as a starting point, it is essential to remember that it is inserted in a field of struggles and power relations, as stated by Geiger (2016). Memory is not a neutral repository of facts, but a space of disputes, where memories and forgetfulness intertwine, articulate and, often, transform themselves according to the relationships that are established at the moment of remembrance. As Foucault (2020) teaches us, narratives are not simple reports; they are constructions that are inscribed in dynamics of power and discipline. By narrating their experiences, these teachers not only reveal their personal trajectories, but also the implications of these trajectories in the larger context of public education and in the social and political dynamics of their time. Foucault (2020) reminds us that power relations are not only manifested in discourse, but are inscribed in the articulated elements themselves, in each word and each silence, weaving what is remembered and what is forgotten.

The memories that emerge from this research are not only reflections of a distant past, but manifestations of a continuous process of becoming, of reconstruction and reinterpretation, in which the teachers, when remembering, reinterpret their own stories. They reveal not only what they experienced, but also how these experiences were reinterpreted over time. Thus, the research made it possible to access the legacy of a work that goes beyond pedagogical practices, entering the affective, political and social sphere that characterizes education as a field of disputes and negotiations. The records of competitiveness, situations of discomfort in the work environment, illness, difficulties in organizing personal and professional life, common in gender divides, attest to these conclusions.

This movement of revisiting the trajectories reveals, at the same time, how much these educators influenced and were influenced by public schools, and how their stories, although personal, are intertwined with the collective narratives of education in the municipality. In this sense, the research is not limited to an individualized analysis of careers, but is part of a reflection on the mechanisms of constitution of collective memory and on how pedagogical practices intertwine with power relations in public schools.

Finally, by echoing the voices of these teachers, the study reaffirms the importance of looking at education not only from quantitative or normative data, but also from lived experiences, the memories they generate and the power relations that permeate them. In line with Foucault (2020), these narratives invite us to rethink the role of school and the teaching profession as spaces not only for the transmission of knowledge, but as arenas for the production of subjectivities and resistance to the mechanisms of standardization.

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