

Maria Helena Silveira: trajectory and contributions at the interface between education and health programs

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Abstract

The historiography of education has made progress in recovering female protagonism. However, there are still unique figures to be explored. In this sense, based on the results of a doctoral research, this article analyzes the work and trajectory of Professor Maria Helena Silveira, focusing on the 1960s to 1980s. To this end, it employs the concept of “archives in transient appearances” when analyzing her contributions to teacher formation for health programs in the 1970s. The methodology adopted combines digital humanities, the “snowball sampling” method, oral history, and primary source research in institutional and personal archives. The results illuminate historical processes at the interface between education and health, especially during the period associated with censorship and repression, by revealing the investigation of content interpreted as “contestatory.” The study thus demonstrates the potential of individual trajectories for the debate on education, health, and democracy in Brazil.

Keywords: Maria Helena Silveira. Education. Public Health. Archives.

Maria Helena Silveira: trajetória e contribuições na interface entre educação e programas de saúde

Resumo

A historiografia da educação tem avançado no resgate de protagonismos femininos. Contudo, permanecem personagens singulares a serem exploradas. Nesse sentido, a partir de resultados de uma pesquisa de doutorado, o artigo analisa

a atuação e a trajetória da professora Maria Helena Silveira, concentrando-se nas décadas de 1960 a 1980. Para tal, utiliza o conceito de “arquivos em aparições transitórias” ao analisar as suas contribuições na formação de professores para programas de saúde, na década de 1970. A metodologia adotada combina as humanidades digitais, a “bola de neve”, a história oral e a pesquisa em fontes primárias em arquivos institucionais e pessoais. Os resultados iluminam processos históricos da interface entre educação e saúde, especialmente no período que remete à censura e à repressão, ao revelar a investigação de conteúdos interpretados como “contestatórios”. O estudo demonstra, assim, o potencial das trajetórias individuais para o debate sobre educação, saúde e democracia no Brasil.

Palavras-chave: Maria Helena Silveira. Educação. Saúde Pública. Arquivos.

Maria Helena Silveira: trayectoria y contribuciones en la interfaz entre la educación y los programas de salud

2

Resumen

La historiografía de la educación ha avanzado en la recuperación del protagonismo femenino. Sin embargo, aún quedan figuras singulares por explorar. En este sentido, a partir de los resultados de una investigación doctoral, el artículo analiza la actuación y la trayectoria de la profesora Maria Helena Silveira, centrándose en las décadas de 1960 a 1980. Para ello, utiliza el concepto de “archivos en apariciones transitorias” al analizar sus contribuciones a la formación de profesores para programas de salud en la década de 1970. La metodología adoptada combina las humanidades digitales, el método de “bola de nieve”, la historia oral y la investigación de fuentes primarias en archivos institucionales y personales. Los resultados iluminan los procesos históricos en la interfaz entre la educación y la salud, especialmente durante el período que remite a la censura y la represión, al revelar la investigación de contenidos interpretados como “contestatario”. El estudio demuestra así el potencial de las trayectorias individuales para el debate sobre la educación, la salud y la democracia en Brasil.

Palabras clave: Maria Helena Silveira. Educación. Salud Pública. Archivos.

Introduction

The research originates from the analysis of the documentation of a teacher training – the *Training of teachers of Social Studies, Sciences and Physical Education, aiming at the integration of health programs in the 1st degree and the teacher-formation school curriculum* –, which occurred in collaboration with the Department of Education and Culture of Guanabara, in 1972. In the midst of these documents, preserved in the academic collection of the Sergio Arouca National School of Public Health (ENSP, anachronym in Portuguese), a singular specific body of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz, anachronym in Portuguese), a name came to our attention, to which a rubric, an enrollment and a function were associated. Subsequently, other documents referring to this person were located in a “dispersed” way, in other collections, allowing us to identify stories and memories that refer us to the relationship between education and health programs.

This is teacher Maria Helena Silveira: the manager of Project 3¹, the educational producer of the *Sítio do Pica-Pau-Amarelo* (yellow woodpecker’s ranch) show, on Globo TV, in the 1970s, also a critic, woman, teacher, manager and mother, among other functions. Her trajectory and her contributions to thinking about education and health in times of dictatorship are analyzed, in this article, from the partial results of the doctoral research, of a historical nature, which has been developed within the scope of the Graduate Program in Education of the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), linked to the line of research Institutions, Educational Practices and History².

As sources, the following were used: the textbooks of Maria Helena Silveira, published in the late 1960s and early 1970s, *Communication, expression and Brazilian culture* book (volumes 1 to 4) and *Portuguese for the gymnasium* book; documents of the aforementioned teacher training, preserved in the Intermediate Archive of ENSP; documents located in the Permanent Archive of ENSP and Fiocruz, available for consultation at Casa de Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (COC, anachronym in Portuguese); documents available in the Information System of the National Archive (SIAN, anachronym in Portuguese) and in the base of the Digital Hemeroteca of the National Library, among others located on the internet; documents referring to the school, academic and professional trajectory of Maria Helena Silveira, present in

personal and institutional archives, such as those located in the collection of the Santa Teresa de Jesus elementary and teacher-formation school, in Livramento city, Rio Grande do Sul state, and in the Computerized Document Archival Management System of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (SIGAD/UFRJ, anachronym in Portuguese).

The research also used oral history as a source of investigation. In this sense, we highlight the interview with Carmen Beatriz, daughter of Maria Helena Silveira, who provided the initial clues that referred to key actors, considered to have participated in teacher training or with the potential to indicate new sources for the construction of the educator's trajectory. Carmen's narrative about Maria Helena, her mother, invited us to reflect on several issues: gender, archives, points of view, worldview, teaching philosophies, communication in the formation of critical and conscious citizens, struggle for freedom of expression in times of censorship and repression. The memorial reports were compared with the documentary sources located in the various collections consulted.

4

Regarding the methodology, the digital humanities were considered, which, according to Ricardo Pimenta (2018), do not necessarily have the issue of technology as an object or starting point, and can be "[...] a method, the set of tools by which I investigate an object" (Fiocruz, 2018). A specific form³ was sent by email or WhatsApp, using the "snowball" methodology. According to Juliana Vinuto:

The execution of the snowball sampling is built as follows: for the kickoff, documents and/or key informants, named as seeds, are used, in order to locate some people with the necessary profile for the research, within the general population. "This happens because an initial probabilistic sample is impossible or impractical, and thus the seeds help the researcher to initiate their contacts and to approach the group to be researched". Then, it is requested that the people indicated by the seeds indicate new contacts with the desired characteristics, from their own personal network, and so on and, in this way, the sampling table can grow with each interview, if it is in the interest of the researcher (Vinuto, 2014, p. 203).

Thus, it was possible to rescue narratives, memories and stories of teacher formation for health programs, under Law No. 5,692, of August 11, 1971⁴, to understand the threads that related to Maria Helena Silveira.

The research benefits from theories of history, education and other fields of knowledge to analyze the data and interpret the results obtained. Thus, we use reflections on gender, addressing the issue of “identity” – “woman/feminine” –, but in the diversity of experiences.

With the concept “files in transitory appearances”, presented by Maria Teresa Santos Cunha at the session “*e-History of Education, collections and sources*”, during the XII Brazilian Congress of History of Education, we realized that persons external to institutions can be transitory and absent in institutional memory projects.

We favor the time frame (1960-1980), based on the thematic axes Trajectory of Women with Political Militancy; Archives, Collections, Sources and Documentary Preservation; Educational Projects and Public Policies. These are themes that bring together the authors, members of the research group Laboratory of Education and Republic: Luso-Brazilian teaching memories, from Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (LER, anachronym in Portuguese)⁵.

The elements analyzed in Maria Helena’s trajectory stimulate us to think about communication, information, literacy, culture and freedom of expression in health teacher education and health programs, in dialogue with the mentioned thematic axes.

The article highlights the relevance of the study on Maria Helena and the documents of teachers, for keeping female stories that, in some way, can dialogue with the memories of educational institutions.

The research aims to contribute to an understanding of the implications of the past in the present and to the construction of a more inclusive history of education, giving voice to women who experienced contexts of educational political activism but who, until now, have not played a leading role in the history of education.

Among documents: meeting and reunion with memories and stories about Maria Helena Silveira

The meeting of the name “Maria Helena Silveira” took place in the exploratory phase of the doctoral research, more specifically in the development of the project *A gift from the past to remember in the future: ENSP 70 years*⁶, which had the participation of one of the authors as a responsible professional. This project aimed to mobilize the ENSP community around discussions on document management, history, and memories, considering both the documents kept in institutional spaces and those that integrate personal files. Thus, it was possible to return to some events “[...] with specific reflections on the historical treatment of the event [...]” (Revel, 2009, p. 85), which contributed to the choice of the object of the investigation.

Initially, the research sought to understand the possible uses and objects that permeate collections considered “academic,” analyzing the collection of the Academic Management Service (SECA, anachronym in Portuguese) of ENSP for a history of education in interfaces with health. As a result, we began to examine the documentation of a training that took place in the 1970s at ENSP – a period in which the institution was called the Castello Branco Institute – to understand school teaching and health education, including as part of macro projects, which involve disputes, with an impact on actions and directions of the daily lives of public agents in institutions.

It was certainly no coincidence that the National School of Public Health (ENSP) was called President Castello Branco Institute between August 1970 and May 1976⁷. According to Mignot (1993), the name change has a historicity. The period of the dictatorship was marked by deep political and social repressions, which significantly impacted public institutions.

Jairnilson Paim discusses Sergio Arouca and public health in the composition of the ENSP name and, in contrast to the term “collective health”, states that:

It is possible to recover the history of various ideological and social movements that have generated scientific fields since the emergence of capitalism – they therefore have different values, different projects, different commitments – and why not, often struggles of

the most diverse kinds – and if there is a very precise mark of collective health, it is criticism – the critique of institutionalized public health – because, as we built this process within the scope of the dictatorship – it has to do with the verticalizing ways in which health was cared for and somehow separating collective actions with those actions of an individual, assistance, or curative nature [...] (National School of Public Health, 2014, emphasis added).

The name changes of the School seemed to be related, therefore, to the ways of thinking, of being, of doing health, education, of building formation in/for health. But what is at the heart of an educational institution? What are the limits and potential of the individuals in these institutions?

ENSP sought to know the individuals and the education and health policies that permeated that period of dictatorship.

The period from 1970 to 1974 was characterized by resistance and the maintenance of activities in conditions of adversity, which in turn accompanied the national political framework, the one of greatest repression during the authoritarian regime implemented in 1964 (Santos; Brito; Lima; Fonseca, 2004, p. 85).

7

The manager of Project 3, Maria Helena Silveira, participated in one of the activities of the 1970s⁸, the *Training of teachers of Social Studies, Sciences and Physical Education, aiming at the integration of health programs in the 1st degree and teacher-formation school curriculum*, which occurred in collaboration with the Department of Education and Culture of Guanabara state.

In the institutional memory documents of ENSP/Fiocruz, we did not get specific information about the manager. Cunha (2024) led us to perceive Maria Helena Silveira as a transient character, regarding that institutional archive, in which she appears only in a tangential way, an ephemeral appearance.

The gaps unsettled us and motivated us to seek out possible memories and stories. "There are, as we know, between memory and history, intertwining and autonomies" (Reis, 2010, p. 171).

Thus, recognizing Maria Helena as a professional in the field of education and as a transitory character in the field of health directed a specific

methodological effort to track her connections and contributions in interfaces with health.

In this sense, the “snowball” methodology, which, according to Vinuto (2014, p. 203), “[...] can be useful to research groups difficult to be accessed or studied [...]” was adopted as technological support and a practical procedure to recompose its network of action and give substance to the analysis of its trajectory, which would remain sparse otherwise.

Thus, we found outside the institutional context of ENSP/Fiocruz documents that referred us to the context of the dictatorship. In them, Maria Helena Silveira appears as investigated, Project 3 being the central issue, related to the restrictions on freedom of expression imposed by the dictatorial regime.

In this documentation, which is currently part of the collection of the National Archive, a set of documents produced by the National Information Service (SNI, anachronym in Portuguese) – a surveillance and control body created during the dictatorial regime, which played an important role in political repression, information containing personal data and workplaces of Maria Helena Silveira was found.

8

It is necessary, however, to draw attention to the fact that documentary records are not confused with the truth. Beatriz Kushnir (2006), when studying the information contained in the collections of the Department of Political and Social Order of Guanabara (Dops/GB, anachronym in Portuguese) and the similar body of São Paulo (Deops, anachronym in Portuguese), clarifies questions about access to truth and the logic of distrust. “The collection allows both to reconstitute a trajectory of the ‘record’, from the perspective of the police agent, and that of the ‘recorder’ person” (Kushnir, 2006, p. 49).

According to the document, Maria Helena taught at Marechal João Batista de Matos State School (former Pedro I State School) and André Maurois State School. With these clues, and considering resources that involve digital humanities – such as the *Family Search* application⁹, which Silva et al. (2024) analyze as a reliable source of information for genealogical studies in a digital informational environment –, we access Carmen Beatriz, daughter of Maria Helena. Thus, we scheduled a virtual conversation, which took place in February 2024, via the Microsoft Teams app.

In addition to personal and textual documents, we understand the relevance of oral history in the construction of historical narrative. According to Rouso (1996, p. 86), the use of archives “[...] written, sound, photographic, audiovisual, or even, from now on, ‘virtual’ files (as long as, in this case, they have been recorded in a memory device) [...]” only makes sense when related to the notion of “source”.

With this perspective, the interviews become, then, relevant traces of the past to compose an overview of the personal and professional trajectory of Maria Helena Silveira.

Image 1 – Maria Helena Silveira in the late 1940s



Source: Family Search app.

In relation to research and the search for documentary sources, it is worth mentioning that Carmen allowed us access to personal documents, shared some photographs, and informed us about the destination given by the heirs to Maria Helena's belongings, which were largely discarded. The library

was dismantled and some books were donated. From the personal archive, only the documents of greatest probative and affective value remained with the family, such as those of civil identification, letters, and photographs.

Regarding the practice of selection in personal files, Mignot and Cunha state:

The documents that remain in personal archives are those that have withstood the test of time, the censorship of their owners, and the sorting by families. Occasionally, in certain life situations, these documents are reread, torn, distributed, classified. They always go through countless discards: for lack of space, because people no longer remember their significance, because they bring painful memories, in short, there is no shortage of reasons for them to be forgotten. The same happens with the archives of renowned educators and teachers who work in schools (Mignot; Cunha, 2006, p. 55).

Image 2 – Maria Helena on 06/21/1990

10



Source: Carmen Beatriz personal collection.

Carmen Beatriz introduced us to her mother, through her daughter's look, and directed us to other looks, from which we were unveiling Maria Helena Silveira in some times and spaces: godmother, friend, student, teacher, woman.

Maria Helena was born in 1931, in Livramento city, in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul state, on the border with the city of Rivera, Uruguay. He grew up in a rural environment, in a traditional family, which valued education. She started teaching as a teenager at Santa Tereza School and had a personal life marked by challenges. She married, but divorced and moved to Rio de Janeiro, facing the difficulties of being a woman, with intellectual recognition, political participation, without giving up on life, children, continuity of studies and her career.

Faria e Silva (2010, p. 198), when analyzing "[...] the revealing compositions of female voices present in the poetics of Chico Buarque de Holanda [...]", lead us to reflect on women in the 1970s: "The Buarquian woman in the 1970s left home, closed the window, experimented with new identities" (Faria; Silva, 2010, p. 202).

The central issues of the conversation with Carmen were systematized, making it possible to search for key characters and find other files. With her authorization, we accessed documents from the Santa Teresa de Jesus elementary and teacher-formation School, in Livramento city, Rio Grande do Sul state, and confronted them with the reported memories.

Maria Helena graduated from the Santa Teresa de Jesus teacher-formation School and taught physical education and hygiene classes there, in the 1950s, in the elementary teacher formation course, in addition to Portuguese, history and geography in the Primary Course.

The 1970s, central to the research, was a period of intense professional and political performance by Maria Helena. At that time, she was appointed to the position of director of the Department of Elementary Education, at the Ministry of Education and Culture. We highlight the potential of the fund of the Ministry of Education and Culture, guarded by the National Archive, in the unit of Brasília, for the study of themes related to education and the period. In 1971, she started as a teaching assistant for the Portuguese language at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ, anachronism in Portuguese).

In the research on Maria Helena's performance at UFRJ, the Computerized Archival Management System (SIGAD, anachronym in Portuguese) was presented as a facilitating instrument and with potential for locating information and documents related to the trajectory of the professor at the University. From the consultation, we analyzed a departure from the country in 1988, participation in the III International Symposium on Art Education, in 1989, and the trip to participate in the Brazilian Congress of Engineering Education (COBENGE, anachronym in Portuguese) in 2007.

Maria Helena participated in several activities, including the coordination of the *One School, One Dream, One Reality* project. This project, aimed at "[...] implementation of a school focused on the development of fishing, in which the learning of fishing technique would be combined with the requirements of elementary school, was idealized in 1999 [...]" (Amorim; Silveira, 2006).

We highlight the relevance of access to archives for which the Access to Information Law (BRASIL, 2011) positively contributes, as well as document management, collaboration, and qualified service in institutions. In accessing archives, it is essential to consider the ethical issues of research and the General Data Protection Law (Brasil, 2018). Distances for access, as well as deadlines and resources, usually scarce for academic research, are limiting elements of consulting primary sources.

In the research, based on the thematic axis Archives, Collections, Sources and Documentary Preservation, we have also analyzed issues such as the dispersion of documents – that is, the "[...] fragmentation of the entire archive, whose parts are divided between different institutions [...]" (Costa, 2019, p. 48) –, the ways of organizing institutional files and teachers' files.

With the deepening of the research, we hope to better understand the historical context in which Maria Helena Silveira lived and the impact of her ideas on Brazilian education. For now, we share documents, memories and reflections that seek to contribute to thinking about education, health, and times of dictatorship in Brazil.

Understanding the documents: thinking about education and health in times of dictatorship

In a context marked by disinformation and the manipulation of information, history becomes necessary for social justice. Manoel Barral Netto (2025), in the inaugural class of the ENSP school year, drew attention to the need to expand knowledge and information to face ignorance and misinformation.

In this sense, it is intended to echo the imperative of a history of education in defense of democracy, a field of action and knowledge in which we find sequels, more specifically due to the national political context faced between 2019 and 2022, “[...] marked by frictions with the Judiciary, threats to democracy and the covid-19 pandemic”. (Ferreira Junior). We believe it is important to bring the new generations closer to themes such as education, health, times of dictatorship, archives, and gender, which were hard hit in the period of a state of exception that marked the country’s recent history. Thus, we begin to reflect on the legacy of Maria Helena Silveira, considering that her documents and those we find on her can contribute to deepen these discussions, so necessary and urgent.

The restrictions on communication and freedom of expression were evident and impacted the training of teachers under the exception regime that was in force in the 1970s, as can be seen in the National Information Service document, in the highlighted excerpt:

It has caused surprise, the guidance that has been given to the courses taught to teachers, due to the nature of challenge to past generations and a sense that could be interpreted as Marxist. Among the mentors of such courses is Maria Helena Silveira (Arquivo Nacional, 1972, p. 1).

According to Sandra Reimão (2014, p. 75): “One of the first measures of authoritarian regimes is to restrict freedom of expression and opinion; it is a form of domination by coercion, limitation or elimination of dissenting voices.”

When analyzing censorship opinions from the period of the military dictatorship, Reimão (2013) points out that the justification presented for the prohibition of the textbook *Health Program: hygiene and health projects and themes*, which aimed to make students aware of their sanitary conditions and

promote healthy habits, was the fear that unprepared teachers could distort information, harming young Brazilians.

Education needs to be understood beyond teaching, communications, but as processes interconnected to cultures, aiming at our survival as a greater good. For this, the teacher needs to have a formation aimed at understanding the existence of different worldviews and points of view, without losing the primordial aspect of school education, public or private, which we believe should be collective.

Thus, the formation of teachers who are critical, participatory, and aware of their rights and duties presupposes the understanding of the models of societies, educations, and cultures, as well as the disputes that relate to territories (currently also considering the virtual environment), knowledge, powers, and life projects.

The school has a fundamental role in promoting democratic education. It should be a space for dialogue, respect, and participation, in which everyone feels valued and included. Education based on democracy is a continuous and challenging process, but essential for the construction of a fairer future for all.

Manuel Gonçalves Barbosa (2020) states that democracy is inseparable from education and that there is no democracy without democrats. Thinking about education and health professionals and aiming to strengthen the democratic process, we started to present contributions and write this history of education in its interfaces with public/collective health.

When locating a document with the “apparent” information we seek, we need to pay attention to the reasons for its registration, preservation, and availability. As Foucault (2023) rightly points out, one must consider the notion of the archive as discourse, with mutations of knowledge. The archive is not a mere repository of information, but rather a space of power that organizes, selects, and preserves certain discourses, silencing others.

We found evidence in newspapers of Maria Helena’s participation in symposia, among other activities, promoting education reform (Law of 1971). In one of them, from June 1975, there is a complaint made by her about the precariousness of public schools. Soon after, her dismissal occurred¹⁰.

Zanlorenzi (2010), who addresses the press as a source of research for the history of education, considers:

[It is] necessary for the researcher to know that the written press expresses the point of view of those who produce it, but this is the point that the researcher will expand, because there is no dispute between right and wrong, but rather the unveiling of the present ideologies and the form of persuasion used to influence socially (Zanlorenzi, 2010, p. 65).

Leonor Maria Tanuri (2000) recovers the history of teachers in the post-1964 context and clarifies that:

[The] concerns of the educational literature, curricular content and teacher training move mainly to the internal aspects of the school, to the “environment” intended to “modernize” teaching practice, to the “operationalization” of objectives – instructional and behavioral –, to the “planning, coordination and control” of activities, to the “methods and techniques” of evaluation, to the use of new teaching technologies, then referring mainly to “audiovisual resources”. It was about making the school “efficient and productive”, that is, making it operational with a view to preparing for work, for the country’s economic development, for national security (Tanuri, 2000, p. 79).

15

What did Maria Helena think about technologies in education? In 1999, there was a training of managers of the TV Escola (school TV) Program in Fortaleza. Maria Helena lectured on *Motivation and Awareness for the Use of New Technologies in the Scope of Distance Education / TV Escola Programs*, in the *Pedagogical Use panel of the TV Escola Program*. It emphasized the need for a scientific approach to education that sought to understand and overcome existing generalizations rather than just reproduce them. Maria Helena also highlighted the importance of not letting education be dominated by technologies with purely economic objectives, and of not allowing methodology to replace method (Ministry of Education, 1999).

The teacher pointed out the concern with dehumanization in educational processes. In 1976, she expressed her criticism of the objective evaluation model that was imposed in the public competitions for the teaching profession.

She denounced the growing devaluation of teaching subjectivity and the consequent loss of autonomy of teachers in the evaluation of their students. According to Maria Helena:

At some point it was judged that the teacher's subjectivity could be confused with dishonesty and gradually objectivity invaded all fields of education, removing the responsibility of assessing who legitimately must exercise it (Contest... 1976).

This critique – which needs to be contextualized in relation to the educational reforms and government policies of the time – still runs through contemporary debates on educational evaluation. The search for a more humane assessment that values the diversity and particularities of each student is an increasingly urgent demand. In recovering his speech, we highlight the importance of reflecting on the implications of excessive objectivity in education and technology in teacher formation.

Teachers need autonomy to mediate educational processes, considering collectively validated projects, local specificities, and contexts in which that community finds itself. After all, we understand education as a dynamic process that requires sensitivities and knowledge sharing to be fully effective.

Next, we highlight other themes that permeated Maria Helena's trajectory in the field of education, such as the book and the school textbook. Faria (1997), with a feminine perspective on "Ideology and Utopia in the 60s," as expressed in the title of her work, clarifies that: "Books liberated, transmitted information and knowledge, and were censored, which only serves to reinforce the representation of their liberating character, and therefore, made them subject to condemnation by repressive authorities" (Faria, 1997, p. 119).

Maria Helena not only read but wrote. In the late 1960s and 1970s, she published textbooks commented on by important Brazilian writers. Affonso Romano de Sant'anna (1973), in the text *The most laughable school and perhaps the frankest*, praises the book published by Maria Helena in 1973. Fernando Sabino (1974), in *A última flor do Lácio inculta e bela* (the Portuguese language, uncultivated and beautiful), highlights Maria Helena as "another of the best, as he heard" and states that his book has "admirable graphic presentation".

Image 3 – Some textbooks published by Maria Helena Silveira



Source: image by the authors.

What objectives did Maria Helena have in producing the teaching materials? In the presentation of the book *Communication, expression, and Brazilian culture 4*, the teacher clarifies.

The goals are high, the intentions are guided by respect for the young people entrusted to the work of an open school and confident in their advisors. But what would become of man if it were not for utopia to encourage him to walk, opening the windows of the future? (Silveira, 1973, p. 8).

17

Juliana Miranda Filgueiras (2025) contributes to the understanding of the theme of textbooks in the period by exploring the Technical Book and Textbook Committee (COLTED, anachronym in Portuguese) and the National School Material Foundation (FENAME, anachronym in Portuguese).

The two bodies were created by Ministry of Education in the 1960s, but had different guidelines for textbooks. While COLTED had the objective of stimulating the expansion of the book industry, FENAME should produce teaching materials for distribution or sale at cost (Filgueiras, 2025, p. 85).

As an educational producer of the *Sítio do Pica-Pau-Amarelo* (yellow woodpecker's ranch) series, Maria Helena gave interviews, made analyzes and rebutted criticism of the adaptation of Monteiro Lobato's books for television.

At Sítio show, we were very concerned with the country's historical memory. We wanted to recreate the Brazil of the 1920s, the Brazil of Monteiro Lobato. For this, we also worked with other authors, such as, for example, Mário de Andrade, who had a less conservative view of the country. Of course, in a program aimed at children, we had to take some precautions, such as, for example, excluding from the script racist phrases uttered by the doll Emília in relation to the maid Anastácia (Silveira, 2004, p. 23).

In 1978, thirty years after Monteiro Lobato's death, Maria Helena analyzed the author's work in *Jornal do Brasil's weekly guide to ideas and publications*, with an approach that, apparently, sought balance, valuing Lobato's contributions and, at the same time, promoting a reflection on the negative aspects of his work.

He was a precursor, was in the middle of the path of verbal creation, what would later appear in Guimarães Rosa, but he also revealed prejudices against Black people and women in his children's books (Silveira, 1978, p. 11).

18 When we look at Maria Helena's trajectory, also crossed by criticism, books and literature, we find a universe of pedagogical and educational management knowledge and practices that shaped the past and influence the present. Such stories and memories stimulate us to follow in the investigation of the pluralities and singularities of the female universe.

Final considerations

The article gives prominence to Maria Helena Silveira, perceived as a relevant character for the history of education, when located in academic documents, in the development of an institutional memory project in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Sergio Arouca National School of Public Health (ENSP/Fiocruz).

The documentary analysis, guided by the concept of "files in transitory appearances", made it possible to identify the potential of individual trajectories, especially of female educators, for historical debates.

With a return to events of the past, the study of Maria Helena's trajectory, in the field of education, and the analysis of her contributions, in the field of public health, led to a new research perspective and offered a look at the teaching processes at ENSP and teacher formation policies for health programs.

The research analyzes that the history of institutions is intertwined with the history of fields of practice and knowledge, which are interrelated to the history of several individuals. In this sense, analyzing transient characters, whose memories are not so evident in institutional memory projects, in official sources, such as Maria Helena Silveira, can offer relevant clues about contexts, disputes and conflicting positions.

We share documents, memories, and reflections, to contribute to the construction of a historiography of education, in interfaces with public/collective, plural and democratic health, recognizing the relevance of individuals, sometimes invisible, who integrated the processes or related in some way to them.

There is still a lot to be explored and the research seeks to open paths for new investigations, with different theoretical and methodological perspectives on the stories and memories of Maria Helena Silveira, the themes that permeate her trajectory, in addition to research that recognizes other transitional and thematic characters in the education and health interface, based on the methodologies adopted.

Notes

1. One of the priority projects that came to compose the Education and Culture Sector Plan for the 1972/1974 triennium – Project of the 1st Degree Education Sector – Improvement and Training of Teachers for Elementary and Teacher-Formation Education (Pamplona, 73, p. 22-24)
2. The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee. Certificate of Presentation of Ethical Appreciation 86501325.8.0000.5282.
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