



# **The development of the historical thought in Primary Education: possibilities of using family files**

*O desenvolvimento do pensamento histórico na  
Educação Infantil: possibilidades do trabalho  
com arquivos familiares*

**Geyso Dongley Germinari**

PHD in Education from the Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR), Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Laboratory for the Teaching of History (LEHIS), Department of History, Universidade Estadual do Centro-Oeste (Unicentro), Irati, PR - Brazil, email: geysog@gmail.com

---

## **Abstract**

The article problematizes the use of historical documents of family files as a tool for the development of the children's historical thought in the Primary Education. It lays on the research field of History Teaching denominated Historical Education, which analyzes the teaching and learning process based on History's epistemology. The relation between Primary Education and Historical Education finds reference in the theory of the historical conscience of JörnRüsen, and in the researches on historical teaching and learning for children developed by Hilary Cooper. The thoughts presented here are part of the research project "The historical thought of youths and children of schools located in the municipal district of Irati-PR", developed in the Department of History of the State University of the

Central West (Unicentro), Irati campus. As a result of greater relevance, it is pointed the possibility of the historical learning in the extent of the Primary Education, through the systematic work with historical sources from family files.

**Keywords:** Primary Education. Historical thought. Family files.

### **Resumo**

*O artigo problematiza o uso de documentos históricos de arquivos familiares como caminho para o desenvolvimento do pensamento histórico de crianças na Educação Infantil. Ele está inserido no campo de pesquisa do ensino de História denominado Educação Histórica, que analisa o processo de ensino e aprendizagem com base na epistemologia da história. A relação entre Educação Infantil e Educação Histórica está referenciada na teoria da consciência histórica do filósofo da história JörnRüsen e nas pesquisas sobre ensino e aprendizagem histórica para crianças, desenvolvidas pela pesquisadora Hilary Cooper. As reflexões apresentadas são parte do projeto de pesquisa "O Pensamento histórico de jovens e crianças de escolas localizadas no município de Irati-PR", desenvolvido no Departamento de História da Universidade Estadual do Centro-Oeste (Unicentro), Câmpus Irati. Como resultado de maior relevância, aponta-se a possibilidade da aprendizagem histórica no âmbito da Educação Infantil, por meio do trabalho sistemático com fontes históricas oriundas de arquivos familiares.*

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Infantil. Pensamento histórico. Arquivos familiares.

### **Resumen**

*El documento analiza el uso de documentos históricos de los archivos de la familia como un camino para el desarrollo del pensamiento histórico de los niños en la educación de los infantes. Está alojado en la investigación que se llamó la Enseñanza de la Historia de la Educación, que analiza el proceso de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje basado en la epistemología del campo de la historia. La relación entre Educación Infantil y educación de la historia se hace referencia en la teoría de la conciencia histórica del filósofo y historiador Jörn Rüsen en la investigación sobre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de la historia para los*

*niños, desarrollado por la investigadora Hilary Cooper. Las ideas presentadas son parte del proyecto de investigación "Pensamiento histórico de los jóvenes y los niños de las escuelas ubicadas en el municipio de Irati-PR", desarrollado en el Departamento de Historia de la Universidad Estatal de Medio Oeste (Unicentro), Irati campus. Como resultado de la mayor relevancia, se apunta a la posibilidad de aprendizaje histórico en Educación Infantil a través del trabajo sistemático con las fuentes históricas derivadas de archivos familiares.*

**Palabras clave:** Educación Infantil. Pensamiento histórico. Archivos familiares.

---

## Introduction

In the research field of History Teaching has been highlighted in recent years, a perspective of analysis called History Education, also called research in Historical Cognition, developed intensively in several countries, mainly in England, The United States, Canada, Portugal and Brazil.

In Brazil, the presence of the History Education was evidenced by the work of Evangelista and Triches (2006). The authors systematized information about research groups (RGs) in History Teaching, Teaching of History and History Education, registered in the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), between 2000 and 2005. Among the results, it was found the presence of research groups and research lines (RLs) in History Education from the year of 2005.

In the studies of History Education, researchers "[...] have focused their attention on principles, typologies and historical learning strategies under the assumption that the intervention in the quality of learning requires a systematic knowledge of the historical ideas of the students [...]" (BARCA, 2005, p. 15).

Thus, this study starts from the assumption that the systematic knowledge of the historical ideas of students is necessary for the didactic

interventions in the teaching/learning process for them to be more effective. From a theoretical-methodological perspective, different from cognitive research grounded in Educational Psychology, the analysis of historical learning, through History Education, references itself in the proper historical knowledge, in other words, the teaching/learning of History is effected by means of a theoretical framework surrounding the epistemology of History.

The research and teaching interventions anchored in the principles of Historical Education have pointed out ways for children and young people to engage with the past through reflections guided by historical research. In this direction, it was defined the basic processes of historical thinking, at any level of education, such as the analysis of cause and effects of changes over time; the inferences from different historical sources, with various media (photography, paintings, documents, oral testimony, material culture); the selection of sources for confirmation or refutation of hypotheses; the apprehension of historical multiperspectivity.

Having as reference the perspective of History Education, it will be dealt with conceptual problems related to the development of historical thinking in children aged compatibly with Early Childhood Education, through work in the classroom with family archives documents. The reflections presented here are part of the research activities of the research project "Historical Thinking of youth and children from schools located in the municipality of Irati-PR", linked to the Department of History, at State University of the Central West (Unicentro).

### **Historical Education and children historical thought**

Investigations in Historical perspective of Education held in historical epistemology assume, nowadays, a set of approaches that can be summarized in three groups: a) analysis of second-order ideas; b) analyzes of the substantive ideas; c) reflections on the use of historical knowledge.

Reflections on ideas of second order seek to understand the historical thought, at any level of schooling, according to quality criteria, anchored in contemporary debates about the philosophy and theory of History. In this approach it does not matter the amount or simple correction of factual information about the past, but issues related to reasoning and historical logic, analyzing concepts such as: historical understanding, narrative, history evidence, inference, historical consciousness, causality, among others.

The analysis of substantive ideas focuses on historical concepts, known in school as "teaching content". These studies focus on general concepts, for instance, such as imperialism and democracy and also on particular notions tied to specific contexts in time and space, such as national, regional and local stories. Investigations on the use of historical knowledge deal with the meaning and use of history in everyday life. Seeking a definition for the area, Schmidt and Garcia (2006, p. 9) emphasize that:

[...] History Education has its foundations guided by questions such as those seeking to understand the meanings that young people, children and teachers assign to certain historical concepts – such as the French Revolution, Renaissance, Reformation - called "substantive concepts" as well as so-called "second-order" such as narrative, explanation or historical evidence.

The interest in knowledge of historical ideas (substantive and second order) built by individuals and its consideration as a source for significant interventions in History teaching arose in England. According to Lee (2001, p. 13), a pioneer in studies of History Education:

In the sixties, there was a fear that students would stop studying History, which actually almost happened. There was a decentralized curriculum in England and few students chose the subject of History. This resembled a set of stories and children, when known, they did not like them. They liked most of the stories from TV, books, etc. Instead of learning substantive knowledge about the past, students learned "stories".

The situation of disbelief whereby passed the subject of History in England began to change with the 13-16 project (coordinated at the last stage by Denis Shemilt), whose main objective was to address the Teaching of History in historical terms.

The project, organized for students from 13 to 16 years, reached across England involving more than one third of schools, modifying the conception of the discipline. Lee (2001, p. 14) notes that:

One of reasons why people changed was noting that previously, children regarded History as boring and useless and parents also thought so; with the Project, the children started to look at History as a serious subject. It was necessary to be something that children gradually learn, changes to be operated with ideas and in a way that made them able to perceive these changes. In fact, the children related best with their ideas in History.

In the context, the project suggested new questions about the teaching of History such as: "What were the ideas that children brought to the subject of history? Which concepts, which images that History provided to children?" (Lee, 2001, p. 14). These questions have guided the historical cognition analyzes.

The accumulation of research on the progression of children's historical thinking, in several countries, allows pointing out some points of convergence:

- a) Learning occurs in real contexts.
- b) Children and young people use their experiences to make sense of the past, which does not always fit their prior ideas.
- c) Several factors influence the historical cognition, such as the previous experiences of the subjects, the specific nature of knowledge, the types of jobs offered and individual skills.
- d) The historical ideas of children have a logical progression, but not invariant. Each subject can oscillate between levels more or

less elaborate depending on the situation. The progression of ideas by age follows a trend, but it is not decisive.

The development of historical learning goes through the challenge of combining historical understanding (second-order concepts) with substantive knowledge of the past (historical contents). For this relationship to happen, according to Lee (2006), it is necessary an applicable notion of historical literacy. The concept refers to the set of skills of interpretation and understanding of the past, allowing a historically reading of the world. So to be competent historically involves the mastery of elements of historical investigation. It is highlighted in the procedure of historical research, the questioning, the construction of concepts, causal analysis, temporal context and exploration of historical documents.

Although the use of historical sources are inseparable, it will be analyzed only the use of historical sources of family files, in the context of working with children from 3-6 years old, consistent with the definition of the age range for Childhood Education, defined by the Bases of Brazilian Education (LDB), Law n. 9394/96, which is thus expressed in art. 29: "The kindergarten, first stage of basic education aims at the holistic development of children up to six years of age, in their physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects, complementing the action of the family and the community" (BRAZIL, 2002, p. 37).

### **Family files: epistemology and research methodology in History in Primary Education**

The files, from the perspective of Paes (1997), can be classified, among other ways, according to the sponsor's entities. They can be: public (Federal, State, Municipal), institutional (school, church, associations, unions), commercial (companies, corporations) and family or personal. The public file can be defined as a "[...] set of documents

produced or received by government institutions, federal, state or municipal level, due to their administrative, judicial or legislative functions." (PAES, 1997, p. 24).

Institutions provide serviced targeted to the survey, reading and reproduction of documents and, moreover, have technical conditions for conserving large document collections. As stated Camargo (1988, p. 58), "[...] within the public as the equivalent of state and official, files are, above all, repositories of public trust." Yet, according to the author:

The appreciation of the file as the body that retains the documents from public authorities comes from a long legal tradition based on the presumption of authenticity of the acts perpetrated by those who hold public positions and offices. The public sphere - by authentic and reliable records - that show the veracity and validity of the facts (CAMARGO, 1988, p. 59).

The family archive of documents is not part of the lives of characters from political or media scenario. These documents can be found within the various residences, filed in drawers, in cardboard boxes, forgotten temporarily upon cabinets. There someone can find old yellowed photographs, birth certificates, land deeds, diaries, letters, confidential notes, portfolios of work.<sup>1</sup>

This definition is supported by the ideas of Artières (1998, p. 31), for whom "[...] save his/her own life is not the privilege of illustrious men (writers or rulers). Everyone, at some point in their existence, for any reason, indulges in this exercise."

The classification of family documents occurs daily, according Artières (1998, p. 10), "[...] So we spent the time to file our lives: Packed, messed, reclassified". This author examines the complex relationship

---

<sup>1</sup> The use of family archives documents in History teaching to children was originally proposed in the project "Recreating Stories", under the coordination of the teachers Mary Auxiliadora Schmidt and Tania Garcia Braga, of the Federal University of Paraná. It was initiated through a partnership between the Federal University of Paraná and the Metropolitan Region, signed in 1997.



between the individual and his/ her documents, pausing in the nature of social requirements, which leads people, daily and quietly, to keep files of their lives.

With children the same process occurs, since the first years of life different sources are produced and stored. This material can be classified into two types: a) sources directly related to the lives of children, for example, pictures of stages of life and birth registration, which are favorable for building the individual history of the child; b) Sources found in family archives not directly related to the lifetime of the child. They fit into the accumulated artifacts before the child's birth.

This documentation can be used to mean the experience in collective histories (family, regional, national), which exceeded the scope of the individual child story. The researcher Hilary Cooper (2006, p. 178), maps sources types that can be inserted in Historical Education of children:

The sources can be visual, such as photographs, paintings, ads. They can be music - songs, games of the past, popular songs of Grandma's childhood. Voluntary organizations can be connected to allow children to talk to older people - oral sources. Sources may be things that were done in the past, since brooches to castles, museums or found at home. They can be written; for younger children include: baby bracelets, birthday cards, photo books articles, names on statues and memorials.

Among the sources mentioned, some are originated from family archives, such as photographs and birth cards. These materials, from the historiographical point of view, are considered sources for history and, therefore, liable to be used in the Historical education of children.

The use of documents in the History teaching has been a widely debated topic in recent decades. To Ferraz (1999, p. 682), "[...] is relatively large the volume of articles, essays and books related in one way or another, to the exercise of historical knowledge through documentary work."



**Figure 1** - Furtado Family portrait, Mafrá, SC - Brazil (1980).

Source: Personal archive.

Hilary Cooper (2006, 2012) suggests possible historical concepts of being developed in Early Childhood Education from the work with historical sources, such as inference; creation of meaning to the past; temporal sequences; historical imagination; understanding of different attitudes and values of the past; expansion of the historical vocabulary; validity and historical truth. Cooper (2012, p. 24) also emphasizes the stimulating nature of working with historical sources for children:

What characterizes the sources as is intriguing is that they reveal their secrets easily. We usually have to "guess" what they may be telling us, based on what more we can learn. There may be more than one possible inference to be made about a source. Children in particular like to make guesses about a source, justifying it by arguing with the

inclusion of other interpretations, just as there is no "correct" answer or it is not yet known by the child. Even if your chances seem unlikely, they are learning to commit to the process of historical research [...].

Overall, the family archives contribute to the knowledge of mankind. Within this broad perspective, some specific epistemological and methodological points are worth mentioning when it is proposed the use of documents found in family archive in the early years of elementary school. The inclusion of family papers in class by their nature requires a seated pedagogical practice in certain methodological principles.

In this sense, it is noteworthy to understand that all people, independent from the social class, are subject of the historical process and, as a result of this position; there is a need for a broad conception of historical documents. Besides the epistemological assumptions, working with documents in state family archive requires methodological referrals regarding the collection, identification and organization of the sources involved in this task, teachers, students and families.

Regarding the collection of sources, the teacher should set a fund-raising strategy that involves students and respects the family and employees (owners of documents) in order to ensure proper handling and return of documents. Concomitantly to this it is needed to identify the sources, determining the track of basic information, such as date, place and subject, fundamental data for use in any type of document in the classroom. In specialized institutions in guarding and preserving document collections, public archives, museums, documentation centers, the preservation of data sources in their custody meets the demands of research. In the case of family archives it is not observed because identification is precarious, since these sources are not accumulated and stored to serve to the research.

Therefore, it becomes essential to identify the act of collecting, asking the owners of the documents the minimum data necessary for pedagogical practice. Importantly, the collection of documents should be guided by the content being taught. In other words, the capture of documents must serve the educational work in the classroom.

The documents of family archive are records that may reveal aspects of the culture of a people. For Williams (2011a, 2011b), the culture of a people is in its most everyday aspects, such as eating habits, either in its more sophisticated aspects, such as the arts and literature, is an elaboration of the whole society, in other words, both the everyday practices, as the most sophisticated products of individual creation belong to a common base of social character. Cevasco (2001, p. 48)

Explaining a little better: the more prosaic definition of culture as a way of life, and the highest, culture as artistic products, do not represent exclusive alternatives: the value of an individual work of art lies in the integration of the particular experience that their plasma shape. This integration is a selection and a response to the collective way of life without which art can not be understood and even get to exist, since its material and its meaning come from this collective.

On this aspect, Jean-Claude Forquin (1993, p. 36), based on Williams<sup>2</sup> points out that

Each generation within the same country, receives a certain intellectual heritage and artistic tradition that is always much more than the product of a single social class [...] each period, when a particular social class can be said in 'dominant' position is far from it, in terms of culture, creating a monopoly and control: the common stock of symbolic goods is always fueled by individuals of different social origins, even though the contribution of each group is uneven.

In this direction, it cannot be affirmed the existence of a culture produced exclusively by the ruling class to the ruling class, as a kind of authentic culture, there is a process of selection, interpretation and appropriation of certain cultural elements by the ruling class, which uses part of the culture as a form of distinction and maintaining power in relation

---

<sup>2</sup> In this passage Forquin (1993) relies on the book *Culture and Society 1780-1950*, by Raymond Williams, published in 1958.

to other social classes that make up society. This process Williams (2011a, p. 54) calls "Selective Tradition":

What, in terms of an effective dominant culture, and always assumed as "tradition", "significant past." But always the key point is the selection — the way in which, from a whole area of the past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen and emphasized, while other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded. Even more importantly, some of these meanings and practices are reinterpreted, diluted or placed in ways that support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture.

The continuous making and remaking of the dominant culture takes place through processes of education; the wider social formation, such as the family; the organization of work; in everyday practices; the selective tradition in an intellectual and theoretical level; these forces collaborate to maintain the dominant culture.

This proposal contributes to the discussions about the practice of historical education within the Childhood Education, in the way that it proposes a methodology that values the everyday aspects of life and the experience of the students and community.

## Conclusions

The inclusion of historical documents from family archives in Early Childhood Education requires, by its nature, an anchored Historical education based on the principles of historical research.

Besides the epistemological assumptions, the work with sources of family archives requires specific methodology, regarding the collection, identification and organization of sources.

Regarding the collection of sources, the teacher should set a fundraising strategy that involves students and respects the family and employees (owners of documents) in order to ensure proper handling and return

of documents. Concomitantly to this it is needed to identify the sources, determining the track of basic information, such as date, place and subject, essential data for use in any kind of historical document in the classroom.

Importantly, the collection of documents should be guided by the content being taught. In other words, the capture of documents must serve the educational work in the classroom.

Besides that, this proposal contributes to the discussions about the practice of History Education, by proposing a methodology that values aspects of daily life and the life experience of children, themes present in the curricular proposals in the Municipal, State and Federal spheres

## References

ARTIÈRES, P. Arquivar a própria vida. *Estudos históricos*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 11, n. 21, p. 9-34, 1998.

BARCA, I. Educação Histórica: uma nova área de investigação? In: ENCONTRO NACIONAL DE PESQUISADORES DE ENSINO DE HISTÓRIA, 6., 2005, Londrina. *VI Encontro Nacional de Pesquisadores de Ensino de História*. Londrina: Atrito Art, 2005. p. 15-25.

BRASIL. *Lei de diretrizes e bases da educação (Lei 9.394/96)*. 5 ed. Rio de Janeiro: DP&A, 2002.

CAMARGO, A. M. de A. O público e o privado: contribuição para o debate em torno da caracterização de documentos e arquivos. *Arquivo: Boletim Histórico e Informativo*, São Paulo, v. 9, n. 2, p. 57-64, jul./dez. 1988.

CEVASCO, M. E. E. *Para ler Raymond Williams*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2001.

COOPER, H. Aprendendo e ensinando sobre o passado a crianças de três a oito anos. *Educar em revista*, Curitiba, Especial, p. 171-190, 2006.

COOPER, H. *Ensino de história na educação infantil e anos iniciais: um guia para professores*. Curitiba: Base, 2012.

EVANGELISTA, O.; TRICHES, J. Ensino de história, didática da história, educação histórica: alguns dados de pesquisa (2000-2005). *Educar em revista*, Curitiba, Especial, p. 33-55, 2006.

FERRAZ, F. C. A. O uso escolar de fontes históricas. In: ENCONTRO PERSPECTIVAS DO ENSINO DE HISTÓRIA, 3., 1998, Curitiba. *Anais...* Curitiba: Aos Quatro Ventos, 1999.

FORQUIN, J. C. *Escola e cultura: as bases sociais e epistemológicas do conhecimento escolar*. Porto Alegre: Artes Médicas, 1993.

LEE, P. Progressão da compreensão dos alunos em história. In: BARCA, I. (Org.) *Perspectivas em educação histórica: actas das primeiras Jornadas Internacionais de Educação Histórica*. Braga: Centro de Estudos em Educação e Psicologia, 2001. p. 13-27.

LEE, P. Em direção a um conceito de literacia histórica. *Educar em revista*, Curitiba, Especial, p. 131-150, 2006.

PAES, M. L. *Arquivo: teoria e prática*. Rio de Janeiro: FGV, 1997.

SCHMIDT, M. A.; GARCIA, T. M. F. B. *Consciência histórica e crítica em aulas de história*. Fortaleza: Secretaria da Cultura do Estado do Ceará, 2006. (Cadernos Paulo Freire, v. 4).

WILLIAMS, R. *Cultura e materialismo*. São Paulo: Ed. da Unesp, 2011a.

WILLIAMS, R. *Cultura e sociedade: de Coleridge a Orwell*. Petropólis: Vozes, 2011b.

Received: 06/06/2014

Recebido: 06/06/2014

Approved: 07/15/2014

Aprovado: 15/07/2014