

# The life of Physical Education Teachers: Personal and Professional Teaching Experience

Núbia Zorzanelli dos Santos \*

Valter Bracht \*\*

Felipe Quintão de Almeida \*\*\*

**Resumo:** Este artigo trata do ciclo de vida de três professores de educação física no contexto escolar, numa análise que combina elementos biográficos àqueles relacionados com a carreira profissional. Investiga questões referentes à formação dos professores, desde suas experiências escolares na infância e adolescência até o posterior itinerário profissional em educação física. Finaliza apontando algumas conseqüências para a formação docente.

**Palavras-chaves:** Biografia como assunto. Docentes: história. Prática profissional. Educação Física.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, some researchers have called attention to the difficulty in materializing in the intervention of theoretical advances made in Brazilian school physical education (Palafox MUÑOZ, 2002; CAPARROZ; BRACHT, 2007). The most common explanation is to give the teacher the responsibility for this difficulty, ignoring the many factors, not only professional that stiffen actions toward a renewed practice. Unhappy with that kind of understanding that blames the teacher and perpetuates the "professor-bola" (ball-teacher) metaphor, we conducted an investigation aimed at understanding the evolution of the person who is a teacher, in their relations with their careers, with knowledge and with themselves. For this, we took their training in quite a broad way, from school experiences in childhood and adolescence, through the option and getting the professional qualification, to the removal or retirement (BUENO, 2002; BOLÍVAR, 2002). We also followed Goodson (1995) in its strategy to avoid a direct and predominant focus on the teaching practice by considering it the most exposed and

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\* Licenciante in Physical Education at CEFD. Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Vitória, ES, Brazil. E-mail address: biasz\_914@hotmail.com

\*\* LESEF/CEFD researcher. Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Vitória, ES, Brazil. PhD by Oldenburg University (Germany). E-mail address: valter.bracht@pesquisador.cnpq.br

\*\*\* LESEF/CEFD and Núcleo de Estudos e Pesquisas Educação e Sociedade Contemporânea. Doctorate student in Education in the Post-Graduate Program in Education of Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, SC, Brazil. E-mail address: fqalmeida@hotmail.com

problematic of the teachers' world (in cases where this happens, it is as if the teacher was the very practice). Such incidence should be complemented, at least partially, with a broader consideration of the life of the teacher. The reason to take this direction is that when teachers talk about their professional development, and we will see that in this article, they constantly bring to light information about their own lives in their extra professional aspects. This can be taken as reasonable evidence that teachers themselves consider these elements very important.

However, for a long time, researchers in education considered teachers' narratives, their voices, as irrelevant elements of researching and training. The teaching profession was reduced to a set of skills and abilities related to the practice, highlighting the essentially technical dimension of pedagogical action, its best methods and techniques. This view of the teacher led a strong separation between their personal and professional life, one of the main factors responsible, as pointed by Nóvoa (1997, p. 17), for its identity crisis: the studies that "[...] cross our way to be with our way to teach and reveal the way we teach our way to be" would only gain visible propulsion in Brazil in the mid-1990s, the time from which our educational literature, upon rehabilitating the presence of the subject in the educational setting (Joss, 2004), was "invaded" by works and studies on the teachers' live, careers and professional paths, the (auto)biographies and personal development of teachers.<sup>1</sup>

The resource to the (personal and professional) life cycle of teachers is one aspect of a methodology that, as requested by Goodson (1995) in a classic text, allows hearing the voice of teachers. In our research, the voices heard are of three physical education teachers who, for over 20 years, devoted considerable time of their lives to that profession in schools. They are teachers Orchid, Forget-Me-Not (the latter retired 13 years ago) and Sunflower. In the research, we opted for the oral biographical interviews (SOUZA, 2003) with the aforementioned teachers. The challenge of a biographical interview is to make up a minimum order of existential experience. Before

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed description of the development of the uses and appropriations of this recent trend in Brazil can be found in Bueno et al. (2006). A peculiarity of the Brazilian case, as these authors suggest, is that the prospect of research and training endorsed by "precursor" authors of the story of life in training or (auto)biographical methods, such as Gaston Pineau, Pierre Dominic and Marie-Christine Josso, Christine Delory-Momberger etc. had little resonance among us. In recent years, however, these authors had their books translated into Portuguese and their texts are more widespread in Brazil. Symptomatic of this situation is the fact that the *Educação & Pesquisa Magazine* has published, in 2006, a section about the theme of life history and training, publishing texts of those researchers. Within physical education, as already said by Molina Neto et al. (2006), it is still small the occurrence of articles that take life stories or (auto)biographical narratives of teachers as theoretical and methodological benchmark of research.

the interviews, which have a semi-structured character to use and explore the wealth of stories told by our informants, it was established a new previous and personal contact with collaborator teachers (at the school where they work) in which it was clarified the objective of this study and how they could help by providing one or more interviews with guiding lines would combine aspects of their lives to those related to their professional careers. This job, according to the typology of Nóvoa (1995), was primarily guided by a research concern, with the aim of obtaining knowledge about aspects of the training of those teachers and their teaching practices. We also said that, after the interviews, teachers would have access to the transcript (which does not take long to happen) and would receive the research report produced with their help, which happened some months later. For the choice of life stories to be heard, we established as a criterion: (a) teachers should be at least ten years in the acting profession, (b) the fact that it would be interesting working with a teacher who has been retired, given the lowest number of works that explore the life of former teachers (BUENO, 2002). In the following three items, we present a summary of the biographical interviews that were carried out, ending with some consequences for teacher training.

## **2 LIFE BEFORE AND AFTER THE PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION**

We can assume, based on biographical narratives here collected, the decision of which profession is the result of the meeting of a group of cultural and social factors which, combined with subjective conditions, are the very life in construction. In the case of our three collaborator-teachers, we noticed how this set of factors created several reasons for choosing the profession. Regarding teacher Forget-Me-Not, the financial factor was a double determining factor in the decision of her career. First, because the lack of money made it impossible for her to go to med school, what she originally desired. After that, even through this, it was precluded by her teachers at the school where she studied that:

[...]back then, teachers, despite having their studies, would compare, when students chose to participate in something, only those children who had better condition would participate in most circumstances, it is not a clothing matter, no, it was the cuter one, who he had things straight at home, that was chosen and we always stayed in the rear. So then I said: 'one day I will be a teacher and I will treat everybody equally". Then I took teaching, finished high-school, finished teaching, so I started working with elementary school, then I swapped it for physical education and ended up very well because it

was what I wanted. And when I went to physical education, to teach, I did everything that I want to do that teachers did not do for me (FORGET-ME-NOT).

Orchid's and Sunflower's arguments for the choice of teaching physical education is the most common among professionals in the area: a passion for sports and involvement with it even before entering the university. For both, the uncertainty usually associated with the decision of which profession to follow, was softened since both have chosen an area that, besides family, was related to the realization of both and their stories of life:

I always liked a lot of sports, mainly dancing, it was dancing that led me to the option of physical education. I used dance, I took ballet classes (ORCHID).

[...] Initially, the expectation was: 'I will take a course that has to do with what I like to do, sports, traveling and all'. [...] First, enjoying sports, I always liked it, my whole life, but deep inside, taking physical education never crossed my mind. I came up like this: a friend of mine came to me, I lived in Colatina and I was there for puerility. Then he said: 'I'm coming from Vitória and I enrolled in the physical education course'. Then it hit me [...] physical education course. I like sports, play it, travel to Colatina to referee a game or organize a competition within Colatina, I live with that, then, suddenly, it was the light at the end of the tunnel, the finishing touch (SUNFLOWER).

These life experiences prior to entering the university are also important to understand that the three teachers, despite studying in the same university (between the mid-1970s and beginning of the decade later), have different assessments of the training received. Teacher Orchid did not like the course because of its nature highly sports character:

[...] when I joined it, I was a little disappointed because I came in with an expectation, and when you get there, it's different, because tests happened to be given like... Basketball ... Ten points, if I scored the ten points, my grade would be ten, if I scored two, my grade would be two. So it began to discourage me a bit because they were not preparing me to teach, they were wishing I were an athlete and that was not what I wanted (ORCHID).

Teacher Forget-Me-Not loved the course for its sports-practice aspect: "[...] we had at the time, the best physical education teachers, UFES was the best school, best university in physical education of all. For teacher Sunflower, the course only ratified what he had already experienced even before entering the professional qualification course. After entering the course, "[...] I was more interested, and that only came to help

me have more appreciation than I did as an athlete, which was the practice of systematized, organized sports" (SUNFLOWER).

These reports show that the social, culture and body experiences of Sunflower's, Orchid's and Forget-Me-Not's, whose origin harks back to their life stories, are decisive in their career choice and subsequent involvement in the course, being strong enough to, in many cases, not go under changes during the stay in university education. In addition, they serve as teaching models carried out by graduated teachers because such experiences do not disappear from the history of the subject in training (Tardif, 2000; FIGUEIREDO, 2004). It is these filters, for example, that enabled teacher Forget-Me-Not, even before changing teaching (as schoolmistress) for physical education, to do "[...] some things at school. When I needed, I would teach dancing and all. I tried but it was not a real class. So, when I graduated, I made the exchange". In Sunflower, such knowledge of his experience are also visible in his school memories:

Yeah, my teachers, not the UFES teachers, teachers from the schools I studied at, I tried to copy some of them, what I found interesting of each one, what I saw that was interesting in terms of organization, teaching methodology, then started to make comparisons: "Oh, this guy did like this". And, sometimes, it is better this way [...].

Besides the professional qualification, given his schooling character, privileging academic knowledge to the detriment of those who bring their life stories at school, with family, at clubs, etc., our teachers are also emphatic in stating that this training is distant from what happens in school every day. This is a finding, by the way, not only the common narratives of Sunflower, Forget-Me-Not and Orchid, but the reports contained in other studies (BRACHT et al., 2003; BORGES, 1998; ALMEIDA; FENSTERSEIFER, 2007; FIGUEIREDO, 2004; SANTINI; MOLINA NETO, 2005). The consequence of all this is obvious: teachers feel unprepared for the professional practice, since there is a huge gap between what happens in training courses and teaching practice. So the idea that the teaching skills of teachers arising from the direct experience of classrooms takes place, expressed in the often heard thesis that "theory, in practice, is different".

This distance (and the confusion it causes) is not the privilege of training for professional qualification, being also present in continuing education. Many authors in physical education have drawn attention to the ineffectiveness of such training, when moved from the workplace and from issues affecting the teacher as a person. It is not

different in the Forget-Me-Not's, Orchid's and Sunflower's testimonies. It is reproduced in the service training of all three, a logic of devaluation of the experiences and voices of the person who is a teacher, whether because the training is very theoretical (Sunflower) or released from specific issues of education (Forget-Me-Not), or because it works according to the logic of the specialist teacher (Orchid).

### **3 STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVATION OF LIFE AT WORK: AMONG THE DIALOGUE, THE NEGOTIATION AND THE DISEASE**

In recent years, numerous works were published in education and school physical education that discuss the processes that cause widespread disturbances in the teacher's life. Some authors have characterized them as the Burnout Syndrome (CODO, 1999) or teacher malaise (ESTEVE, 1999), while others, particularly in physical education, called them the syndrome of professional exhaustion (SANTINI, 2004, 2005 et al.; SANTINI ; MOLINA NETO, 2005). In biographical reports provided by Sunflower, Orchid and Forget-Me-Not, it is mentioned the multiple triggering causes of this syndrome in physical education teachers. Among them, it was very evident in the voices heard here: a) a radical change in the relationship between teacher and student, given the fact that nowadays most students do not respect the teacher's authority, addressing the (what used to be) master with aggressions of all kinds without, in practice, existing functional arbitration mechanisms (generating insecurity at work) b) the responsibility of the family in the education of children, allocated to the school and teachers the educational responsibilities that have traditionally been assumed by the family sphere. The result of this accumulation of functions is the mismatch of teachers to the meaning and scope of their work. Struggling on several fronts and taking a piecemeal activity, their professional identity is being seriously hampered by the multiplicity of functions, often contradicting one another (BOLIVAR, 2002), as demonstrated by their testimonies.

Teachers try to solve such adverse situations at work (and that may cause them a sick state) because, in the words of Sunflower, all this bad weather is nothing "[...] that keeps you from doing your work. It is up to challenges that we will launch. We see what can change [...]". Thus, they create strategies that, in addition to education, guaranteeing the preservation of life (their health) in the practice of the profession. As Santini et al. (2003) explain, the teacher has to change the conduction posture of their classes so that

they can exercise disciplinary control over the students, establishing such a measure for the purpose of completing the requirements of the teaching task and "survival" at work. According to what Forget-Me-Not, Sunflower and Orchid wanted to highlight, the best exit for the problems they face every day, with students or with profession colleagues, is the dialogue. Listening to what the student has to say, their stories, advising them, showing them other possibilities, not calling them vagabonds out of gratuity are attitudes that can be viewed in their testimonies. Let's hear the emblematic transition of teacher Forget-Me-Not:

[...]I have not had any feud with them, because these boys, these students you must be friends with them so they trust you, because if you are rude to them. 'Oh you bum! You're whatever!' That's not good, right? They get angry, get outraged, that is when they feel like beating the teacher, bringing weapons to school, but I had no problem with any of them, neither I nor the other teacher. We would pretty much deal with them out there. I had no problems with them, they had problems in the classroom, but in my class and the class of another teacher, we had no problem. They accepted it (my class), I talked a lot with them, laughed, and they spoke a language we also spoke with them, we would make a mess and ended up winning them over.

When the dialogue could no longer secure the teaching process, the negotiation with the students was also a successful strategy for our teachers:

[...]So now we started the group discussion, classes have to come along this way: we may be letting you do some different activities, which is exactly what they like, playing football, girls as much as boys, dodgeball. So, for you not to be taking hits in your head, you make a deal in the beginning. You can negotiate it, go slowly putting it across and all of a sudden, the following year, you're in control of the class, you already showed [that] this is an interesting lesson, it is worth to be participating better [...]. And you end up negotiating then what you understand as a class. Initially, when you arrive at school, you negotiate what they want, but imposing what you want too (SUNFLOWER).

Calling for a negotiation is a solution, also present in the teacher Orchid's testimony: "[...] I do not go against them. Sometimes, I go like this: 'Oh, today I'll teach you my class, but next time, I promise it will be up to you'. So we negotiate it. Only then you get something, because otherwise you don't". On many occasions, however, the teacher reports that she could not convince students of the importance of class, with her strategies (negotiation and dialogue) being unable to persuade the students of the opposite. The result of this process, day after day, was the discouragement regarding work:

[...]then they [the pupils/students] have resistance, just want to do what they want, so that is a little disincentive to you. Sometimes you plan a lesson and you cannot teach it, then what happens? You go dropping it, you will leave your planning, they will be doing them every day. Primarily 7th and 8th, all right. And I have no more stamina to be insisting, ok? Sometimes, I go like this: 'hey, my salary is all there at every end of a month and I'm here, you don't charge me anything, so I won't do anything. Is it me who is missing out on anything? No, you are'. We try to play some stuff, you know? But it's no use, no. It is always the same thing, they want to recreate, they live in this hill, then what happens? There isn't space for them and the only space they have is in physical education class. [They] work. So they want that ball, who am I to take their reason? Suddenly, the reason I did not shoot them, no. That is why they like physical education. Check if they like mathematics and Portuguese? They don't.

Her testimony shows a teacher who is emotionally exhausted, due to damage that she is subjected to daily at school, especially with the students. According to people close to Orchid at the institution where she teaches, in 2007, she went on leave three times to solve problems related to health that are associated with the difficulties faced at work. The result of this framework is terrible for the teacher's life: "Oh, now I don't have as much more pleasure, you know? I confess it to you: I don't have as much stamina as I had before. No way" (ORCHID). In situations like hers, the teacher conducts her work badly, settling up ("[...] then what happens? You go letting it go [...]"), to protect your own image and keep your life under control and, in turn, "[...] supporting widespread criticism, which you, without considering the circumstances, consider responsible for the immediate failure of the education system "(ESTEVE, 1995, p. 97). The failure thus is personalized by the figure of the teacher: "If everything goes well, parents think their children are good students. If things go wrong, they think teachers are bad professionals" (ESTEVE, 1995, p. 105).

As Lapo and Bueno (2003) said, analyzing a different context, that teachers were more concerned about spending their energies in self defense (a conformism linked to their strategy of survival in education) than open to new experiences and learning. In the literature, we characterize the distance of basic obligations in education with the name of absenteeism or abandonment of teaching (LAPO; BUENO, 2003; ESTEVE, 1999; GONZALEZ; FENSTERSEIFER, 2006), a phenomenon that, and despite the initiatives of teachers in the opposite direction, can be read as a consequence of the numerous difficulties involving teachers in the profession today (so visible in the narratives here collected, especially in Orchid's).



#### **4 STAGES IN TEACHING: THE CAREERS OF SUNFLOWER, ORCHID AND FORGET-ME-NOT IN FOCUS**

Parallel to the enhancement of life as reading key that allows access to so little valued aspects of training and performance of teachers in recent years, it has employed the concept of career as a way of understanding the professional development of teachers. This is the case of studying the course of life in an organizational structure and understanding how the characteristics of the person, when influencing such organization, are at the same time, influenced by her. In Brazil, perhaps the best known and used example of this tendency is the classification developed by Huberman (1995). Without losing sight of his ideal character, and in the dynamics of the life of each teacher studied here, it was possible to identify, as Huberman (1995) noted in his study, that the beginning of teaching itself was a sensitive period in the career of the teachers investigated here. This is the moment of the so-called "survival" or "shock with reality", the confrontation between what is learned in training courses and reality found in schools, a period of intense learning (almost always the test assay-error type) of difficulties with students, with inappropriate material. Teacher Forget-Me-Not thus refers to this period of her career:

In the beginning, when we take high-school, we're leaving, then something gives you problems, such as volleyball, I learned it, but not as much as it should be, to work with the student. So I had that shock, but once I was learning from the students themselves, because they knew it, I would stand there minding my own business, I gave me classes, but I was learning with them. In the beginning, I learned more from students than from myself. But that was how I was taught, right? [Graduation] leaves much to be desired, a subject leaves much to be desired and, in my case, it was volleyball.

Teacher Orchid describes the initial difficulties found and ways to resolve them: "[...] because they would go running, running about like crazy, running around the school, while I would shout, then I didn't know what to do because I was like, I felt a little desperate, but I grew understanding that situation". Until I found the "way", however, "[...] cried a lot at home, I would come home crying, crying, I thought: 'God, I haven't learned anything in college, what am I going to do [...]'. That was the clash between what is spoken and reality". When asked if she was able to discriminate the "best" and "worst" years of her career, she said:

Look, the worst one were the first, you know? Because of the shock, it is a learning, you will learn how to teach. And the best one were thus more or

less the second to third year after I joined, I think they were the best. Now it has the worst for about five years, the middle is great. Let me finish it, for example, why today is worse, not because I'm already close to my retiring, because I am super active, I am a person who can't stop, I talk too much. You can already tell it, can't you? So this is it, it doesn't wear me out, my work doesn't wear me out, it makes me complete. Now, what wears me out is the students (Orchid).

In teacher Orchid's speech, we noticed the description of her "best" and "worst" moments in the practice of the profession as stages:

The stage of shock, the stage of peace. It came and there you are. Then I felt safe, you know? Then, there was calmness. So there came a stage like fear. From about five years onward, we feel a little fear, because you can't tell a student off anymore, you know? Then you have to be very good, know how to talk, you have to know how to get to this student.

The testimonies of teachers Orchid and Forget-Me-Not confirm a common theory in studies about the development of teaching careers, which "[...] shows the possible occurrence of the worst years of their career in the early professional life [...]" (Gonçalves, 1995, p. 154). The stage of peace, which Orchid refers to, relates to what Huberman (1995) calls the stage of stabilization, of more commitment, of the decision of objectives, the consolidation and improvement of the teaching plan, a better field, which is together with the feeling of freedom, security, relaxation. In this stage, teachers can better deal with unusual situations, they let themselves be conducted and explored more to the point of authority to become more natural.

As for teacher Sunflower, it is interesting to realize that he, like Orchid, also uses the stages or moments to characterize his career. Thus he expresses himself about his early professional life:

It's a stage of adaptation, you graduated and start to make people believe you are a good professional. '[...] Will I meet that person's needs?' [...] You have to make people believe in your work [...]. You're there in the first five, ten years of your life battle, running after it, with the mood to be helping and all. Then comes a stage of search, of wanting to do more things, you need to make them recognize you. What you have suddenly found out that you suddenly need. That school needs a dance gym there, or you can do that, all kinds of parties within the school. It will be nice, dazzling, and suddenly, now you're at a stage of accommodation, but not to be accommodated [...].

In the case of teacher Sunflower, beyond that stage of stability or adaptation, as he calls it, we can his work (HUBERMAN 1995), a moment when you want to do more things, changing the teaching for students (although it binds it to the need for recognition in the

institution), with new fronts of work, finally, maximizing his performance in school. At this stage, therefore, teachers were more motivated and committed with respect to the school under this provision and such mood is reflected and can be accompanied by personal ambition: the demand for more authority, responsibility and prestige before the others. Your definitive recognition in the institution! The process of accommodation to which he (teacher Sunflower) refers, and which in his opinion, should not be understood as a situation of neglecting teaching itself, it is a kind of reward for so much effort and dedication to the career and to the school. If you seek to correlate this type of comment in Huberman (1995), what Sunflower calls accommodation is the stage of his career in which the level of ambition and investment decreases, while the feeling of serenity and confidence increases. "People have nothing more to prove, to others or themselves, they reduce the distance that separate objectives from the beginning of the career of what was possible to achieve so far, by presenting a more modest aim to be achieved in future years" (HUBERMAN, 1995, p. 44). It is very interesting to realize that this characterization (ideal) in the literature is similar to what Sunflower said about this stage: "[...] accommodation is: I know who I am, I showed people how much I'm capable of and now I'm enjoying it, I'm doing things more calmly, more wisely, you know?".

We must not lose sight, however, of the satisfaction of knowing what you're doing, believing that you are doing well, it is sometimes confusing, with a degree of conservatism (Gonçalves, 1995). Or, then, as Morgado reminds us (2005), although stability is very necessary when it becomes the dominant logic of the teaching organization, it can trigger immobility, protectionism and fear of disorder at the expense of positive factors associated with it (the feeling of belonging, certainty, clarity, convenience, order, etc.).

Still according to Huberman (1995), teachers reach a certain stage in their career where they begin to question things they did in their life. They, literally, bring into question the work done so far, comparing the effect outputs and the ones that "should have" happened, in short, they reflect on the image they have of themselves as teachers. Orchid's testimony is revealing:

[...] my picture of nowadays? You want me to make a picture of my nowadays? As a professional? You want my self-assessment? I'll tell you my self-assessment today. I think today I suck! [laughs] Because I'm not achieving what I always did. So it's not that I am not being able, they [students] are the ones not so much responding as I wanted. Then you get a

bit frustrated with it. Then the end of your career hits you, it is the worst that can happen. Not because you are tired, it is also for the situation, because I've been discouraged for about five years. I tell everyone that is joining the school that I pity them. In this case, you are not going to retire of the profession you graduated for, because you won't stand it, get it? Because I take pity. You won't stand it! You're now entering a terrible stage, you know? I'm at the end of my stage, and you are starting it. Yeah, you guys are full of stamina, but it doesn't mean everything.

In teacher Orchid's testimony (directed to the interviewer teacher, by the way), we observed a sense of futility related to the work she conducts and frustration for the failure to implement her teaching ideals in that stage of her career, which she herself characterizes as the end of it. No wonder she is eager for retirement:

I can't wait for time to pass soon. [...] 2010 is coming. So close. [...] For all I've just told you, we reach a very stressful point of physical education, not only of it, but also in all subjects. I'm not the only one to complain. When we sit, during teacher's meetings, it comes from other areas too. I'm not even talking about only physical education, the complaint is the same, you know? Everyone is upset, everyone is exhausted. We're still practically in the middle of the year and it seems that we are at the end of it. Everyone is tired. But what is this tiredness due to? The behavior of students, which makes us very stressed.

Identity is a place of struggle and conflict, an area of construction of ways of being in the profession, as each one feels like a teacher (an existence style lived by teachers themselves). For teacher Sunflower, the image he has of himself in the profession is of a person who is aware and professional, who strives to do the best for his students: "I see myself as a very human guy in relation to the student, I try to respect them as much as I can so they respect me. I don't impose things, I direct it to understanding that that is important [...]. So I see myself, I believe, as a good professional". Even considering himself a good professional, he said:

Some considerations in my life, which affected my way to teach. Some particular problem of mine. I built within a municipal school, a sports school, and I believed that, working with the school could mean a gain for those kids. It was maintained by the City Hall, which was absorbing the school and giving financial support, help with costs, food. To make the City Hall believe it, I had to invest some of my own money. I wound up taking a lot of that money, and got no refund. Then I started to get worried and to think things over and over. Leaving my classes aside, I relaxed a little. There was a time I was thinking, I still hadn't absorbed it, no, thinking that from 0 to 10, my classes weren't getting a 5. It had a much higher level. Now it is improved a bit, I've already overcome enough, but isn't where I believe it has to be yet. Like, from 8 to 9, from 9 to 10, so I go from 8 to 10, I haven't gotten there yet. I've already risen about two points, not two, even more, less than 5 though, I must be up to 7, within the assessment I have.

In the teacher's report, there is the feeling of discouragement and frustration with the fact occurred: "[...] this situation of the school that failed, I was clear, I tried, I did my part, repentance isn't at the professional level, but the personal one, because I invested in something and didn't have any refund"(SUNFLOWER). The teacher works below his potential, below what he believes to be the ideal, and this transformation is due to non-realization of personal desires in the professional scope. This evidence shows how the personal and the professional are interlinked, since there is no way to separate the teacher from the person and the person from the teacher (JOSSO, 2004).

Regarding the teacher Forget-Me-Not's professional identity, the positive evaluation of her career path is a reflection of her life story in training (Joss, 2004), because, despite that frustration as a girl in school, her educational biography is full of moments that express satisfaction at work. Not even the approach of the end of her career was able to undermine her willingness to work (and here her testimony contradicts studies that claim the end of a career to be one of the worst moments in the teaching profession). Not surprisingly, thus, her evaluation as a teacher: "I have an excellent image, I feel complete" (PERFECT LOVE). We understand why she says: "[...] I ended it with pleasure, because after retiring, we have a desire to come back". It was exactly what she did: when she retired in 1994 after 25 years and eight months of work, she served for three more years as teacher of the state school network, this time by temporary designating contract, until she stops for good, due to fatigue:

I was called, but then I was tired of working. Under the sun, you know? Because, at the time, courts weren't covered. Look at my spots off sunshine! Now that it is good, they covered them, after I left full of spots... But it was good (FORGET-ME-NOT).

Still, far from schools, she emphasizes that the main activities of her life are related to the professional performance which had for so many years. She says:

[...]I always do something that is bound to physical education, I still participate in gymnastics for the 3rd age, I still help when we go to any tour of the 3rd age, there is always a little bus to take me with them, then I play with them on the bus, so my life is really all in about physical education.

Teacher Sunflower, like Forget-Me-Not, also provides evidence of how the end of his career is not necessarily marked by widespread pessimism or all kinds of

complaints (many with good reason, certainly). Both are keen to highlight in their testimonies, the importance of work in their personal lives, "a time to build unforgettable friendships", of "great learning" and "personal recognition", which awakens in them a feeling of, as Sunflower summarizes, "I'll take it all with me":

You know, I didn't want to retire, no. I am required by law, right? Thirty years, but I believe I have 30 more years to work yet. I love what I do, you know. So you've just asked me if I do anything out of here, if I stop working here what I will do, right? Staying home? It is nice to stay home, but there's something missing, like hearing a boy swearing, screaming, congratulating you, laughing out loud, crying, a colleague talking at school (teacher Sunflower).

## **5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS SOME POINTERS TO THE TEACHER TRAINING**

This work had no intention to generalize the biographical and professional evidences narrated here. Our expectation was to understand, from a biographical point of view, the development of three lives (Sunflower, Forget-Me-Not and Orchid) in the profession. We believe that decisions on choosing a profession, the direction given to the career, the disinvestment in education, innovative learning experiences, the abandonment of teaching, the moments which are critical for the career, the future, etc. could be properly studied and understood better if, in addition to the highly professional aspects, we also paid attention to the person who is the teacher. Of what has been hereby synthesized and taking into account the debate already accumulated in the field, we would like to conclude with some pointers that arise and go beyond the work, configured as challenges to our theories and training practices.

- We operate with a new epistemology of training (NÓVOA, 1995) which located the personal and professional development of teachers throughout the different moments of his life. Our training processes occur in different places and times, with the memory having a privileged work in rebuilding them as souvenirs-references constitutive in the narratives of training (Joss, 2004). This concept implies, therefore, to examine, on the one hand, the history of life and the intellectual training of teachers in its various aspects and stages (from childhood to adulthood) and, on the other hand, it would appear that both teachers and teachers-to-be are the key operators in this process. We follow this direction, to take the training of

Sunflower, Forget-Me-Not and Orchid at its diachronic, since their school experiences to the approximation (or completion) of retirement. Their narratives show how the choice and subsequent career in the itinerary leash up their life stories. Understanding the training as this new science means learning to understand people as teachers and professionals whose lives and work are mutually shaping. Muting the relationship between them, on the opposite, will not take us very far in understanding the professional training process.

- Even recognizing the many advances in the initial and continuing training of physical education teachers, "schooling" and "academic" tendencies of training programs for teachers of this discipline still predominate. It remains, therefore, the challenge of building learning theories that break with this logic in the training of adults toward methodologies and practices of sensitive training to the teacher as a person: from the training of the subject to the subject in training. The use of (auto)biographical approaches to represent the teachers as subjects of their own training, with professional courses in a given stage of development, opening a route to experience brought by the (future) teachers, might be problematize, deconstructed or constructed from symbolic dimensions distinct from those of training knowledge. These experiments fulfill a crucial role in teacher training, because the diversity of expectations reaching that stage of life under development alerts us to the fact that this should not be built, only by means of courses, with the technical acquisition or knowledge from books (training knowledge), but also by an intense work of (re-)compilation of personal experiences and identities, which are prior to going to college (NÓVOA, 1988).

- When entrusting their training to others, experts or theorists who tell them how to do so, the teacher's voice is silenced in the decisions need to be taken towards the renewed practice. The training, thus understood, suggests that: a) the problem is the teacher's, not of the proposed change, b) the whole issue is to convince the teacher of the goodness of change, overcoming initial aversion; c) silence is the limitations of internal coercive actions of educational administration to impose "rational" solutions, largely designed in offices or universities, almost in their impact on teachers' lives. The training value of an educational activity seems, however, more linked to internal dynamics and history of life of participants than to the clarity of the intentions of the trainer or the quality of his speech. The recognition of the person who is the teacher, with their practice or stage of career where it contributes

to understanding how the teachers in training assimilate and reinterpret new ideas and content, but also implement innovations and strategies of teaching. This link between the personal and the institutional, therefore, points in the direction of designing the reforms in a "softer" and less voracious way on lives of teachers, pupils and other staff of the school, and the need to hear more the testimony of this staff (BOLÍVAR, 2002).

- Paying attention to the teacher's voice implies a highly desirable "epistemological humility", especially considering that until very recently, educational theories were more concerned with standardizing the characteristics that should meet a good teacher (the critical, the revolutionary, the progressive teacher) rather than examining the quotidian and located movement in which teachers produced their practices, but also had their lives produced by it. In these situations, as pointed by Fontana (2005), it is like the daily life of the teacher matches the denial of the project company endorsed by trainers. The result of this legislation on how to tell the "being a teacher" can be seen in the inadequacy of recent theoretical advances made by Brazilian physical education and its difficulty to be materialized, in equal proportion, in the pedagogical intervention.

- Charge teachers with failure, discouragement or obstructionist conservatism in education is not the most appropriate strategy when the assumption that the biography of the teacher is essential to understand the processes of education. Just taking note, from biographical and institutional point of view, the framework that causes disinvestment or abandonment of teaching, and the tested attempts by teachers survive at work, we can draw an understanding of the reasons for the teacher to turn into a "ball-teacher". Only this way we will avoid the blame to be put on those who, on many occasions, are the real victims. In such cases, we cannot require of teachers, paraphrasing Beck's (1997) accurate sentence, biographical solutions to systemic contradictions.



### **The life of physical education teachers: personal and professional teaching experience**

**Abstract:** This article deals with the life cycle of three Physical Education teachers in a school context, via an analysis which combines biographical elements with the professional career. It examines issues related to teachers training from their own school experiences in their childhood and adolescence to their late professional path in Physical Education. Finally, it indicates some considerations for the training of teachers.

**Key-words:** Biographic as topic. Faculty:history. Professional practice. Physical Education.

### **Vida de profesores de educación física: el personal y el profesional en el ejercicio de la docência**

**Resumen:** El artículo trata del ciclo de vida de tres profesoras de educación física en la escuela, combinando elementos biográficos y profesionales. Son investigadas cuestiones que se refieren a la formación de profesores, desde sus experiencias profesionales en la infancia y juventud hasta la posterior trayectoria profesional en educación física. El trabajo se finaliza apuntando consecuencias para la formación docente.

**Palabras-claves:** Biografía como asunto. Docentes:Historia. Práctica profesional. Educación física.

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