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## BOOKLET: CULTURAL OBJECT, VEHICLE OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PRACTICES REMEMBERED BY LITERACY TEACHERS

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### ABSTRACT

At the end of the 20th century, as a result of studies of psychogenesis, literacy studies, and institutionalization of National Curriculum Parameters, a new curriculum for teaching of reading and writing has been instituted. Studies and research at different educational levels have vehemently opposed the use of old literacy methods and disseminated a discourse against the adoption of booklets and, consequently, the ba-be-bi-bo-bu. In this study, I've verified that those manuals, throughout the history of education, had been used as guides for literacy practices and presented a linguistic structuring of teaching and learning through letters, syllables and words that still remain in practical action of teachers who emphasize the use of those primers as support for teaching of reading and writing in current school context.

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### INTRODUCTION

The destruction of past - or rather of social mechanisms linking our personal experience to that of past generations - is one of the most characteristic and dismal phenomena of the late twentieth century. HOBBSAWN (1995, p. 13). From the above quotation we understand that Hobsbawn's warning is that we should be attentive to decline of history and memory in our times. We are not talking about static analysis of historical facts. That has been pointed out to us by the fact that, at the end of the 20th century, the beginning of the 1980s, studies aimed at teaching of reading and writing in the first years of schooling strongly opposed the use of old methods of literacy and, consequently, the adoption of old ba-be-bi-bo-bu booklets, officially adopted until the 1970s. Exactly at the end of the 20th century, as a result of Psychogenesis studies, throughout Brazilian national territory, teacher training courses, both those promoted by universities and those offered by teaching secretaries, have sought to "destroy" a methodology of teaching that in course of history of education was based on practice of literacy teacher and that reached to hand through textbook, in that case, the booklet. All that effort in combating primers and teaching by syllabus persisted throughout the University of Southwestern Bahia-UESB decade of 1990, including

with officialising of National Curricular Parameters, that has defended and established a curriculum for literacy sustained in constructivist perspective. There have been many published works since this decade that, in discussing inefficiency of school and literacy process, have attributed to spelling books and old methods the reason for that failure. However, in practice, what it has been observed, in the same period concomitant to that combat, is "preservation of past"; the frequent use of a work based on model of old booklets; of a methodology considered outdated, but which is extremely alive in memory and in the action of literacy teacher.

#### The book of spelling as a mark of a memory for teaching of reading and writing

In researching the history of pedagogical ideas and literacy methods expressed in some booklets that have appeared in the sixteenth to the twentieth century<sup>1</sup>, we've found that all those manuals carry within themselves a similar structure regarding the literacy process; always bring a teaching based on teaching of vowels, consonants, syllables, words, phrases and texts, whether presented in a synthetic or analytical perspective. They also have a link with a social group which occupies the

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position of teacher, and in that function is presented as a subject that carries marks of an individual memory who preserves marks of a collective memory, that is, of individuals who in other contexts have performed functions similar and who have left their impressions in history of education. In this quest to understand this "remembrance," the booklet has been delineated as an instrument for guiding knowledge that at the same time has presented itself as part of history of schooling and which has remained as a memory of a school culture destined to literacy. The content expressed in it is only present in this type of textbook with a unique purpose: to teach reading and writing. Therefore, in order to understand the linkage of that study to theme of memory, we assume that memory, as a source of information of a given knowledge, has an interrelationship with history, understanding, as stated by Zarias (2001, p.) that "... the relations between memory and history, and set of individual and collective acts that give them materiality and political thickness, delimit a wide spectrum of historiographic approaches. "The booklet is a cultural object, vehicle of institutionalization of historically constructed school practices, as a normative instrument of specific knowledge. In our understanding it has also presented itself as a "place of memory", since it is a specific and unique space that shelters, in our educational system, a secular linguistic structure that has been, since the sixteenth century, a ritual and a literacy model that support literacy practices and are taken up by authors in new manuals edited throughout the centuries and still remain in practical action of teachers who emphasize the use of book as a reminder of their time as a learner and as a support for teaching of reading and writing skills. In a paper on booklet-textbook relation in the field of History of Education, produced by Boto (2004, p.495), she says that:

[...] the booklet is perhaps the school textbook that has stayed with us for a longer time. Referring to our own path of life, we remember to leaf through its pages, sometimes the letter colors of each lesson, format of illustrations, texture of pages, printed support that supports the text. We went symbolically, simply by going through that first book, from being illiterate to readers. In cities, we remember the first posters we were able to read alone (and in a low voice) on the street. Such recollections call our attention precisely because, ever since, we have never been able to avoid reading; even if we wish to forget, we are reminded of it. As children, we've imagined that it was the booklet that had taught us, slowly, to read: hence its primacy between places of memory.

Considering the booklet as a place of memory implies considering and understanding that it has always been organized following certain necessary steps so that its objective could be reached: to teach reading and writing. Using the metaphor created by Nora (1991), we could call it pedagogical breviaries. That is a specific didactic material which offers teaching scripts that remain alive in pedagogical doing of literacy teachers in the most different historical times. As we embark on history of education and some studies already done, we have been cataloging booklets used in different educational paradigms from the sixteenth century until the twentieth century. All of them, regardless of method approached, have in themselves a structure that is only found in that type of textbook, a book destined to teacher responsible for initial teaching of reading and writing, which authorizes us to say that it is a book which brings, independently of period in which it was written, an identity proper to literate discourse.

Here, based on the writings of Pollak (1992), we are considering that memory and identity have a relational character; they are social constructions. According to that author, we can say that memory is a reconstruction of past realized from interests and concerns of groups and individuals present. In case of booklets, we can say that in historical path in which they arise, they present themselves with a structure of their own, sometimes giving rise to a few mutations and / or reinterpretations.

Halbwachs (2003) has also emphasized that memory must be understood as a collective and social phenomenon, that is, as a phenomenon built collectively and subject to fluctuations, transformations, constant changes. In highlighting that fluctuating and changeable characteristic of memory, it is important to note that in historical course we have drawn in studying different booklets, in discoveries made during historical periods and their pedagogical ideas, we have noticed that in booklets edited and distributed to teachers as "method" be followed, something invariant would remain. They have been structures and teachings that were being solidified in the body of a didactic support, called a booklet that, even in disuse, had made memory so important that it prevented the occurrence of effective changes in teaching process.

#### **Reported experiences: collection of a school tradition conveyed by the booklet**

Even when in a certain period in which the hegemonic discourse of education, 1990s, through National Curriculum Parameters, sought to dismiss that memory impregnated in tradition and history of literacy, placing it in the condition of marginality or a kind of "memory underground" in words of Pollak (1992), it has not been erased from school context. Taken as traditional and outdated, the booklets and their literacy methods have been set aside and condemned to oblivion. However, in spite of need for more detailed studies, I infer from experiences I have passed in teacher training process that propositions of booklets come to fore with great intensity in work of a group of teachers from the 1990s to current days, who were very likely to have been literate with booklets as textbooks used for that purpose. In that way, "[...] memory has appeared as a subjective force at the same time profound and active, latent and penetrating, hidden and invasive" (BOSI 1993: 47). That can be seen in a teacher's testimony, whether as a regent or as a parent who assists in work of his son's teacher in acquiring reading and writing, he still has the booklet as a guide for that learning process. Let's see:

I have already taught people to read by adopting the most varied processes and I love the discovery of reading, I have already used "Casinha Feliz", "Miloca", Teleco e Popoca, "Ficha Esquema", which works from syllabic families and construction of new words from the syllables studied. (Teacher 3)

I have as my best example my son. In 2014 he was in the second year in primary school and he was 7 years old, he was not developing in reading, that is to say he was not on the same level as some of his classmates, so the teacher called me at school, told me and asked for help. I started to study the syllables every night with him, from the beginning to the simple syllables, after he learned, I moved to the complex syllables in matters of what he was reading. It is very difficult

for a child to learn to read without learning the syllables, how will a student speak the word BOLA if he does not know the syllable BO and LA? Or will he speak the word CRENTE if he does not know the syllable CREN? When he learns all syllables, it is easy to form the word. (Teacher 1)

The work of those educators, as we understand it, started to be triggered by a memory which involved not only experiences directly experienced as students of those manuals, but also, it is quite possible that, through historical socialization, a phenomenon of projection or identification with a school history has occurred, so strong that we can speak of experiences inherited and learned in a specific textbook, and transmitted by individuals through a certain social function - that of literacy teachers.

In that perspective, it is necessary to highlight an identity construction which involves individuals, groups, socio-economic and cultural contexts in permanent dialectic interaction. Pedagogical values and knowledge are shared and preserved historically through the language of booklets, highlighting here the essential character of language for socialization of memory as Bosi (1993, p. 52) states: "Language is the socializing instrument of memory, it also reduces and unifies and brings different experiences together in the same historical and cultural space".

That association which we seek to establish in our study between memory and literacy drives us to seek in Halbwachs the association between memory and tradition. For that author, memory does not simply refer to an experience begun and completed in past, but rather to something that remains alive, animating the thoughts and actions of individuals and groups in present. Starting from that premise, considering booklets as a vehicle for a literacy memory and its use as a result of relationship between memory and social identity, we have analyzed those materials also from the perspective of individual and collective memory, since, when produced by an individual, each booklet carries the marks of an individual memory, but also of a collective memory because that individual-author carries in himself marks of a collective memory, shared in a social group as a student, teacher or education specialist.

### Final considerations

Memory is the product of a work of resignification built by crystallization between past and present. It appears, as it is produced collectively and individually. The student's understanding of that subject requires theoretical and methodological treatment. Thus, when constructing memories based on individual experiences, the subject needs to look for instruments provided by social environment, such as ideas and words. And this is what brings us to our study that link between individual and collective memory in relation to construction of a literacy practice. In that teaching process, the teacher inevitably recalls specific words and practices of a group which had been present in educational process and in elaboration of literacy proposals.

It is considered the isolated individual does not form memories, or at least is not able to sustain them for long without the support of testimonies of others to construct and format them. Halbwachs (2003, p.29) points out:

We seek testimonies to strengthen or weaken and also to complete what we know of an event about which we have already had some information, although many circumstances relative to that remain obscure to us. The first testimony we can turn to will always be ours. When he says, 'I do not believe in what I see', someone feels that two beings coexist in that - one, the sentient being, is a kind of witness who comes to testify about what he has seen, and the self, which he has not really seen, perhaps he had seen it before, and may have formed an opinion based on testimony of others. In this way, memories are taken as raw material of testimonies which evoke the construction of memory. Memory is that work of recognition and reconstruction which updates the social frameworks, frames of reference space-time that make possible the constitution of individual memory. It is the different points of view which co-inhabit the individual and assist him in constitution of his "impression", which is imbued with different visions and testimonies of others, as Halbwachs points out when referring to his trip to London and his different interlocutions with his friends: architect, historian, painter, merchant and the authors of books read by him. They had been all present on a tour that only apparently he, Halbwachs (2003, p.31), did alone,

(...) because in thought I was in this or that group, which I had composed with the architect and people he used to interpret with me, or with the painter (and his group), with the geometer who designed the map, with a novelist. Other people had had those memories in common with me. More than that, they had helped me to remember them and, to remind me better, I turn to them, for a moment I adopt their point of view, I join their group, of which I continue to be part, because I still experience their influence and encounter in me many of ideas and ways of thinking that would not have improved me alone, by which I remain in contact with them. From Halbwachs's point of view, we find that there is, in process of constructing individual memory, in lived present, an interaction with different experiences lived in different past collective. In constructing and systematizing the knowledge acquired at a time when he has visited a city, the author shows us how much knowledge interrelates, how different voices intertwine in construction of an individualized knowledge. That is because in each context of society where individual transits, he establishes relationships, builds learning that consolidates in his personal memories, which guarantee him an identity of an individual belonging to a particular group. That belonging has also established itself in a kind of "affective community" (HALBWACHS, 2003, p. 34), making collective memory subsist in time, manifesting itself in each new generation and for each new generation. And that is what we have seen in relation to teaching of reading and writing in the first years of schooling: teaching methods of reading and writing that have been validated and shared in the most varied booklets and these were, over time, marks of oneself, of practices, of a group, of a teacher, of an era which has transcended innovations and seems to remain in schools, legitimizing a practice still widely used for literacy.

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