

THEMATIC SECTION:
MATHEMATICS EDUCATION



School Collections and the Research in History of Mathematical Education

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ABSTRACT – School Collections and the Research in History of Mathematical Education. We present reflections on the treatment, preservation, organization, and availability of school documents carried out within the scope of the Project Study to Teach: mathematical practices and knowledge in normal schools in Rio Grande do Sul (1889-1970), more particularly from work experiences at the *Instituto Estadual de Educação Assis Brasil* in Pelotas. To this end, we will bring dialogues and approximations with scientific-professional fields that deal with the preservation of the collections, which were essential for the work that we do and that point to the importance of an interdisciplinary dialogue between these fields when conducting research in the History of Mathematical Education with these collections.

Keywords: School Collections. Institutional Memory. Document Preservation. History of Mathematical Education.

RESUMO – Acervos Escolares e a Pesquisa em História da Educação Matemática. Apresentamos reflexões a respeito do tratamento, preservação, organização e disponibilização de documentos escolares realizadas no âmbito do Projeto Estudar para Ensinar: práticas e saberes matemáticos nas escolas normais do Rio Grande do Sul (1889- 1970), mais particularmente a partir de experiências de trabalho no Instituto Estadual de Educação Assis Brasil, de Pelotas. Para tal, trataremos diálogos e aproximações com campos científico-profissionais que lidam com a preservação dos acervos e que foram imprescindíveis para o trabalho que realizamos e que apontam para a importância de um diálogo interdisciplinar entre esses campos quando da realização de pesquisas em História da Educação Matemática junto a esses acervos.

Palavras-chave: Acervos Escolares. Memória Institucional. Preservação Documental. História da Educação Matemática.

Introduction

The present article aims to present some provocations about the commitments that can be assumed by us, historians of mathematics education, facing the institutional archives to which we are linked during our research practices. Such provocations are built from a literature review of the History of Education field, in which we identified approximations with Archivology and Museology, and that will be used for the problematization we intend to bring here.

The debate about the connection of educational historians to school archives and their concern about the conditions of these spaces that keep the vestiges of school educational practices has already produced specific dossiers in scientific journals of the field, such as those published by the Brazilian Journal of History of Education and Pro-Positions Journal, both in 2005, demonstrating a growing concern with

[...] the preservation of collections and the attention to the primacies of archivists and museology, entangling historians of education in the discussion about material culture, the exercise of archiving and disposal, and the specific techniques of conservation of each support or object. Such interlocutions have further broadened the horizon of work in history of education, at the same time provoking fissures in what is considered the historian's field and questioning disciplinary boundaries (Vidal, 2005a, p. 71-72).

One of the inspirations to bring the issue to the debate, specifically for historians of mathematics education, arose due to a tension produced by a school institution in which a researcher from our group intended to investigate its existing collection, not yet systematically organized. The school museum coordination requested that, during the period in which the research was taking place, we should collaborate, somehow, with the organization of the archive as a whole, which is in a transition process from *dead archive to historical archive*, when the documents from the institutional past will integrate, in a certain way, to the *current archive*, constituting a new set, the *permanent archive* (Vidal, 2005b).

This is a municipal school institution where, for some years now, we have defended the relevance of taking care of the documental collection, given the importance of the institution for the city of Pelotas-RS. It is necessary to say that this was not a simple negotiation or a give-and-take, but an honest provocation, a sincere request for help from a school institution. Like many others, this school is pressured to ignore its institutional memory, ignoring a considerable volume of residues and signs of educational practices that, strictly speaking, no longer need to be kept, since they represent a certain inconvenience for the institution.

The arguments, there and elsewhere, indicate the demands for space and the difficulties in getting, with the city hall, the concession

of hours for an institutional responsible and the set of conditions necessary to preserve and properly pack them.

Another inspiration arose from debates held among the participants of the inter-institutional Research Project *Studying to Teach: mathematical practices and knowledge in the normal schools of Rio Grande do Sul (1889-1970¹)* (Búrigo et al., 2016), which, in addition to the commitments made with CNPq, was concerned with the care of the collection related to the teaching of mathematics present in the school archives of the *Instituto Estadual de Educação Assis Brasil* (IEEAB) in Pelotas and the custody and care of the collection of the Mathematics Laboratory of the General Flores da Cunha State Institute of Education in Porto Alegre, due to a major reform that the institution is undergoing. In the scope of this Research Project, it was recognized the importance of seeking approaches to the scientific fields related to the conservation, management and availability of documentary collections, to train the team, both teachers and students, to inventory the sources of the archives of the participating institutions and to produce, together with the Center of Documentation and Digital Collection of Research of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (CEDAP- UFRGS) a digital collection about the practices of training for the teaching of mathematical knowledge within the participating primary teacher training institutions (Rios; Rodrigues, 2020).

During *the 1st Seminar Practices and Mathematical Knowledge in the Normal Schools of Rio Grande do Sul*, held on May 24 and 25, 2018, at UFRGS, there were specific activities to discuss approximations with Museology and Information Science, when it was discussed, among other issues, aspects related to digital curatorship.

This is a different question from the one that has already been considered regarding the role that school archives, *as places of memory*, can offer for the education of mathematics teachers (Rios, 2015a). We will not resume, here, this question, although we consider relevant to reaffirm some aspects about the relationship between school archives and the historiography of mathematics education.

Next, throughout the text, we will make some provocations about the limits and possibilities of the performance of historians of mathematics education in the preservation and conservation of school archives and their collections, and how the positions taken can have repercussions in the strengthening or weakening of the relations between researchers and the institutions that receive them for the practice of research.

Introducing the Question

For some time now, the History of Mathematics Education has been sensitive to the importance of school documents for the production of knowledge, so that several researchers and research groups have undertaken a considerable effort to provide access to school institutions and their collections, in order to locate traces of practices related

to the processes of learning and teaching mathematics, in the various periods of Brazilian school mathematics.

These materials, which can still be found preserved in school institutions (namely, documents referring to the most different activities - administrative or pedagogical - and old school objects and images) have their importance already well recognized in the production of the History of Education and, consequently, they have potential for the historiography of mathematics education, since

[...] allow not only the perception of the contents taught, from an analysis of statements and answers, but the understanding of the set of actions activated inside the school. It highlights, for example, the way the graphic space of the exercise page, the exercise book or the exam is organized; using formulas indicating the beginning or the end of activities or school day; defining a hierarchy of knowledge...] these cultural objects and many others, individual and collective, necessary for the functioning of the classroom carry the marks of the modeling of school practices, when observed in their regularity. But they carry indices of the daily subversions to this modeling arsenal, when perceived in its difference, making it possible to locate traces of how users deal inventively with the material profusion of the school and the changes, sometimes imperceptible, that they impose on these same school practices (Vidal, 2005b, p. 16-17).

The search for such sources is justified by the expansion of fields of interest and investigative questions that have been posed to the History of Education, in its approach to Cultural History, as Maria João Mogarro explains:

The attention that historians of education are increasingly giving to school archives is rooted in an attitude of plural dialogue, in which the issue of sources of information emerges as a priority in the theoretical and methodological framework of the history of education and cultural history. It becomes urgent to locate, systematize, organize, and disseminate these sources, problematizing and validating them, so that they can feed the new themes and objects of study included in the scientific field of the history of education: students, in their specificities (such as the renewed attention that has been given to childhood), teachers and the teaching profession, teacher training, school institutions, non-formal education, gender issues, minority school publics, school daily life, pedagogical knowledge, the circulation and appropriation of cultural models and the forms that convey them (Mogarro, 2005a, p. 88).

It is also necessary to consider that the search for school documents is not restricted to educational institutions, but includes institutional collections linked to documentation centers of research groups, which have taken over the care and custody of collections from several

schools that do not have conditions to treat, preserve and conserve a good part of the documents related to the institution's past or, which is not an exception, do not recognize the importance of preserving its institutional memory. Such centers undertake an important effort to try to reduce the damage caused by the inexistence, in the country, of a preservation policy for school documents that guides the management of the collections, allowing that “[...] the document evaluation is under the responsibility of the school itself, which, discarding its documents without technical or scientific criteria, is subject to sometimes irreversible mistakes” (Barletta, 2005, p. 112).

Even outside school institutions or documentation centers, there is an important number of researchers in search of personal traces of educational practices connected to Mathematics and the memory of its characters, including an important production of oral sources that carries, as it is its own, the potential to answer questions that often cannot be explained from the material traces.

The commitment of such researchers goes in the direction of overcoming the limit of the traces limited to the material support. Antonio Viñao recognizes that notebooks (and we, here, allow ourselves to extrapolate to all other traces of school practices) do not bear traces of the universe of oral practices, which are not configured to the written support, but that, as we all know, are part of school daily life.

Not everything is in the notebooks. They are silent, they say nothing about the oral or gestural interventions of the teacher and students, about their weight and the way they occur and manifest themselves, about the atmosphere or mood of the classroom, about the activities that leave no written or other clues, such as reading exercises (oral reading, for example) and the whole world of the oral (Viñao, 2008, p. 25).

Returning to the issue of material traces, given the apparent unanimity about the importance of school documents for the scientific production of the area, the question that arises here concerns what we can or should do when the set of school documents that interest us require, sometimes urgently, actions to enable their preservation, recovery, organization and conservation.

For some time now, when we have been visiting school document depots, places where, just like us, several researchers have concentrated their research *locus*, we have come across realities similar to those already pointed out by colleagues from the History of Education: the conditions of the school collections are, most of them, very precarious, indicating the lack of a *documentary sensibility* (Regazzini, 2001) and exposing the set of objects and documents existing there to a condition of imminent disappearance.

Heaped up in basements, under stairs, in cramped rooms, haphazardly distributed in cabinets and boxes, careless and uninteresting, documents, almost always admin-

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istrative, in addition to collections of scientific instruments, textbooks, antique furniture, trophies, medals, among other objects, survive the weather, drips, unsanitary conditions, lack of identification, organization, and proper storage in most schools (Souza, 2013, p. 205).

To problematize the precarious conditions in which these materials are found and the consequent need to review the limits of our work with school collections, considering the possibility of collaborating with, at least, reducing the speed with which they have been disappearing, seems to us a pertinent issue to be discussed with researchers of the History of Mathematics Education.

The proposal to engage in the discussion about the limits of the researcher's action interested in school collections is allied to the debate that, for more than a decade, has been a point of discussion among some educational historians, as already mentioned. Within this debate, Maria João Mogarro considers that

[...] the task of recovering, preserving, studying and disseminating the educational heritage, namely school archives, acquires a new sense and urgency, which passes through the need to define guidelines and give consistency to the movement that today is felt, both socially and scientifically, about the school, its history and memory (Mogarro, 2005b, p. 114).

Despite the recognition of the relevance of these spaces and their potential, concrete actions to collaborate with them have not been a commitment for most researchers.

Although there has already been a discussion about the issues that guide the preservation of documentary heritage, there are still few concrete initiatives. For this reason, it is important to conduct studies about archives, libraries, museums, documentation centers, because these places gather documents of diverse origin (Furtado, 2011, p. 151).

A small number of research works in the field of History of Education have reconciled the analysis of sources with document preservation, as, for example, Moraes, Zaia, and Vendrameto (2005), Menezes (2011), and Batista and Schmidt (2018). In general, such initiatives are established due to the recognition of the precarious conditions of the collections and the imminent risk of their disappearance. However, even by these researchers, it is recognized that such a posture is not frequent, despite the demand being quite common in the collections in which they research:

Such a course presented itself as a differential, since it has been common for researchers, when conducting research in the institutions, to use the collections as a source, to give them a precarious order, just enough for the development of the research in progress, and to abandon them after finishing it. These deliberate attacks without a plan to organize the collections often result in losses or altera-

tions to the supports due to lack of proper handling and other precautions. The work of conservation, description, and packaging is left to others. These practices leave marks in the collections, with gaps and precarious order, out of the original order. They are memories, with specific periods or themes, in general on which researchers have detained in their investigations (Menezes, 2011, p. 99-100).

The provocation that we bring here is not intended to indicate a fateful end, in case we do not integrate ourselves to the task of collaborating with the preservation and systematization of school collections during our research practices, even because, as Julia would say (2001, p. 17), “[...] the historian knows how to make arrows with any wood”. The question is somewhat different: is it up to us to take on more of this responsibility and include it among our research practices? What would be the most appropriate position for us as research practitioners who recognize the importance of these traces? How much can and should we do with school archives? Would it be possible for the field to assume an *ethos* that articulates historiographic production to documentary preservation, organization and conservation, in the context of school institutions? Can such commitments be associated with a disciplinary practice or is this a private matter for the researcher?

On the one hand, it is important to recognize that document preservation has not been the main purpose or commitment of the History of Mathematics Education. Since it is understood that this purpose or commitment, differently, has been attributed to Archivology and/or Museology, it might seem excessive to argue that such a function should be assumed by us as part of a professional *ethos*. On the other hand, considering that we are directly interested in the materials contained in school archives - dead, current or historical -, that there is no public policy that recognizes its relevance, and that part of them are on the way to disappear, doesn't it seem reasonable that we would assume a share of the care and the commitment in building partnerships to value and preserve them?

Regarding the field of History of Education, Batista and Schmidt (2018), when presenting the path taken to access the collections and documentary sources on the first initiatives of educational care to early childhood in the state of Santa Catarina, reflect and discuss about the difficulty in access and the need for conservation of collections of this nature for the writing of the history of Early Childhood Education, in this case, in the state of Santa Catarina. However, despite this panorama exposed by the authors, there are still few works that bring this issue to light and, after a vast research, no other records of this movement were found in the History of Education field.

What we defend is that the History of Mathematics Education could find ways to solidarize and commit itself to the spaces of school preservation and, if possible, create other meanings for its existence. We fear, not only out of mere pessimism, that these spaces may cease to exist, in most schools, if the digital systems absorb the data of the stu-

dents' academic trajectories, limiting themselves to current tables and discarding the original documents.

Although the focus of this text is a discussion around the preservation and conservation of school documents, we do not intend to diminish the demand placed on the historian to understand, problematize, interpret and explain these historical sources, since they offer clues of the past and need a deep reflexive exercise.

In view of this, it may be worthwhile to revisit the question: where does this debate concern us? Would it not be appropriate to leave to researchers from the fields of Archivology and Museology the responsibility for dealing with the preservation of archives, restricting ourselves to the historiographical production related to Mathematics?

School collections related to Basic Education, in general, are far from being objects of exclusive attention of Museology, Archivology or Information Science, given the inexistence, except in very particular cases, of positions for these professionals in Brazilian schools. Thus, it seems unreasonable to expect that the preservation of school collections should be assumed by these professionals without any articulation with researchers in the field of History of Education and, in our case, researchers in the History of Mathematics Education.

Besides the gain for the institutional memory of the schools to which we are linked, an approach with the archival and museological knowledge can provoke us to think about how the vestiges of the practices of teaching and learning Mathematics need to be preserved, problematizing the exercise of conservation and disposal, besides allowing reflections about what to conserve and why.

If we understand that it is pertinent to commit part of our research hours to the strengthening and consolidation of these spaces, we believe that we have the chance to better locate other sources of research and establish other partnerships, such as with alumni associations, for instance, which, when they exist, are often interested and invest something of their activities in the preservation of the memory of the institution to which they were connected and to their school trajectory.

In addition, efforts to collaborate with the consolidation of institutional archives, in order to make them historical archives, can improve the institutional transit due to the strengthening of ties between the university and the school, which may come to recognize that this is not an extractive or predatory relationship, but of collaboration and mutual support, in defense of the institutional memory (Rios; Rodrigues, 2020).

To participate in the debate about how to deal with these institutional materials, and who is responsible for this task, necessarily involves the management of the collection, which includes actions of conservation and disposal. In this sense, the performance of the community of researchers in History of Education can be of interest to the area, allowing us to raise questions, such as: what kind of school archive organization can be useful and interesting for our research practice? What sets of school documents can be considered dear to the History

of Mathematics Education? What, among the existing set of documents, interests us? How can we participate in the management of these collections and in the production of inventories? In what minimum conditions of preservation, organization and packaging can these sets be accessible for the historiographic production, our main focus?

The school community, besides being potentially interested in the organization of the archives, should also participate in the decisions, since a school archive does not suppose the unrestricted keeping of traces of the institutional past, but, as Vidal (2005b) explains, the organization and disposal of school traces are part of the same process that, when accomplished, attributes new meanings to what it is decided to preserve, since its conservation is established by technical procedures and recognition of its importance for the present and the future.

However, the task of participating, of collaborating with the school archives does not end when defining what to preserve and what to discard, once “[...] this work will be incomplete if we do not collaborate in the more general treatment of these materials, which allows giving them visibility, participating in the improvement of the cultural quality of the city” (Felgueiras, 2005, p. 99).

In spite of being a demanding task, Margarida Louro Felgueiras’ claim seems to be of great lucidity and constitutes, in our understanding, a crucial point of interest for our field of research: from the availability of the sources we will have the possibility to continue with the development of our research and with the deepening of the historiographic explanations that we produce. In this sense, Information Science has also provided a significant collaboration, making possible not only for the community around the school, but, more broadly, the conversion of school documents to digital version.

In this sense, it is worth saying that, regarding the availability of school documents of various natures, researchers of the History of Mathematics Education have been striving, in recent years, for the constitution of digital collections of free access, aiming to make available the largest possible contingent of digital documents, including the various types of documents related to teaching and learning Mathematics, from legislation to the most varied school documents. Among the existing initiatives, we highlight the repository of the Research Group for the History of Mathematics Education (GHEMAT) which, located at the Federal University of Santa Catarina², has offered to the public a considerable set of school documents in their digital version for anyone interested in the subject.

In this same sense, we present in this text the possibilities and the limits that we have been treading, along with the partnership established at the IEEAB, in the city of Pelotas, linked to the research project already mentioned. What are the actions that two Mathematics Educators and their students have been taking in face of the scenario of their research *locus*? How did the partnership between a school and a university extrapolate the usual stage relationship for the internships and

advances in the awareness of the school community for the importance of the maintenance and preservation of their school vestiges? What do we believe is incumbent upon us?

Moving the Discussion Forward Reflecting on an IEEAB Experience

In this section of the text, we will bring from the experiences of the field of Mathematics Education: what can two professionals in the field of History of Mathematics Education bring to this debate? How have our research practices been guided? What preservation experiences, linked to initiatives started five years ago, including from the Institutional Program for Scholarship Initiation to Teaching (PIBID), can and should be highlighted by undergraduates? How have these experiences been consolidated?

In mid-2015, from the creation of the Research Project within the Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPel), *Mathematics Education in Rio Grande do Sul: institutions, characters and practices (1890-1970)* (Rios, 2015b³), a partnership relationship was established with the IEEAB. Since then, the project sought to assume the commitment of conservation and the constitution of a digital collection of the school collection, in order to make these materials available to researchers and those interested in the area, in addition to the availability of the digital version of its collection to the school itself (Rios; Rodrigues, 2020).

Currently, after the accomplishment of the mentioned research projects, we are in the final phase of organization of the documents that contain traces of classroom mathematics practices and availability of the digital collection of the school collection.

From this long period of closeness, it is important to emphasize that the relationship between the university and the school required patience, understanding and a lot of dialogue; what does a mathematics teacher seek and want when visiting the school's collections? What does a mathematics professor want when visiting the school's collections? The strangeness was to be expected. The school community, in short, was unaware of the importance of its collection for the research practices in the field of History of Education.

The lack of better understanding about the relevance of these archives does not seem to us to be "the fault" of the school, but the effect of the lack of public policies that defend the relevance of the value of these vestiges as a possibility to problematize the educational processes and to strengthen the links of the school identity. The lack of professionals in the field to deal with these materials also indicates the little attention given to the traces of the educational experiences of the characters inside the school culture - managers, educators and students, who end up not having their memories recognized in the institutional educational discourses.

Alongside initiatives pertinent to the present, the school can be a space where the vestiges of old educational experiences have a place for preservation and where the practices that have already been witnessed there, whether appropriate or not, find an opportunity for circulation and dialogue. This would interrupt the discontinuity between past and present, which seems to be imposed in societies like ours, in which the new is privileged instead of the old and the future before the past, making possible the reconstruction of the link with the educational experiences lived in the institutional past, fulfilling what Nora (1993) called 'duty of memory' (p. 17) (Rios; Rodrigues, 2020, p. 72).

Moreover, the most usual was that the partnership established between a degree course and the school institution was that directed to the fulfillment of supervised internships of undergraduates or teaching projects as was the case of PIBID. So, when we talked about preservation and maintenance practices of the documental collection, there was a certain strangeness for not being a common proposal, even more coming from a professor of the Mathematics Undergraduate Course.

Next, we will present what we were able to experience along this path, bringing some of the challenges and the ways we dealt with them, whether due to the practical conditions of carrying out the research, or due to issues related to the effort of acting in activities that were not part of our initial training and of the participating students.

The partnership with the institution started back in 2013, when a thematic axis was created in the scope of PIBID/UFPel/Mathematics related to the History of Mathematics Education, in the scope of two important school institutions in Pelotas, the Municipal Pelotense School and the IEEAB. The goal was to strengthen the link between different generations of educators who had worked in the institutions and undergraduate students of Mathematics, and to reflect on how knowledge of their practices could contribute to the training of new educators. At the time, it was clear that it would be an opportunity for the participating students to "[...] confront themselves with traces of a school culture, ranging from the physical structure to the traces related to practices of appropriation of pedagogical proposals" (Souza; Rios; Silva, 2018, p. 143) and, thus, reflect on their own formative process.

In this first approach movement, it was possible that most of the undergraduates in Mathematics and PIBID fellows had their first contacts with the discussion about the importance of preservation and maintenance of collections for school culture.

As of 2016, with the closure of the aforementioned axis created in the institution's PIBID and with the actions of the local Research Project already mentioned (Rios, 2015b), we further strengthened the relationship with the IEEAB and had access to the collection that was in a restricted sector of the institution's library that, after completing the steps of sanitization, organization and digitization were reorganized in

the space intended for its custody, maintaining the logic established by the school institution.

However, it was not a simple approach. Many conversations and a process of mutual trust established during the years of work between teachers and students from the university and the managers of the Institute were necessary. Some of them, when they joined, did not identify themselves with the approach, and others graduated and became interested in the theme, to the point of integrating post-graduation projects in the area, as is the case of one of the authors of this work.

The result of this partnership favored the preservation of the collection to which we had access and, as a result, collaborated with the preservation of vestiges connected to the school culture of the institution, besides having made possible the development of some master's researches in the field of the History of Mathematics Education, and, also, of an interesting set of research results, published and presented in scientific events. Among the developed researches, it can be pointed out the master's dissertation of Silva (2019), which presented narratives of normalists about Mathematics in the Normal Course of the *Instituto Educacional Assis Brasil*⁴ between the 1950s and 1960s; the dissertation of Heidt (2019), which presented a panorama about Modern Mathematics in the Institute in the period 1964-1979; and, finally, a dissertation still in progress that analyzes professional knowledge to teach Mathematics that composed the training of normalists in the 1960s in the same institution.

Especially between 2017 and 2020, due to the constitution of the Research Project, which was funded by CNPq, it was possible to advance in the treatment of the school collection, when we started to have a work room, which allowed us better conditions of hygienization, organization and digitalization of the material, the traces related to the teaching practices of Mathematics and Mathematics Didactics (Rios; Rodrigues, 2020).

In 2020, due to the health crisis established by the coronavirus, the face-to-face work on the school collection was interrupted, aiming at the safety of the Project participants and the IEEAB staff itself. Thus, as we had already digitized most of the materials located, sanitized and organized, we decided to focus our actions on the final stage of the work on the collection: the production of catalog cards and the submission of digital versions of the documents located in the institutional repository of CEDAP, a sector of UFRGS, the Project's co-partner institution.

It is worth mentioning that we were facing a new task for the working group: the elaboration of the catalog cards and the production of metadata, as well as the organization and submission to the digital repository mentioned. Given the partnership established with CEDAP, we had the opportunity to count on the collaboration of professionals from the fields of Librarianship and Information Science, which were indispensable to guide us in this production, since it involved a series of procedures and care specific to these fields that we had not yet encountered.

This elaboration required care, exchanges, and an important formative dialogue, highlighting, once again, the importance of establishing partnerships and approaches with specialized professionals from these academic areas for our work as educators interested in collaborating with a school collection.

After the work of preparing the catalog cards, about 1,700 pages of digitized documents, distributed in sets and folders of documents, were sent to CEDAP's digital repository and/or are in the process of being submitted. Among these documents are class diaries of the Normal Course, containing records of the subjects Mathematics, Drawing, Special Didactics of Mathematics, Didactics of Mathematics, Didactics of Drawing, among others; teacher folders, containing copies of the identification documents of these teachers, attestations, certificates, ordinances, and memoranda; reports of internships carried out by normalist students; a folder of documents related to the Department of Specialized Studies (DEE⁵); a book of minutes from 1959 to 1967, containing records of meetings related to the Kindergarten which operated in connection with the Escola Normal Assis Brasil, as the institution was called at the time.

Beyond the technical work associated with the collection, one of the issues that seems important to us to highlight here was the need, both for the students and the teachers involved, to make theoretical and methodological approaches that do not traditionally make up the training of a mathematics teacher, related to fields that have document preservation as a duty of office, as we have already mentioned. It took many hours of collective study to overcome

[...] the technical limits of the Project proposers, for not having specific training related to the research fields that have heritage preservation as a duty of office, we had as one of the starting points the search for approximations with Museology, Archivology, Librarianship and Information Science to support the team's actions and, thus, enable and qualify the processes of inventory production of the sources of the participating institutions' archives and the constitution of the intended digital collection (Rios; Rodrigues, 2020, p. 75).

We reached the end point of the project, which was funded by CNPq in 2020, recognizing the advances and collaboration effectively achieved, the importance of the work to preserve the collection with which we worked and considering that the participating students were also able to reflect on how this work can collaborate with their training, from questioning about being a mathematics teacher in the present and in the past, by having access to many other experiences of teachers who worked at different times in the institution.

The lived experience from the moment we started the PIBID, when we started a link between the undergraduates and school contexts, not only linked to the internship, here referring specifically to the case of the IEEAB, besides integrating them to a school daily life, very similar to

the spaces where they will be inserted professionally in the future, this coexistence has enabled them to reflect

[...] about the role of mathematics teachers in different historical moments experienced by the institution, and how their pedagogical actions were adhered to certain models and pedagogical discourses, and expressed in their daily practices. By having access to pedagogical actions of other teachers, temporally displaced and mediated by the documents, they will be able to reflect on the ways in which the existing educational prescriptions were interpreted and institutionalized, contributing to the discussion regarding the educational tensions existing between the established prescriptions and what is done of them inside the schools (Rios, 2015a, p. 18).

In other words, in addition to the importance that the project had for the preservation of the school collection, it allowed the participating students to experience aspects of daily life at school with which the undergraduates had little or no contact, as is made clear in the following narrative⁶, in which one of them talks about his participation in the project⁷

I have been linked to IEEAB since 2019 through our project. If I could only talk about the things I learned inside the Institute, [I would talk about] the part of the project work itself, the technical part of maintenance and official documents, which was something I had never worked on, being inside the IEEAB doing this project, this work in this case, helped me a lot in relation to [learning] this. I also have to mention the relationship, but not the 'standard' relationship inside the school, where you [teacher] are related to the students, but the teacher's relationship with the employees... especially [because in the project] we have a lot of contact with the janitorial staff or the secretarial staff. So, it turned out that these areas inside a school, of which I didn't have much or any notion, I ended up getting to know a lot, getting to know the people there, and it was a very good experience, it was a very important learning experience for me, and I think that mainly because inside the university we don't have such a good notion that there are people there, We see several things telling us how to act or we have subjects that tell us how to do each little thing, and we forget that they are people [who are there], that they have a history, that they have their daily lives and that being there is also a job, and it is very complicated for everybody. And this is something that we don't stop to reflect on. So being inside the institute, having this relationship with these servers that we would not have the same relationship as teachers, is very rewarding, it is a very 'proper' teaching of the project (Pedro, 19 Dec. 2020).

It is up to us to be sensitized and seek possible dialogues, beyond the aspects of our training, so that we can transit in fields of work that are not familiar to us at first. From there, despite the fact that we have no formal education in Archivology, Museology or Information Science, we have research practices and work experiences in collections that allow us to act adequately in the preservation and maintenance of school collections whose importance is fundamental to know the didactic

practices carried out in different educational moments in the institutions we are connected to, as we have already said.

Thus, it is important that we resume the debate about the commitment to work with collections and how this technical work influences the training of new researchers. Jorge (18 Dec. 2020), when telling us about his experience with the research practices with the archive, positively highlights how this affected him as a future teacher and researcher.

The experience I had at the Instituto Assis Brasil was very interesting, not only in terms of my training as a teacher, since we had contact there... we studied, [with] traces of the institution available in that space, right? where many professionals like me and my teachers, teachers in the area, also spent and worked, but also with an excellent experience for an aspiring researcher like me, who had an abundance of desire and lacked experience and experience. Being in that place and having access to the documents is very enriching and makes you, in a way, open your eyes to how we are inserted in a complex place. Whether you like it or not, being inside the institution, an institution like Assis Brasil, whose history is so rich and vast, and having access to the vestiges of this history, there inside, was undoubtedly a great experience, not only professional but academic and personal as well. I think that beyond the documents, the discussions and doubts that arose throughout the work, you know? those were the moments that I learned and grew the most as a professional (Jorge, 18 Dec. 2020).

Without pretending to exhaust the debate, we intend to bring some problematizations about the role that historians of mathematics education can play facing the school collections with which they work in their research practices and we present the process of our working group with a school institution in which it was possible to establish a successful partnership.

Finally, the approaches made possible by the projects mentioned here, interested in the preservation of school documentation, have been enriching for the formation of researchers in History of Mathematics Education and of teachers, since the participation of some students, scholarship students or volunteers, has favored the expansion of their readings about school culture and enabled them to have access to the daily life of the institution to which they were linked, valuing didactic practices not only of current teachers, but also of those from other generations who worked in the institution.

We hope that we have been able to stimulate other colleagues in the area to approach the debate that, for some years now, has been brought by historians of education and concerns the constitution and the current conditions of school archives, as well as the repercussion of our professional activities in these spaces of institutional memory preservation.

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Notes

- 1 Project supported by CNPq.
- 2 Under the coordination of Prof. Dr. David Antonio da Costa, the Digital Repository houses the digitalizations of the documents mobilized in GHEMAT's ongoing projects (Costa; Valente, 2015), possessing with a considerable set of digital documents. To visit the Repository: <<https://repositorio.ufsc.br/handle/123456789/1769>>.
- 3 Project supported by FAPERGS.
- 4 Over the years IEEAB went through several changes in its name. It was called *Complementary School of Pelotas*, when it was founded in 1929, in 1940 it was called *Escola Complementar Assis Brasil*, in 1943 it became *Escola Normal assis Brasil*. In 1962 it was established as Instituto de Educação Assis Brasil and, as of 1997, it included state in the name (Amaral; Amaral, 2007 *apud* Silva, 2019).
- 5 To learn more about the actions carried out by the Department of Specialized Studies (DEE), see Rodrigues and Rios (2020).
- 6 The reports presented followed an invitation to talk about the experience in the Project and followed an ethical procedure, with the signature of the Free and Informed Consent Form (ICF) that authorizes the disclosure in academic works. The TCLE is in the possession of the researchers.
- 7 Both reports are from students who work as fellows in the Project Mathematics Education in Rio Grande do Sul, institutions characters and practices, being respectively, PBIP-AF/UFPel and PROBIC/FAPERGS fellows.

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