

## Teacher training policies in Brazil and Europe: challenges and possibilities

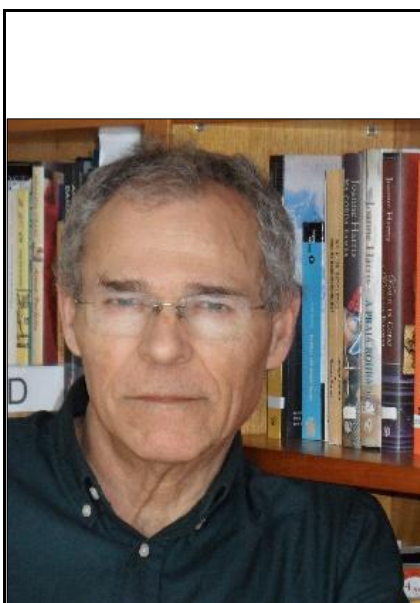
*As políticas de formação de professores no Brasil e na Europa:  
desafios e possibilidades*

*Las políticas de formación de profesores en Brasil y en Europa:  
desafíos y posibilidades*

Entrevista: José Matias Alves

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**Resumo:** Esta entrevista com José Matias Alves, Professor da Universidade Católica Portuguesa (UCP), foi realizada pelos professores Fernando Ilídio Ferreira e Maria Célia Borges no dia 06 de janeiro de 2025, mediante convite e agendamento prévios. Gostaríamos de registar aqui o nosso agradecimento pela sua pronta resposta ao nosso convite, assim como pela disponibilidade e amabilidade que nos transmitiu em todo o processo. A entrevista foi precedida de uma explicitação sobre a finalidade da mesma, nomeadamente, quanto à sua publicação no dossiê temático que agora é dado a lume. Foram igualmente fornecidos oito tópicos ao professor Matias Alves, umas horas antes da entrevista, em torno dos quais se desenvolveu uma boa e profícua conversa entre os três intervenientes, estimulada pelo pensamento original, crítico e reflexivo do entrevistado, que não deixou de entremear o seu discurso com proposições para a transformação de políticas, modelos e práticas de formação de professores. A entrevista decorreu via Zoom, teve a duração de cerca de 60 minutos, foi gravada com a autorização do entrevistado, tendo sido posteriormente transcrita e devolvida ao entrevistado para revisão antes da sua publicação.

**Palavras-chave:** Formação inicial de Professores; Brasil e Europa; Neoliberalismo; Políticas.

**Abstract:** This interview with Professor José Matias Alves, from the Portuguese Catholic University (UCP), was conducted by Professors Fernando Ilídio Ferreira and Maria Célia Borges on 6th January 2025, by prior invitation and appointment. We want to thank him for his prompt response to our invitation and his availability and kindness throughout the process. The interview was preceded by an explanation of its purpose, namely its publication in the thematic dossier that is now being published. Professor Matias Alves was also given eight topics a few hours before the interview, around which a reasonable and fruitful conversation developed between the three participants, stimulated by the original, critical, and reflective thinking of the interviewee, who did not fail to intersperse his speech with proposals for the transformation of teacher training policies, models and practices. The interview took place via Zoom, lasted around 60 minutes, was recorded with the interviewee's authorization, and was later transcribed and returned to the interviewee for revision before publication.

**Keywords:** Initial Teacher Training; Brazil and Europe; Neoliberalism. Policies.

**Resumen:** Esta entrevista con José Matias Alves, Profesor de la Universidad Católica Portuguesa (UCP), fue realizada por los profesores Fernando Ilídio Ferreira y Maria Célia Borges el día 6 de enero de 2025, mediante invitación y previa programación. Nos gustaría expresar nuestro agradecimiento por su rápida respuesta a nuestra invitación, así como por la disponibilidad y amabilidad demostradas durante todo el proceso. La entrevista fue precedida por una explicación sobre su finalidad, específicamente, en relación con su publicación en el dossier temático que es dado a conocer. También se le proporcionaron 8 temas al profesor Matias Alves, unas horas antes de la entrevista, en torno a los cuales se desarrolló una conversación fructífera entre los tres participantes, estimulada por el pensamiento original, crítico y reflexivo del entrevistado, quien intercaló su discurso con propuestas para la transformación de políticas, modelos y prácticas de formación de profesores. La entrevista se llevó a cabo a través de Zoom, tuvo una duración de aproximadamente 60 minutos, fue grabada con la autorización del entrevistado y posteriormente transcrita y revisada por este antes de su publicación.

**Palabras clave:** Formación inicial de profesores; Brasil y Europa; Neoliberalismo; Políticas.

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## Interview

José Matias Alves (UCP)

Fernando Ilídio Ferreira (UMinho)

Maria Célia Borges (UFU)

This interview with Professor José Matias Alves, from the Portuguese Catholic University (UCP), was conducted by Professors Fernando Ilídio Ferreira and Maria Célia Borges on 6th January 2025, by prior invitation and appointment. We want to thank him for his prompt response to our invitation and his availability and kindness throughout the process. The interview was preceded by an explanation of its purpose, namely its publication in the thematic dossier that is now being published. Professor Matias Alves was also given eight topics a few hours before the interview, around which a reasonable and fruitful conversation developed between the three participants, stimulated by the original, critical, and reflective thinking of the interviewee, who did not fail to intersperse his speech with proposals for the transformation of teacher training policies, models and practices. The interview took place via Zoom, lasted around 60 minutes, was recorded with the interviewee's authorization, and was later transcribed and returned to the interviewee for revision before publication.

**MCB:** Professor José Matias, whom I am very honored to meet, was introduced to us by Professor Fernando Ilídio. I want to start by thanking him for his willingness to give us this interview, which will be published in the 'Revista Política e Educação em Debate' (REPOD) of the Federal University of Uberlândia (Brazil), Faculty of Education, Research Line on State, Politics and Management in Education. This journal is very well qualified, with a Capes Qualis A3 rating. Professor Fernando Ilídio, Professor Teresa Sarmento, and I are organizing a thematic dossier on teacher training policies, and we would very much appreciate your contribution to its publication. We are sure this interview will be widely distributed, helping our dossier gain visibility and notoriety.

**JMA:** Thank you for your kind words. I don't know if the contribution is relevant and essential, but I'll do my best. I'll do my utmost to help us think together about a problem that is so relevant, so central. And so necessary. It is essential because all over the world,

there is a particular crisis in the teaching profession in terms of attracting the best. And it has to be the best who come into the profession because teaching is the mother of all other professions. So, it's a pleasure for me to be here, too. I'm very grateful for the invitation to make my contribution. The readers will do me justice, as they are the best judges of the quality of my speech.

**FIF:** What we want is precisely a broad overview of teacher training. There are many panoramas, but we would like to have one drawn up by you based on your in-depth knowledge and the wealth of experience and reflection you have in this field. When I say a broad panorama, I mean that we can address issues on an international scale, on the European Union scale, and, of course, Portugal. We can't forget the global scale involving many supranational organizations such as the OECD and UNESCO. In this sense, how do you see initial teacher training today compared to the recent past? When I say recent, I'm referring to the first quarter of the 21st century.

**JMA:** It's a complex assessment; that's the first word that comes to mind. However, it's a pertinent question. I see this beginning of the 21st century as a time of gains in initial teacher training and possible losses. We've gained a greater awareness of the importance of the profession and its training. This is a relative gain, even if it's not universally recognized, at least in educational policies. In the case of Portugal, an inevitable devaluation of the profession, a certain disregard even, was very marked, which meant that, in institutional terms and social and personal terms, there was a specific flight from initial training. It's not just a feature of Portugal. It's a characteristic on a global scale. It certainly has to do with a certain lack of prestige that the profession has experienced due to complexity, massification, and the emergence of other public priorities, which has led to a decline in the profession's social and political importance and, therefore, a decline in investment and in attracting social demand. So, I think there's a balance here where there are gains because we've also started to realize that the profession, to use an idea that was very dear to Philippe Meirieu, is a fundamental profession: 'Without teachers, there is no future.'

This social and political awareness is now being regained. This is a period of gains and losses. Losses in some importance or recognition of social importance, progressive gains in its indispensability, in its founding matrix of all professions. There is an appreciation of science, especially disciplinary science. I'm unsure about pedagogical science if I can put it that way. There has also been a possible loss of relevance to the contexts that initial

training has to consider and a potential loss of awareness of the centrality of initial teacher training. So, a gain in science and a loss in awareness and contexts cannot fail to be present in initial teacher training. I'm very aware of relationships when I talk about this loss of awareness and relevance of contexts. I think that the teaching profession and its training are very much about relationships, relationships with knowledge, in particular scientific content, but also relationships with content that has to do with pedagogy, didactics, and relationships with people, which is an intrinsic part of the profession, which is a relational profession that deals with human beings. I must like them and maintain a specific empathetic relationship to deal with human beings. And I don't know if initial training has given due value to this relationship with people. The value is given to the relationship with peers, which is a professional community. I'm referring to a relative loss because almost everyone says teaching is interactive. It's a profession that has to live on collaboration between peers. But I don't know to what extent initial training promotes the realization that teachers can only exist fully if they are part of a professional community that learns from each other and thus builds the trust that enables this professional relationship or this interprofessional relationship if you like.

Finally, the question of the relationship with the community is asked. I think a lot about the school in terms of its territorial integration. Teachers are indeed the fundamental agents of this agency and need to be more involved in building the community they are a part of. They are part of and play a central role in assuming greater social prestige and prestige in their work community. In this sense, they must be a kind of community author, author of dialogue and communication, both within the school and in the area where the school is located. I've already said too much on this first topic, but I've done it to give you a general idea of these gains and losses at the start of the 21st century. And I'll leave it at that so we can continue the dialogue on another topic.

**FIF:** In your reflection, I perceive an issue that has to do with a growing tendency towards technicality in teacher training. Following your reasoning, there have been losses in the more reflective and critical dimensions. This can be seen in the syllabuses of initial training courses, where subjects such as philosophy, sociology, and other social and human sciences have disappeared. In short, a curriculum that is almost exclusively didactic, or rather technical-didactic, because I'm talking about didacticism and not didactics as such.

**JMA:** Exactly

**MCB:** This is also the case in Brazil. A technicist approach to the detriment of training in science and pedagogical theories dominates the political guidelines for the teacher training curriculum. Nor are they concerned with this issue that you mentioned of relationships between people and contexts, and teachers are devalued both from a salary point of view and from the point of view of being recognized by society. And teachers are also devalued when their knowledge is reduced to technicality, unrelated to scientific knowledge.

**JMA:** This is also induced by policies that want future teachers to think little and be teaching laborers. Yes, they do what they're told to do.

**MCB:** Yes, follow the instructions.

**JMA:** Exactly. They must comply with the programs, teach the prescribed material, and then take the exams to see if they've learned what they were supposed to. And so this is a proletarian function of the teaching profession that devalues and disregards it, and that is not up to the necessary demands today. In other words, we need human beings who are much more lucid, critical, and creative.

**MCB:** Much more autonomous.

**JMA:** Much more autonomous. Much more, although this autonomy does not dispense with interaction, individual independence, and collaborative autonomy generate interprofessional dialogue, which produces the construction of the profession. Given the heterogeneity and diversity of audiences in Portugal, this has become increasingly visible because the profession is built in contexts and texts. And teachers can't pretend that 'everyone is the same as one' or, in João Barroso's words, 'Teach many as if they were one.' Suppose I think I'm generating exclusion by teaching everyone as if they were one. Everyone is different, and our teaching model pretends everyone is the same. It is a factor in alienation, boredom, and failure to fulfill the profession because it has to live from and in diversity.



Teachers have to consider heterogeneity; they have to realize that students don't need a single menu but a plural one and that they need appropriate responses to their needs to build community. Because a community thrives on difference, it doesn't thrive on sameness. We're all different, and that's a great asset, and it's essential to cultivate it so that difference is inclusive and not exclusionary. This is only possible if teachers and teacher training instill this idea that we need to think, that we need to reflect, that we need to interact, that there is no single truth, and that truths have to be constructed in the contexts where we work because they can't be indifferent to people. And that seems to me to be a good guiding note for action.

**MCB:** Yes, a lot.

**FIF:** This interview has a flexible structure. Before we move on to another topic, I'd like you to share your thoughts on digital technologies and their role in education, considering the trends you've just discussed. Anyway, technology, the advances in digital technology, have been seen as an opportunity, but it's more to accentuate the aforementioned technician. It seems to me that digital technologies are being seen more in the sense of application, a more applicationist sense, which in Brazil is very visible with the production and dissemination of materials, such as handouts, in short, with the interests of the business sector. So, there are interests here, too. And how do you see the other possibilities? Technology is often deified and even seen as capable of dispensing with the teacher, at least the teacher's thinking, becoming a mere applicator. In short, how do you see technology? We know that technology is deified, but it's also demonized. So, what are your thoughts on this? To what extent can it also be transformative in teacher training?

**JMA:** This possibility exists. It depends on how you use it. Technology can personalize. It can individualize teaching proposals if the teacher uses technology to differentiate learning contexts. Because the menu doesn't have to be the same for everyone, and technology allows for this differentiation. A differentiation that is possible on a theoretical level; I'm not saying that this is the practice case. But it could likely be like this that it could be an instrument at the service of greater equality of opportunity, giving, creating differentiated learning contexts, mobilizing technology because they don't all have to be doing the same thing simultaneously centered on the 'master.' They can do different things in the same space at the same time and learn what they need to learn using technology. And that's an opportunity. For example, in

my opinion, of course, the research that has been done into artificial intelligence has identified this possibility as something tangible, something possible. It just needs to be practiced. I don't have any data on the extent of this practice, but it is possible and almost inevitable if we want to democratize learning opportunities.

We can use technology for that purpose, not to increase inequalities, which is another risk. If people don't have access to technology and if there is social segmentation, this access will increase inequalities. Of course, that's a risk, but it's not inevitable that there will be inequality in access to technologies. Once again, it depends on policies in global terms and on policies in organizational terms. How does the organization make technologies available to its students and teachers? And how does it train and qualify them to be able to use these technologies in the sense of freedom to learn, in the sense of differentiating ways of learning, in the sense of increasing the chances of me knowing what I need to learn, in the context of the classroom and outside the context of the school? This seems relatively obvious to me, depending on the contexts and the use leaders and teachers make of these technologies. However, I recognize the decisive role of technological subordination generated by big business.

**MCB:** Technologies can be used for good or bad, right? And we know that their use is often distorted. This is due to issues of capitalism and the intentions of neoliberalism. How can we work against this? How can we educators work to ensure that they are used for good and not for evil?

**JMA:** I would say that the first requirement is to realize what Maria Célia is saying. They can have different uses and be used for good or bad. I have to be aware of this, and as an educator, I will undoubtedly act to ensure that technology is used for the common good and, above all, that it is used for the good of those who most need to learn, for the good of those who live in adverse social contexts, in disadvantaged cultural contexts. If I have this awareness, I can mobilize technology to promote more significant equity in accessing knowledge, reflection, a plural debate, and access to information. And so, I would say that first, you have to be aware of this and then use it well. Suitable use in democratizing technologies and not reinforcing segmentation, hierarchization, and exclusion. I would say that this is very much in the hands of the policies and the means and resources made available to teachers and educational organizations. But then it's also very much in the hands of teachers and their use of their awareness and knowledge.



Awareness, knowledge, and the mobilization of resources to make up as much as possible for the growing inequalities that have existed worldwide. Because, paradoxically, inequalities are not giving way; they are not giving way to more equality and fairness. So, how do I solve this problem? I solve this problem with adequate resources and by using resources to combat discrimination and exclusion as much as possible.

**FIF:** Another topic in the script we prepared for this interview concerns the so-called Bologna Process. In short, it is an agenda that has dominated education policies in the European Union. How do you assess the Bologna process's influence on initial teacher training, considering Europe and, in particular, Portugal?

**JMA:** The answer I will give doesn't have much empirical basis. So please read it as a probability, a possibility. I suggest two or three notes because I don't have enough data to judge the topic assertively. Suppose the Bologna process is practiced as submitting to standardized policies, which establish a uniform standard for all contexts and countries. In that case, this ends up imposing, impoverishing educational practices and the training practices of teachers. It is likely that the Bologna process has standardized, subjected, standardized, and imposed a uniform standard on all contexts. Although this tendency seems to exist, there are exceptions. They may be beneficial in escaping these dynamics of subjection and standardization and constituting a standard reference that allows for a more enriching dialogue between the different policies, contexts, and professionals. And if it's a factor in communication and growth, it could be beneficial. Now, if you ask me whether the influence is positive or negative, I can't give you a definitive answer. As you can see, my position is precarious because I don't have enough information to make an assertive judgment on all the implications of the Bologna process.

**FIF:** But this reflection is pertinent because these processes have no determinism. A term widely used in the Bologna Process was 'harmonization'; it has been considered a standardization process in many analyses. But in fact, it hasn't wholly standardized training systems. In Portugal, for example, the various institutions have dealt with this process differently. So, there's no determination. The title we came up with for this interview relates in some way to this question of constraints, challenges, and possibilities. So, let's look to the future, not only from what we've experienced but also

from supranational influences from the OECD, UNESCO, and other organizations that produce and publish many reports, studies, and publications that relate more directly or indirectly to teacher training. I'm not including other organizations like the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund in this reflection. Still, they both have publications whose title uses the term 'scenarios' for schooling, training, etc. One report that I think is very clear in this regard is the one that presents four scenarios for the future of education in 2050. This has clear implications for teacher training. How do you see it? How do you envisage the future, considering these aspects?

**JMA:** Well, I'm going to enunciate the future that I, as a teacher and as a researcher, want, aren't I? These are scenarios of open possibilities. In my way of seeing the world, life, schools, teachers, the new generations, and the community, I want the near future to be a future that some authors call a more socio-community future, merging societal perspectives with community perspectives. The school is an agency that should be at the service of people and communities. And the society in which it operates. It should be a factor in promoting social ties, community, intergenerational, intercultural, and inter-civilizational dialogue. I see the near future; the near future that I want is for education, which doesn't end at school, to fulfill an emancipating, liberating, humanizing purpose. The latest UNESCO report states that the school is central to building more community and a dignified daily life. The title of the UNESCO report - *Reimagining Our Future Together* - emphasizes precisely this convivial dimension, which comes from the 1996 report *Education as a Treasure to be Discovered*. And this treasure is not yet fully realized. It is in the process of being discovered. To quote Paulo Freire, many people don't see education as a treasure or only see it from a 'banking' perspective. And we need to build this treasure with people based on the four pillars: learning to know, do, live together, and be. Learning to be more supportive, collaborative, compassionate, and creative. A more competent human being, but one who uses their competence for the public good, for the good of others.

Hence, the centrality of being compassionate. Because, as some authors have said about the Frankfurt School, the compassionate dimension of human existence is radical and essential. It is necessary for humanity's life. There's a Brazilian author I often quote, Rubem Alves, who proposed another name for 'Homo sapiens.' Instead of being the 'Homo sapiens' who fills the earth with wars, destruction, death, and climate crises, he should be called 'Homo compassivus' because Homo compassivus would never be the author of wars, destruction, and death. This position reveals the sensitive attitude of someone working to build a more supportive, fairer, equitable, and inclusive society. And I would like the school to be one of the central agencies

of this order. To be builders of that order, they need to act in a way that is, I would say, more authorial, creative, and collaborative. Because each of us, alone, can do very little. And our strength comes from our ability to communicate and build a more inclusive and supportive future together. This is the vision I would like us to develop in teacher training and in the actions of teachers in the different sectors where they work.

**FIF:** If you allow me, I will return to constraints and the possibilities that higher education institutions have to recontextualize their training models and practices. What challenges do you see? What challenges do higher education institutions face today? They see these issues in different ways. Some institutions don't train teachers initially but are interested in teacher training, particularly in social interaction and research. Higher education institutions have been relatively passive when it comes to teacher training. I don't mean they don't do it, but they've been more passive in transformation and innovation. I'd like to see more proactive thinking in what you've been saying about a more equal society and fairness and justice issues.

**JMA:** Well, as a first note, I list half a dozen keywords and key concepts that could define a matrix for higher education action in this specific field of teacher training. They have to be more authoritative. The institutions themselves have to be more authoritative; they have to be more creative, and they have to try to get away from the logic of subordination, the logic of subjection, the logic of vassalage to whomever. They have to be organizations that make thinking, critical thinking, creative thinking, and thinking at the service of the community and the service of its more equitable development. They have to make this a fundamental pillar of their action: more thinking, more creation, more autonomy, more agency. To do this, they need more freedom because only by being free can they generate dynamics of construction, reflection, and interaction. Of course, freedom presupposes responsibility. I can only be free if I am also responsible; in other words, if I am accountable for my actions and accountable to myself and to my professional peers, so to speak. It's not accountability in the logic of accountability to the political power, although I may also have to be accountable in that sense in a secondary way. However, in the first instance, I am responsible for my conscience as a professional and for my peers and colleagues. That's what I mean by being responsible. So, if I'm more of an author, more free, more accountable, and have more agency, I have to have more of a voice in the public arena.

We have little voice for two fundamental reasons: media interests are regulated by factors that don't necessarily have to do with the common good but with particular interests. We no longer have a voice in the public arena because significant private interests colonize the public arena. But then we have to create alternative means of having a voice. If we don't have a voice, we can't influence policies or be present in the public arena. One challenge is creating communication channels, networks of communication, and professional interaction. We can't necessarily be subjugated to the interests of the existing *mass media*. Today, we can create. I am an example of this. I've had a *Terrear* blog for over 20 years. Of course, it's not read by thousands and thousands of people, but a few hundred people read it. These hundreds are passing on their voice, passing on their word. I will never give up having a voice. I can't build a vast audience; I don't have that power, but I create small audiences; in other words, I fulfill my role as a tiny grain of sand that I know isn't going to change the world, but at least changes my conscience about the world. So, I'm calm because I don't give up daily having my voice, writing what I want to write, and saying what I want to say. And teachers, individually and above all collectively, in public and professional associations, can have more power to regulate. By having more of a voice, teachers have more influence. They can and should interact more within the professional class, collaborate more, and commit to being part of this program for the regeneration of humanity.

I never forget a great concert that U2 gave many years ago in the United States of America, in which the band's leader - Bono - addressed world leaders, Bush in America Blair in England, saying that if we were able to take a man to the moon, it would be time to use the power we have to bring man back to Earth and to create more humanity on Earth, which is our Motherland and our homeland, to use an idea dear to Edgar Morin's heart. I won't say that these are all the challenges facing teacher training, but they are some teleological challenges that, from my point of view, a teacher training dynamic needs. A dynamic of restoring hope, hope in people, hope in human beings, hope in humanity, especially in a counter-cyclical context in which we see that what seems to prevail is the logic of threat and war, devastation and deportation... But, as Paulo Freire said, we must be the bearers of hope; even in a counter-cyclical context, we can't give up. We can't abandon the educational ideal of transformation, liberation, and humanization. And so that's a good motto for higher education.

**MCB:** It's good that you bring these words of hope. And I'd first like to quote Rubem Alves, a Brazilian educator whose ideas are also present in your *Escola da Ponte*, which I visited and

had the honor of meeting with when I was in Portugal. Paulo Freire also talks a lot about hope. He is a great Brazilian educator, and it is essential for us that you recognize and highly respect him in Portugal. And we do need much hope because teachers, due to social and professional devaluation, find themselves immobilized, passive, and very hopeless. It's tough to restore all these values, so teachers need to be active and fight to have a voice against this trend and against everything that immobilizes them. And you've suggested that we get around this thing that binds, silences, and makes us lose our voice. Teachers must act as subjects capable of intervening in their history and profession. It's not easy, is it, teacher? As we can see, even the discourses of UNESCO and the OECD are often intertwined with the discourse of neoliberalism and capital. You quoted Delors talking about learning to be, learning to do, etc. At first, the world saw this report as a good thing, an opportunity for education, and a perfect path. Still, it was highly criticized by those who saw it as more oriented towards this technicist education geared towards the capital. So, as you said, there are positive and negative points. We need to find the positive points and ways of circumventing the harmful reactions in this sense to see the best way forward.

**JMA:** This is the option that we cannot alienate. As educators, we must ask ourselves what we want from life. What do we want from the world? What part can we play in making the world a little more humane, supportive, and fairer?

**FIF:** In the 1990s, the report 'Education: A Treasure to be Discovered, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century' was seen in this light. Today, it would perhaps be seen as a humanist path compared to other reports. By the way, I'd like to situate the issue of teacher training today in anti-democratic times like the ones we're living through. I mean, extremism, what we're seeing in the United States and throughout Europe and the world. So, schools face a more significant challenge today regarding a democratic education that contributes, as you said, to a fairer and more humane society. In short, teacher training also makes the school, and the school makes teacher training. And the teachers. How do you see some possibilities in this field? For example, I see the Modern School Movement in Portugal, to be specific, and without a doubt, the keyword in this pedagogical model is cooperation. Co-operation councils, project work, promoting the democratic ideal. But how do you see these possibilities in teacher training?

**JMA:** That's precisely the point. Teacher training must create contexts or horizons for teachers to see themselves as interlocutors with their peers. In initial training, we must make people realize they can only exist professionally in a collaborative environment. Because if they exist in a closed classroom, in a secret garden, in a 'black box' that no one can see, we enter a professional world of loneliness and suffering. Being the master of your class, your classroom, the enclosure that protects is also the enclosure that suffocates. We need the confidence to open the doors, to break down the walls, to break down physical and epistemological walls, and to think collegially in more collaborative, interactive ways of making students learn. I think this has to start with the initial training. Students will have to see concrete examples because they already exist, and teachers can be excellent and feel immensely gratified if they work with other teachers in open spaces. I've seen teachers working with 60 students, with 90 students in large open spaces, three teachers, for example, and it's evident that with 90 students there, these teachers couldn't just be lecturing. They would have to think about that space and that time differently; it would have to be a space for production and not for the subject's consumption, which the teacher just dictated.

Teachers would have to be architects of individual and small group learning situations, with technological supports that they could use to research, contrast, and collaboratively build knowledge. Thus, the teacher would create opportunities for students to learn. In my opinion, this has to start with initial training. Initial training has to train teachers in an interactive logic. And they have to see that this can be rewarding because if they don't see that this professional practice is also a source of reward, they won't join in. This is precisely where building a different professional culture comes into play. How do you build culture? A collaborative professional culture is also built through initial training and interaction with work contexts that can work similarly. Students in initial training can see that they can be teachers in a different professional environment, in a more collaborative and interactive environment.

**MCB:** Thinking about what you just said, more collaborative, more democratic training, in an interactive logic. The public policies for teacher training and the curriculum guidelines for teacher training are not very much in line with these ideas because they are more in line with a technicist vision, in line with neoliberal policies. How can we interfere with the content and guidelines of these public policies here in Brazil? And in Europe and Portugal, too, right?



**JMA:** I don't have the magic key to solving the issue here, but a good principle would be for initial training to be a dynamic interaction. The students themselves, future teachers, should work on interacting with each other so that, following the model of isomorphism, they can take to school the contexts in which they will work on these ways of working with their students. If future teachers have learned isolationist logic, they will tend to replicate this model in transmissive teaching logic. This choice is in the hands of higher education institutions: whether to adopt a more individualistic, more transmissive pedagogical model or a more collaborative, more interactive one. So, it would be a good step. If students and teachers could see that there is another way of being a student and a teacher, a more dialogic, interactive, and collaborative, the door to possibility would be open. We need work, even classroom and student work, to be more horizontal, dialogic, and searching. An interactive search would be a good start. It wouldn't solve the problem, but it could be a good start so that later, in real work contexts, they could take this model this way of working with others.

**FIF:** This way, we could intervene and influence public policies.

**JMA:** It certainly would. Because policies don't fall from the sky, Policies tend to be born; they are born on many sides. They are born from transnational influences from policies on a global scale, but they are also born from the bottom up. Citizens, teachers, and professional associations also have the power to reach power and to be transformative power. And they even have the power to disobey the guidelines of power and create alternative models. And so, it's a promising field for establishing other ways of working.

**FIF:** As we near the end, I'd like to raise the issue of quality, which has been very present in the discourse on teacher training. We could sketch a reflection here that problematizes the idea of quality, particularly that which is omnipresent in legislative texts and political discourse. From my point of view, the notion of quality has been obscured rather than elucidated because whenever quality is mentioned, everyone agrees. And that hides controversies and very different political ideologies. So, how can we end the interview? We can conclude by reflecting on this issue more problematically.

**JMA:** I might pick up on an old idea from António Nóvoa. There's a text that struck me when I read it, and I return to it from time to time, and it sets out the thesis of the excess of discourse and the poverty of practices. In the case of quality, we have an apparent excess of discourse. And practices that don't correspond to that discourse. So there's a discourse here that hides more than it reveals. It's, therefore, an empty discourse and a rhetorical discourse. It's a discourse that I would say is useless. Because when I talk about quality education, it doesn't mean anything. I don't know what I'm talking about. At least, when I read this prose, I don't know what it means. What is a quality discourse? What is a quality educational practice? And who benefits from this supposed quality? I'm more interested in practices and trying to question whether practices are of quality for everyone. And under what circumstances? What are the criteria for me to assess quality educational practices and policies in their concrete, practical dimension and impact on day-to-day life, ways of organizing, making students learn, and creating cultural and social developments? That's what interests me. I'm interested in understanding whether education promotes greater justice, more significant equity, and greater equality of opportunity regarding access, attendance, success in education, and the enjoyment of educational goods.

Looking at quality in these four dimensions, it is, therefore, a quality system or school if it does promote the maximum learning possible among the population it serves. And so, as long as the school abandons pupils or leaves because they don't see enough reason to stay there and to take an interest, develop, and humanize themselves, we won't have a quality school. Quality has to be experienced and felt by everyone, albeit in different ways. It has to be affirmed in personal and social concreteness. If it isn't, it's just empty talk. And so, education is of quality if it is based on knowledge, if it is based on a culture of freedom, a culture of responsibility, a pedagogy that generates conditions for more learning, more equity, more citizenship, more commitment, especially to the poorest and most disadvantaged. The concept of quality has a lot to do with its beneficiaries. For the elite, education is quality if it fulfills their aspirations and gives them the advantages they want. For others, who are the majority, this quality is deficient and exclusionary. In Portugal's case, around 25 percent don't have an education with the quality characteristics I've just described, so quality doesn't exist for them.

**FIF:** Thank you very much. We had a good interview. Maria Célia, do you want to make any final remarks or ask any more questions? I think the interview has already exceeded 01h00, but it seems we've already covered the issues we had planned to.

**MCB:** Yes, we have. I'm happy. Thank you. I want to thank Professor Fernando Ilídio, who is here with us, for his availability. The professor who gave the interview was Professor José Matias Alves. We want to thank you. The interview was recorded and will be transcribed. You can be sure that your collaboration was excellent, right? We have a vibrant interview that will add a lot to our dossier.

**JMA:** Thank you for the opportunity. It was a pleasure to dialogue with you. I wanted to give you my vision of the topics you've thrown at me. Of course, an oral speech is always full of redundancies and zigzags, but that's natural. I'd also like to thank Fernando and Maria Célia for inviting me.

**FIF:** Thank you very much. We appreciate it.

**JMA:** Thank you very much too.