PHOTOGRAPHY AS A SOURCE OF RESEARCH FOR THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION

Fotografia como fonte de pesquisa para a História da Educação

La fotografía como fuente de investigación para la Historia de la Educación

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> "That a river is only eternal because it lives off other waters. Isolated, the rivers become perish" (Mia Couto).[1]

A dossier is characterized as both the process and product of a collective, a collection of texts, ideas, and documents, bringing together questions and possible answers. Like the rivers the poet speaks of, research sources are completed collectively – in the dossier, where, like a river of words, ideas, and information, they contribute to achieving the goals of the entire scientific production of which they are a part. Knowledge and science advance as other questions are raised by new generations. Science thrives on debate, controversy, divergences, and convergences that flow like new streams and rivers in social life.

Thus, lives and problems, doubts and the path to solutions are the articles in this dossier on photography as research sources. Like rivers that converge in their courses, they run towards a History of Education similar to the course of history, which, over the last century, has been enriched by the expansion of documentary sources. The History of Education increases its explanatory capacity of reality when it encompasses everything from traditional oral and written sources (texts, laws, charts, graphs, tables) to other objects, such as images (engravings, paintings) and photographs.

Beyond the theoretical aspects of the research and considering the educational potential of history, two aspects should be highlighted: the reach of visual culture in social interaction and also in education in this century, therefore influencing the political and cultural fields. Regarding the presence of visual culture in the world we live in and its influence on lifestyles, Guy Debord (1997) dissects the spectacularization of bodies, ideas, and feelings by the media and social networks. Hearts and minds are shaped by the appearances of visual representations, creating an artificial atmosphere of real life, molded by consumption and the illusion of promises of easy, immediate happiness.

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[1] Freely translated from: Couto, M. *A cegueira do rio*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2024, p. 107.

Ribeiro and Fernandes (2020, p. 190) start from these ideas and the potential of history to provide a critical reading of events. They report a school experience in visual literacy whose objective was to lead students to identify hidden meanings in photographic images, hidden in the appearance of the representation and which "contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes and latent prejudices".

The theme of this dossier, as the title of the thematic proposal states, encompasses three major issues: (i) photography, this marvelous invention that has spanned time since the 19th century and delights our eyes, cell phones, computers, television and film media in the 21st century; (ii) its use as a research source, a document that answers our questions *pari passu* with traditional written and oral documents; (iii) and the History of Education, which accompanies humanity from generation to generation, shaping coexistence, culture, customs, loves, acceptance, disagreements and prejudices. In the context of these introductory words to the dossier, we reflect on the empirical and theoretical meaning of the three terms.

PHOTOGRAPHY

What is photography, this writing of light that is so important in today's world, in our ways of seeing and reading the world, events, of seeing people? What is photography reproduced to infinity, embellished, manipulated to challenge accepted truths or invent untruths? How to apprehend it in what it shows of reality and in what it conceals, hides, creates and recreates as if it were another reality? How to use it as a document for the reconstruction of history?

The use of photographs as an illustration of a theme or as a means of communication is still very common, which is legitimate for the purposes for which they are intended. They appear as inserts in the middle of the text or at the end (Azevedo, 1963) and, more frequently, on book covers (Ciavatta, 2022). But, beyond the sensitive information or ideological message contained in their use, beyond the visual and aesthetic pleasure of the image, photos tend to become merely a curiosity about the subject in which they are inserted. They illustrate, embellish, attract the eye, the imitation. Influencers illustrate their communication with their image, with the diversity of forms, colors, good or insidious messages.

In this dossier, we aim to present articles that use photography in research in the History of Education and discuss the methodological paths found. We want to advance in the discovery of its heuristic value for the historical reconstruction of the subject in which it is used. We start from two ideas present in the scientific production of our universities[2]. They refer to the problem of the construction of the object in the

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[2]   Some aspects of this reflection are based on Ciavatta (2009).

various areas of knowledge, which, here, concerns the human and social sciences. The first approach attempts to understand the world in the most direct way possible, "without filters, without biases, without prejudices; the second alternative requires always admitting the presence of filters, categories, and means of approximation between the human spirit and matter" (Latour, 1998, p. 15).

The first case exemplifies the understanding of photography in realism, photography as a reflection or faithful reproduction of reality. This option includes empirical-positivist conceptions, the search for neutrality, political impartiality, the objectivity of knowledge, and the supposed absence of an active subject. Also present is the postmodern idea of the deconstruction of the modern, understood through the concepts of progress and secularization, the question of the subject, idealism, the Enlightenment, and the negation of grand explanatory systems. It can be an aestheticized view of reality, with the primacy of the signifier, the word, over the signified; history as a style of narrative, a discourse, with the elimination of politics. These are conceptions that rely on fragments of a world to be emancipated from all metaphysics.

According to the second idea, the presence of filters, categories, concepts, representations, and ideologies that stand in the way of approaching reality and scientific and/or interpretative activity are also conceived as constrained, and one moves from relativism about what is possible to know (as in Kant's a priori categories) to extreme skepticism, according to which knowledge of reality is impossible for human reason.

To obtain some kind of certainty in knowledge, Latour (1998) proposes inverting the metaphor of the optics of filters, so that intermediaries are neither denied nor considered veils concealing reality, but rather become the means, the "mediators" that put us in contact with objects. This reflection, on the one hand, correctly signals the importance of the means, of other objects, to achieve a certain knowledge. On the other hand, it apparently simplifies their mediating role by conceiving them only as means.

The concept of appearance and essence (Kosik, 1978) allows us to advance this reflection, to arrive at the concept of mediation (Lukács, 1978), which is particularly appropriate to photography as a visible expression, which is recognizable by its appearance, but which holds other aspects and meanings in what is not apparent, that is, the real object represented, the first reality and the second reality, which is the representation of that real object (Kossoy, 2001, p. 133). In this conception of reality, photography is seen in the conditions of its production, with its cultural, political, economic and technological mediations. The photographic object itself, as memory, source, document or monument (Le Goff, 1992), is historical mediation, a complex social process, a "synthesis of multiple determinations" (Marx, 1977, p. 227).

Our immediate contact with reality is with the apparent, with what is shown to the eye, the external qualities or what constitutes a representation of an object. To arrive at the "thing in itself," a certain detour is necessary. "For this reason, dialectical thought distinguishes between representation and concept of the thing," which does not mean distinguishing two forms and two degrees of knowledge of reality, "but especially and above all, two qualities of human praxis," because the human being is not "an abstract knowing subject," but a historical individual who acts objectively and practically (Kosik, 1978, p. 9).

The world of external phenomena, which reveal the surface or appearance of processes, the fetishized praxis, and the world of representations, which are not immediately recognizable as results of the social activity of men, is the "chiaroscuro world of truth and deception." Its proper element is double meaning, because the phenomenon indicates the essence, but also hides it. The essence, which is not immediately given to understanding, is mediate to the phenomenon. Although reality is the unity of essence and appearance, the essence manifests itself in something different from what it is, its representation in the case of photography. In this sense, to know an object is to reveal its social structure. This is the way of constructing the concept of object (Kosik, 1978, pp. 11-23).

Returning to Latour (1998), at this second level, we are not talking about a means, but about more complex processes, with diverse meanings, depending on the acting subjects and the dynamics of the phenomena involved. We understand that this second level of the problem, which goes beyond appearances, is the world of mediations, of social processes (economic, technical, political, environmental, scientific, etc.), of the hidden essence of the phenomenon. These are the articulated relationships that are reconstructed at the level of historical knowledge by social subjects within a given social totality, understood as the context or set of relationships established by objects, phenomena, people, and events. We are all beings related to other beings, other situations, feelings, and ideas, both in the plane of objective life and in the subjectivity that we construct upon this reality. We are confluent, like the living rivers of which Mia Couto (2024) speaks.

Bosi (1992, p. 15) works with the idea that "the possibility of rooting the current experience of a group in the past is achieved through symbolic mediations. It is the gesture, the song, the dance, the rite, the prayer, the speech that evokes, the speech that invokes." This reference allows us to emphasize that the concept of mediation applies not only to material processes, but also to cultural and political phenomena. What is visible reveals and conceals – from where, perhaps, comes the great seductive power of photography – the history that is still invisible. Helping to rescue the invisible is the role of intertextuality, of reading the invisible in photography through other documentary sources.

RESEARCH SOURCES

We are once again faced with a metaphor, that of the sources that create the rivers of history. Sources or documents are two terms that historians use in their studies, although sources are preferably all human traces found in the present that allow us to know something of the past. They become documents to the extent that they answer the historian's questions. At the same time, it is the historian's questions that transform documents into sources of research (Petersen & Lovato, 2013).[3]

Mustè (2005) takes up Droysen's work from the German historical school and classifies sources into remains or vestiges; monuments, such as inscriptions, coins, coats of arms, works of art and architecture; written and oral sources, to which we add iconographic, audiovisual and digital sources. In these sources, "things appear transformed by relationships, causal links, systems of motivation, purposes, conditions that were not present in the originals, but are present in a modality of human representation" (Mustè, 2005, p. 17).

In addition to the expansion of sources, Petersen and Lovato (2013, pp. 297-298, 308) record "the recovery of the context of the document's emergence and the analysis of its trajectory to the present"; the new means of dissemination, the new techniques of data collection and access (microfilm collections, digital collections, media, storage programs).

This work with sources becomes all the more complex when we consider fake news and the use of Artificial Intelligence, which places faces, words, actions, and situations onto images that become something else, that become fictional beings and, even more seriously, documentary fiction, which we both admire and fear, due to the deregulation that allows its circulation orchestrated by algorithms that we do not know and do not control. Therefore, external criticism of documents, their origin and references to recognizable facts and locations, linguistic specifications of the texts, and authorship remain ever necessary.

Internal criticism is also necessary to seek the authenticity of the document, the veracity of its content, and the individual or collective represented. One can conclude that the representation is curious, that the communication is powerful, that the author is ingenious and artistic, but not that it is a historical source.

Another important issue in dealing with sources concerns documents and their understanding as monuments, symbols of power. Le Goff, in his classic book *History and Memory* (1992, p. 535, author's emphasis), discusses document and monument: "Collective memory and its scientific form, history, apply to two types of materials: documents and monuments." Further on, he emphasizes that monuments are a legacy of the past, and documents are the historian's choice. He provides a history of the use

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[3]   We revisit here some aspects developed in Ciavatta (2019, pp. 52-53).

of the two terms throughout the centuries, showing how document is used in the sense of proof by the positivist historical perspective; and how *monumentum* and *documentum* could refer to the same testimonies or legal statutes.

However, over time, the *documentum* has become enriched with meanings, as expressed by the founders of the journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* (1929), pioneers of a new history who broadened the notion of document: "History is undoubtedly made with written documents. When these exist." But it can be done, it must be done without written documents when these do not exist" (as quoted in Le Goff, 1992, p. 540).

In this fortunate opening of understanding the social totality, that is, the set of relations present in the way of being of any and all objects, phenomena or subjects, humanity is enriched by knowing "the history of women, slaves, workers, laborers, sexuality, love, madness" (Petersen; Lovato, 2013, p. 297), of the economy, of power, of ideas, of mentalities, of culture, of agriculture, of cities, of landscapes, of companies, of the family, of daily life, of ethnicities, of religions, of photography and of cinema, as Ciro Flamarion Cardoso and Ronaldo Vainfas (1997) record.

Le Goff (1992, p. 536) elevates all documents to the category of monuments, as symbols of some power: "The monument has as its characteristic its connection to power. of the perpetuation, whether voluntary or involuntary, of historical societies (it is a legacy to collective memory) and the referral to testimonies, of which only a minimal portion are written testimonies".

In this dossier, as proposed by RBHE and its organizers, the works presented utilize photographic images. These images gain identification and meaning to the extent that other documents locate them in the space-time of their social subjects and the institutions that preserve them. As research sources, silent in their public and private archives, they gain expression as documents in the reconstruction of some history.

HISTORY OF EDUCATION

In the dimensions this text introductory to the dossier, only some few questions These issues can be addressed. The History of Education is today a complex field, with many... Aspects of development. We understand the History of Education[4] as part of the science of history. Reis (2003, p. 7) summarizes: No there is search historical

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4   We do not distinguish between the history of education, the history of pedagogy, and the history of the school, as mentioned in the introduction to the book edited by Sanfelice, Saviani, and Lombardi (1999, p. 3). We understand that this distinction reduces the educational phenomenon to an institution, the school, or to its practices, pedagogy. By the term history of education, we refer to the study of educational phenomena in all spheres of society, different institutions, social subjects, and their practices. This is the meaning we find in Saviani (2006, p. 10).

empirical without support implicit or explicit theory and the theory is sterile without the historical research. One is linked to the another and they constitute reciprocally.

In a previous text, Reis (1998, pp. 38-39) explains the transformation Theoretical development of history in the 20th century based on the concept of time:

Therefore, the great theoretical renewal brought about by the Annales school's reconstruction of historical time was problem-oriented history. It opposed the narrative character of traditional history. It recognized the impossibility of "narrating the facts as they happened." It acknowledges that there is no history without theory. Historical research is the verification of possible answers—hypotheses—to problems posed at the beginning. In it, the historians knows that they choose their objects in the past and interrogates them from the present. They make their conceptual elaboration explicit, because they do not intend to disappear in the research in the name of objectivity. On the contrary, to be more objective, the historians "appear and confess" their assumptions and concepts, their problems and hypotheses, their documents and techniques, and how they used them and, above all, from what social and institutional position they speak.

Although few professional historians deal with the History of Education, as demonstrated by the book *Domínios da História* (Cardoso; Vainfas, 1997), in which, among its 19 chapters, the History of Education is not included, and therefore there is no recognition of the History of Education as an area of historical research, such absences do not invalidate the belonging of the History of Education to the field of history, including reflection on theory and method, empiricism, documentation, object of study, issues that are important in the articles that make up the dossier.

Also, the History of Education, alongside the classic questions of history—who, when, how, and where—needs a theory, a conception of reality to give meaning to events. There are many conceptions about human beings and their paths on the planet throughout time and the spaces occupied to sustain life.

Following the development of the sciences, for some historians of education, the historical account is made through the description of educational phenomena; Or history seeks to be the account, if not the discourse, about the educational phenomenon as an experience, a shared lived experience. These are historical accounts that approach what François Dosse (1992) called "history in fragments."

Others seek to explain the phenomena described or experienced based on society, the relationships between the different social groups and classes that produce them. This is what they call global history or history as the social production of existence in Marx's terms (1979). It includes social, economic, political, and cultural aspects of the objects of study and the social subjects involved in the capitalist socioeconomic structure in which we live.

In historical research, photography was incorporated late into the arsenal of documents used by historians. It was with the *École des Annales* that the possibilities

of sources to be used were broadened. This opening allowed historians like Peter Burke to later reflect on photography as a research source.

In the field of History of Education, this inclusion occurred even later, with some studies standing out, such as those carried out by Ian Grosvenor on school photographs, which were pioneers in this field:

> The responses given to the problem of recovering this educational memory according to the political, cultural and social contexts are different. But discomfort is an inherent part of investigating and disseminating our past. Educational memory takes on these roles when it approaches a complex history that explains lived and narrated educational experiences (Collelldemont, Padrós, & Grosvenor, 2022, p. 78).

The History of Education was already a subject taught in teacher training courses since the 1930s. Sociologists, psychologists, and other intellectuals wrote about the History of Education. The postgraduate system created as a national system in the early 1970s provided advances in all areas of knowledge, including the History of Education. Studies and research on vocational and technical education, problematized as a field of work-education since the early 1990s, have little insertion in the scope of the History of Education.

Compared to other methodological resources, such as charts, graphs, and tables, photography is a theme and a source of study that is still little explored in the History of Education in Brazil. Pioneering works focus more on the indispensable activity of identifying and organizing photographic collections and other documentary sources, such as Barros (1997), among others. The usual references for the study of photography are from the field of communication, such as Barthes (1984), Sontag (1986), Machado (1984), and others.

Nowadays, we have expanded and updated works on history, art, and communication, such as those by Ana Maria Mauad [Essus de Andrade] (2004) and Boris Kossoy (2001, 2020), in addition to numerous theses and dissertations, some of which are analyzed in Ciavatta et al. (2023).

The research on the use of photography in History of Education and work-education history books, in the national sphere (Ciavatta, 2022), made us aware of the pioneering nature of this documentary source in the area of vocational education, especially Fonseca (1986) and Cunha (2000a, 2000b, 2000c), Montojos (199), Manfredi (2002), Moraes (2003), Lima (2007; 2016), Ciavatta (2009); the works gathered in Ciavatta

et al. (2019), by historians of education, Faria Filho (2001), Oliveira (2003), Silva (2000); in addition to Faria Filho and Araújo (2011), Medeiros Neta and Ciavatta (2020).[5]

For the dossier on the History of Education, with all the thematic and theoretical diversity that the area encompasses, we chose the following thematic axes: Conceptual and methodological issues in the analysis and interpretation of photographic images in the History of Education; Photography and Archives in the History of Education; Photography and the History of educational institutions; Photographs and school daily life; Photographs and school material culture; Photographs and the History of Education in non-formal spaces.

It was a pleasant surprise to receive 46 articles submitted for publication. In addition to the rigorous evaluation of scientific productivity, which encourages professors to seek to publish their research in well-regarded journals such as RBHE, it is necessary to recognize the advancement of visual culture, in this case, photography, as a research source for the History of Education.

The thematic diversity met our expectation of seeing different themes and issues investigated with this source treated as a document, broadening the understanding of the problems addressed with different points of view and theoretical frameworks. This allowed us a prospective dialogue on the theoretical and methodological demands placed on oral and written sources for the writing of history, also used for photographic images. This, along with thematic and regional diversity, were the main criteria for selecting the works for the dossier, which are as follows, distributed across thematic axes.

The first axis, dedicated to conceptual and methodological issues in the analysis of photographic images in the History of Education, includes the articles "Analyzing school photographs in the age of Artificial Intelligence," by Sjaak Braster and Maria del Mar Del Pozo Andrés, and "Photography and History of Education," by Helena Cabeleira.

The second axis, focused on the relationship between photography and archives in the History of Education, brings together the studies *Photographic images of Black education in Washington, D.C., during World War II*, by Phillip Cheng, Bruna Garcia da Cruz Canellas, and Sevan Terzian, and *School in black and white*, by Silvia Pacelli and Valentina Valecchi.

On the axis dedicated to the photographs in the context of daily school life, the article is presented. *The Use of Photos to Create a New History of Education. A Case Study of the Mompiano Kindergarten in Italy in the Early 20th Century*, by Evelina Scagliam, and *The Schooling of the World by camera lenses missionary Protestant: snapshots of the Unevangelized Fields Mission (1931 – 1944)*, by Elizânia Mendes.

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[5]　We have not included here the current production of historical works from the IFs (Federal Institutes of Professional and Technological Education).

Finally, the axis on photographs and school material culture encompasses the work *The photograph as a source for the history of education professional at the Lauro Sodré Institute (1900-1904)*, by Mayara Teixeira Sena and Laura Maria Silva Araújo Alves.

From this perspective, the breadth of proposed articles demonstrates how photography is embedded in research in the field of History of Education, being used in different themes and perspectives. Faced with such diversity, organizers and RBHE, we embarked with great commitment on the process of evaluating and defining which articles would be included in the dossier. In this sense, the journal's guidelines and the quality of the articles were taken into account. However, we emphasize that, if it were not for the limited number, many other rich contributions could be published.

With the aim of addressing different themes, the articles in this dossier contribute to different spheres of research in History of Education. Because it is a research source with a relatively late insertion, we consider it important to have contributions regarding conceptual and methodological issues in the analysis and interpretation of photographic images in History of Education. In this sense, we were presented with studies that address the problematization of the role of photography as a source and object of research, based on analyses of investigations carried out in the Luso-Brazilian context. The challenges faced by historians of education regarding research in times of digitalization and Artificial Intelligence are also included in the contributions presented in this dossier, particularly in its articulation with combinations of quantitative techniques and qualitative methods.

With the emergence of the study of school archives and collections and the great possibilities for studying photographs located in these contexts, we have contributions to understand what Pozo, Braster, and Grosvenor call the black box of the school. These collections are studied in different contexts and periods, which will allow readers different possibilities for analysis.

Current perspectives on the analysis of daily school life were also considered in this dossier, with an article that uses photography as a research source for understanding kindergartens, from the perspective of a New History of Education. Finally, school material culture, a relevant theme in the field of History of Education, has an important contribution, which is related to the History of Vocational Education.

We therefore hope that reading the dossier we have organized will contribute to strengthening research using photographs as both an object and a source for the History of Education.

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