



Pedagogical Strategies in the Construction of Historical Knowledge for the 2nd Cycle of Primary School

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Abstract

History teaching plays a crucial role in the civic, cultural and critical education of students, enabling them to understand the world around them and the roots of contemporary societies. However, in European schools there are several challenges that affect the quality and relevance of this subject. The latest general report produced by the Council of Europe Observatory [1] on the teaching of history revealed that teachers often resort to one-way teaching, highlighting the lack of more participatory and interactive methods, such as project-based learning. This traditional approach is often justified by the time demands imposed by overloaded curricula, textbooks and exams.

Additionally, this report states that the educational resources most used by teachers include textbooks, teachers' notes and websites and databases with historical content approved by the education authorities. This dependence on these resources can limit the diversity and updating of teaching materials, affecting the dynamics and effectiveness of the teaching-learning process.

Furthermore, there is a clear need for professional development opportunities for educators, with a focus on collaborative and multidirectional pedagogies. This scenario raises questions about declining interest and government investment in the area, contributing to the weakening of the discipline and the need for more effective pedagogical strategies that provide a solid foundation for higher-order thinking, which is fundamental to the development of critical thinking.

In this paper, we will explore the complexities associated with the development of pedagogical strategies for history lessons in secondary schools carried out by students on the master's degree in 1st and 2nd cycle of Primary School Teaching (Portuguese Language, Portuguese History and Geography) in the context of pedagogical practice.

Keywords: *History Teaching, Pedagogical Strategies, Active Methodologies, Teacher Training*

1. Introduction

This study is based on the work carried out in the Master's programme in 1st and 2nd Cycle Portuguese Language, History and Geography Teaching at the School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, in the context of Supervised Teaching Practice II. The study aimed to demonstrate, through experience reports, the benefits and challenges of using diversified pedagogical strategies, employing a variety of sources and approaches in 2nd Cycle History classes.

The 5th and 6th grades are part of the 2nd cycle of basic education in Portugal. It is at this stage that students are introduced to the subject of History, specifically the History and Geography of Portugal. According to [2], the fact that all of the country's history and geography is covered in just two years, within an increasingly limited curriculum time, jeopardises the achievement of the objectives set by the Directorate-General for Education (DGE) for teaching history in this cycle.

According to a recent report by the Council of Europe's Observatory on the Teaching of History, teachers in the Member States, including Portugal, point out that the number of teaching hours is increasingly reduced, while the curriculum is becoming progressively more overloaded, and this factor ends up having a direct impact on the strategies adopted in the classroom [1]. It is becoming increasingly difficult to adopt teaching strategies that favour a constructivist approach with teaching times of 45 and 50 minutes [3].

In addition to the time issue mentioned above, other factors such as unidirectional teaching and the indiscriminate use of textbooks contribute to limiting the teaching of history to a "mechanistic", "memorable" approach that is often considered "boring" by students [4].

According to [5], the subject of history has distanced itself from its original objectives, focusing excessively on the memorisation of facts, dates and personalities, which leads to subsequent forgetfulness on the part of the students. From this perspective, it is essential that history teaching develops competences in students, not through a prescriptive approach, but by helping them to



understand the fundamentals. According to [6], learning in History should be geared towards a contextualised reading of the past, based on the evidence provided by a wide variety of sources where one should not just accept "one grand narrative" about the past. The obstacles, observed on a daily basis in the context of supervised teaching practice and discussed purposefully in the weekly meetings of this course unit, resulted in the construction of teaching resources and strategies enriched by a variety of documentary sources. The aim was to provide students with a broader and, above all, more critical understanding of the topics covered through a set of activities in which it was possible to cross-reference the sources in their various messages, confront information and its intentionality, but, above all, mobilise second-order concepts. These reflections and observations served as justification for the development of the work that will be presented in this study as an account of the experiences of the Master's students in pedagogical practice in the context of the 2nd cycle of basic education.

2. Methodology

This work is part of an experience report carried out by the students of the Master's programme in Teaching Portuguese Language, History and Geography of Portugal in the context of teaching practice in the 2nd Cycle.

According to [7], experience reports are a form of scientific communication that allows professionals to exchange knowledge and practices, contributing to the collective development of the field. This type of report is particularly important because it is based on real practices and specific contexts, presenting strategies and resources that can be adapted or replicated by other professionals.

The activities took place in private and public schools in the district of Leiria, Portugal with two 5th grade classes and one 6th grade class. The activities developed involved a variety of historical documents and didactic strategies such as: didactic games, document analysis and image reading.

3. Activities carried out

Report 1- Image Analysis

This activity was carried out with 5th graders students from a public school, in a class of 27 students. The work consisted in the analysis of images related to the curriculum on the Middle Ages in Portugal, and more specifically on the Portuguese culture of the 13th and 14th centuries.

The strategy used was observation and iconographic analysis. During the approach to this content, different images were presented to make the students aware of the difference between courtly culture and popular culture and how the population used their leisure time.

According to [8], teaching through images is crucial because it recognises images not just as a support for other forms of language, but as a specific language with its own value. The aim of teaching through images is to provide students with the resources and mechanisms that images possess and to help them explore their expressive, meaningful and communicative possibilities. This type of approach allows students to develop a deeper understanding that goes beyond a purely aesthetic reading. In the same vein, [9] argues that images, be they paintings, photographs or drawings that reach us through archives, museums or textbooks, bear the marks of the past and present students with possible social and cultural scenarios of the historical moment in which they were produced.

The choice of images for the assignment should show the contrast of social life in the Middle Ages, so that students can compare the images, highlighting people, places, clothing, etc., as we can see in the images below (Fig 1.):





Fig. 1. Images showing the contrast of social life in the Middle Ages

The image analysis was divided into three stages. Firstly, the students were asked to look at the images and recognise their elements. A series of questions were asked to reflect on the images presented, for example: Who are they? How are they dressed? What are they doing? Next, the aim was to interpret them in such a way as to relate their elements to the content covered. A sheet was drawn up for the students to record their impressions of each image, highlighting specific elements of each picture. In the third stage, each student was asked to identify the differences between the social groups in question by comparing the images, distinguishing which group they belong to and what the indicative elements are. In addition, the trainee teacher's role as a mediator in analysing these images is noteworthy, as he enabled the students to play a reflective role, focusing on the most relevant aspects of the image and, above all, comparing the social contexts presented. When implementing this strategy, we identified that the students have a certain difficulty in observing and describing the elements they visualise. They tend to interpret images immediately, without really realising the details and exploring the context. This tendency is one of the main difficulties identified in this type of activity. This situation compromises the process of image analysis, as all the stages are essential for an effective and complete interpretation.

With this in mind, we decided to complement image reading with other documentary sources, more specifically written texts. To this end, we compiled a set of historical documents, such as Foral Charters and Fair Charters, with the aim of broadening the students' perception of the medieval period and providing more elements for the development of the figures represented. Analysing these charters was undoubtedly a fundamental strategy. The dialogue between the various sources allowed the students to develop a deeper understanding of historical similarities and differences, as well as permanence and change over time.

Nome:
Data:

Eu, Afonso, pela graça de Deus, Rei de Portugal e Conde de Bolonha, faço saber aos presentes e aos vindouros que de boa mente e de espontânea vontade, me aprouve dar e conceder a vós, meus homens e vassallos de Torres Vedras, carta de foro. (...) Assim dou-vos por foro que aquele que publicamente, na presença de homens bons, com armas arrombar violentamente casa pague duzentos soldos e isto assim sem vozeiro e se o assaltante for morto dentro de casa, o que matou ou o dono da casa pague um morabitino, e se aí for ferido pague por isso meio morabitino. De igual modo por homicídio e violação publicamente feitos pague duzentos soldos. (...) Aquele que arrombar o relego do vinho, e vender o vinho no seu relego, e provada a infracção com o testemunho dos homens bons, da primeira e segunda vez, pague cinco soldos. E se for achado de novo em falta pela terceira vez, com o testemunho dos homens bons, todo o vinho seja entornado e os arcos dos tonéis sejam cortados. (...) Os habitantes de Torres Vedras tenham livremente tendas, fornos de pão e também de olaria; e dos fornos de telha dêem uma décima. Aquele que matar um homem à traição fora do couro pague sessenta soldos. Aquele que fora do couro ferir alguém pague trinta soldos. E quem ferir alguém em público com armas pague a metade de um homicídio. (...) O ferreiro, sapateiro ou peleiro que tiver casa em Torres Vedras e nela trabalhar, não pague por ela nenhum foro. E aquele que tiver mouro ferreiro ou sapateiro e trabalhar na sua casa não dê por isso foro. Porém aqueles que forem mesteirais, ferreiros ou sapateiros e viverem desse ofício e não tiverem casas, venham para as minhas tendas e dêem-me o meu foro. (...) Portanto todo aquele que firmemente cumprir isto que fiz para vós seja beneficiado com as bênçãos de Deus e (com) as minhas. Aquele que porém o quiser infringir tenha a maldição de Deus e minha."

Excerto da Carta de foral de Torres Vedras, 1250

1. Lê, atentamente, a carta de foral e preenche a seguinte tabela.

Quem concedeu a carta de foral?	
A que povoação foi concedida esta carta de foral?	
Quais os privilégios dos habitantes dessa povoação?	
Quais os deveres dos habitantes dessa povoação?	
Quais as punições dadas aos habitantes dessa povoação?	
Qual era a importância das cartas de foral?	

Fig. 2. Example of an activity with a Foral Charter



Report 2- Documentary analysis – periodicals of the time

The activity was carried out with a 6th grade class from a public school in the district of Leiria, Portugal, and its theme was the fall of the Portuguese monarchy at the end of the 19th century.

Developed in a class of 23 students, the work used written documents in lessons to introduce students to historical thinking. Aware of the care needed when using this type of historical source in a school context, we began by selecting the documents, taking into account their suitability for the age of the students, the vocabulary used and the length of the texts. We defined clear strategies for their use. According to [4], this type of activity requires very specific criteria from the teacher, as each type of document has its own particularities that must be approached in an appropriate way.

The activity was structured in four stages, with the main aim of enabling students to understand the historical events of the period portrayed from different perspectives. Using the written press as a historical source allowed for this multiplicity of information and points of view, alerting the students to the fact that the discourses presented in a news story are not neutral or impartial [4]. In this way, a research guide was organised with the important stages that led to the establishment of the republic in Portugal, between 1890 and 1910, over a period of twenty years. The aim was to understand the historical context that led to the fall of the monarchy in Portugal and to take a critical stance on the events of the period.

The cover of the script is a map of the time - the so-called pink map, where the territories that Portugal wanted to dominate in Africa are marked in pink. The next page presents a chronology of the main events that led to the fall of the monarchy between 1886 and 1910.

The first stage of this activity refers to the pink map proposed by Portugal at the Berlin Conference between 1884 and 1885. Portugal's intentions to unite the then colonies of Angola and Mozambique clashed with England's interests in building a railway link between Cairo in Egypt and Cape Town in South Africa. As a result, the British gave Portugal an ultimatum to drop the pink map proposal. Portugal's concession to the English Ultimatum would have been a fatal blow to the monarchical regime in Portugal.

The text presented on the pink map was taken from a teaching platform on Portuguese public television (RTP). Here are three questions for the students to answer: (1) what the territories were claimed by Portugal? (2) what connections the various expeditions made to this area? and (3) what conflict Portugal's claims could provoke?

The second stage, on the English Ultimatum, presents excerpts from two newspapers of the time on the Portuguese reaction to the English Ultimatum, published on 12 and 13 January 1890. The two newspapers have different positions on the monarchy: the newspaper "Os Debates" is clearly republican, while the newspaper "Diário Ilustrado" is not opposed to the monarchy. Students are asked to identify the event discussed in the two texts and Portugal's reaction to the English Ultimatum. They are then asked to compare the two newspapers in relation to four themes: how they see the English Ultimatum; who is to blame; what Portugal's reaction should be and its political position in relation to the monarchy. The answers can be transcripts of texts that confirm the positions of each newspaper. Finally, the last question requires students to put themselves in the place of the Prime Minister of the time and to conceive and justify their reaction to the English Ultimatum.

The third stage is dedicated to the republican revolts in Lisbon and Porto. The document presented is an excerpt from the newspaper "Diário Ilustrado" of 1 February 1891, which quotes another newspaper - "Correio da Noite". The questions put to the students mention the pretensions of those revolts, the reason that aggravated their discontent and their political position in relation to the monarchy.

The fourth and final stage of the script presents four newspaper headlines from the time about the regicide in 1908 and an excerpt from the newspaper "A Voz Pública" on 2 February 1908. The students have to identify the event, the intention of the shooters in attacking the royal family and the expectations of the new king, Manuel II.

As well as analysing the documents, the students were shown copies of two complete editions of Diário Ilustrado, one from 12 January 1890 and the other from 2 February 1908.

The students' difficulties were related to understanding the language present in the documents and the different perspectives that the same event could have, such as, in this case, on the English Ultimatum, the republican position and the monarchist position. It was necessary for the trainee teacher to intervene more in the process of clarifying doubts. There were also difficulties in distinguishing between the different types of power - executive and legislative - and in grasping some concepts.



However, by the end of the activity, it was possible to see that some of these obstacles had been overcome.

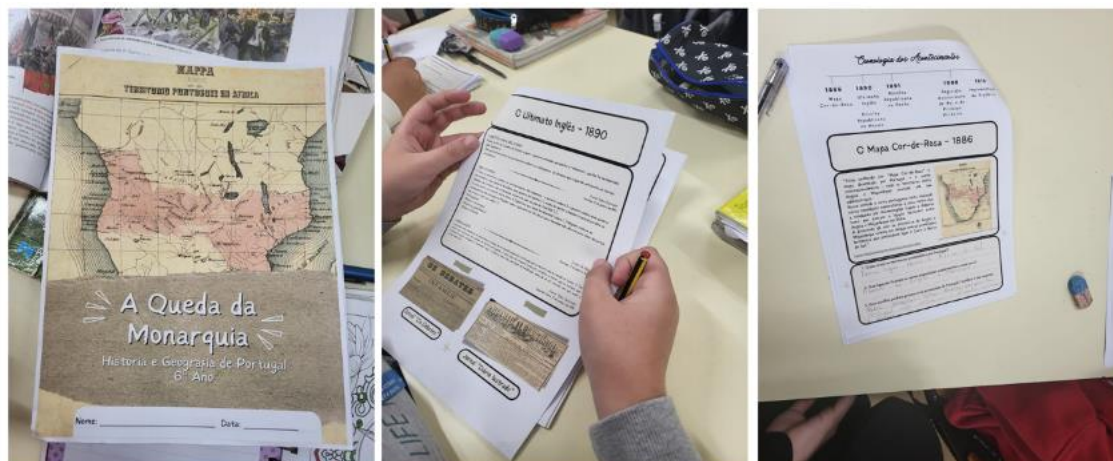


Fig. 3. Example activities with periodic of the time

Report 3- Documentary analysis of the Foral Charters and image reading

The documentary analysis was carried out with a 5th grade class from a public school in Leiria, Portugal. The study focused on foral charters and fair charters, using documents from the period in question, as well as iconographic analysis, as a way of broadening knowledge about the historical period covered. In both cases, the activities were prepared on the basis of prior research. In the case of the letters, there were no adaptations, since the main aim of the activity was to familiarise the students with the structure and language used at the time, using official documents. The work was divided into several stages, starting with the documentary analysis and then the iconographic analysis. The analysis of the Foral Charters was carried out first in a large group and then individually, so that the students felt familiar with analysing this type of document before working independently. An attempt was made to promote critical thinking in the students through the questions posed, both orally and using worksheets, in the sense that not only were questions asked about the content of the letters, but also about the students' opinions and points of view.

With regard to the difficulties experienced, it can be said that these came mainly from the students themselves, who were uncomfortable with the language used, which made it difficult to understand the documents and interpret them, thus requiring the intervention of the trainee teachers.

Despite the difficulties presented, this strategy proved to have several potentialities, including, as mentioned, familiarising the students with the language of the time, promoting their critical sense and addressing, in parallel, other aspects that would probably not have been mentioned without the use of these documents.

Cartas de foral

"Com a ajuda da graça de Deus que a tudo fecunda generosamente, eu, Afonso, pela divina vontade Rei dos portugueses, conquistei aos sarracenos [...] a cidade de Lisboa e restitui-a ao culto de Deus, entregando-a depois a vós. [...] Se dentro de casa o agressor for morto, o dono de casa ou quem o matar pague 1 maravedi. [...] Por água comprada ou vendida, paguem 2 soldos. Por boi, 2 soldos."
Foral de Lisboa (adaptado)

1. Identifica o autor e o destinatário da carta de foral acima.
O autor é Afonso III português e o destinatário são os habitantes do concelho de Lisboa.
2. Explica os direitos e deveres dos habitantes expressos na carta de foral.
Deveres: se dentro de casa o agressor for morto o dono de casa ou quem o matar pague 1 maravedi. Direitos: Por água comprada ou vendida, paguem 2 soldos, porque têm os habitantes de comprar e vender.
3. Compara as condições de vida dos habitantes dos concelhos expressas na carta de foral com as dos habitantes dos senharios, que estudaste anteriormente.
As condições de vida não são muito boas, porque eles tinham que pagar impostos e não pagavam água quente no foral enquanto os senharios eles tinham que pagar nada, pagar pelo trabalho e por isso a foral é o melhor.
4. Transcreve da Carta de Foral uma expressão que evidencie a fé cristã do autor.
"Com a ajuda da graça de Deus que a tudo fecunda generosamente."

Bom Trabalho!



Fig. 4. Example of the students' responses

The figure 4. above is an example of the students' responses when they analysed the documents independently, illustrating the moments and tasks in which they experienced the most and least difficulty.

As with other strategies, analysing visual sources such as images was a recurring strategy throughout the year. One of the activities that stood out was analysing the characteristics of people in the Medieval Period.

For this moment, four different images were selected and then cut into three or four pieces. All the images represented the way of life of the people and each student was given just one part of one of the images (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Example of pieces given to students

The students first gave a detailed description and interpretation in writing. Secondly, the students took it in turns (when the assigned part of the image was projected) to share their interpretations, which were recorded and allowed them to approach the characteristics of the people at that time. The images below illustrate some of the conclusions drawn by the students and presented during the discussion, which were considered fundamental in characterising the people's way of life.

The aim of this activity was to get the students to look at an image in detail, so that they could also focus on aspects that are not usually emphasised. At the end of the activity, the students were presented with a diagram summarising the information, which showed that all the aspects had been mentioned, thus demonstrating that the initial objective had been met.

Two of the difficulties experienced during the implementation of the activity were initially getting the students to develop their analyses based on interpretation and, secondly, managing the participation of the students to ensure that everyone followed the process of sharing the analyses. The conclusion is that this activity could have potential in terms of promoting student participation in class, when managed well so that all students participate equally.

Report 4 Board game

The board game "The French have arrived!" was inspired by the Trivial Pursuit.

The game covers topics such as the French Revolution and the French invasions of Portugal at the beginning of the 19th century.

Using the Canva platform, a base was created for the board in A3 format, containing 42 squares, 45 questions and 18 themed cards associated with events or personalities (e.g. Marie Antoinette, Louis XVI, Napoleon Bonaparte, Taking of the Bastille, Continental Blockade, Battle of Buçaco), which indicated advances or retreats in the game, or the loss of a round.

The cards contained questions such as: "Which social groups lost their privileges with the French Revolution?", "Which side was Portugal on during the Continental Blockade?", "What did the Royal Family do while the French troops invaded Portugal?", "Which country helped Portugal beat the French?", "What military strategy was used in the third invasion?", and "Who was left to govern Portugal after the French invasions?".

The 21 students in the class were divided into six groups of three or four. Each group had a board, game pawns, a dice, theme cards and question cards. The students showed their commitment during the game, creating a relaxed and fun atmosphere, to the point where the break went unnoticed (something very rare). Most of the class was enthusiastic about the game, although not everyone managed to answer all the questions. Some students even asked to keep the game until the next lesson to play during breaks. I think this game was a successful strategy, as it involved the students in



historical learning in a natural way and stimulated the development of not only historical skills, but also social skills, as the game is played in groups.



Fig. 6. Example of board game “The French have arrived”

4. Conclusions

In this article, we report on some of the experiences developed in the classroom as part of Supervised Pedagogical Practice II with 5th and 6th grade students. Through the activities developed, we emphasise the need for prior reflection, followed by research, the construction of resources and detailed planning of all actions.

We emphasised the importance of articulating strategies so that students have access to historical knowledge through different languages and perspectives. We emphasise the need to place the student at the centre of the learning process, giving them autonomy in the construction of their knowledge and encouraging the development of complex thinking and critical capacity.

We stress the active importance of the teacher in all stages of the process, acting in the articulation of activities, in the problematisation of historical events, in scientific clarifications and in the consolidation of knowledge. We believe that the activities presented, as pedagogical strategies for teaching history, achieved the proposed objectives and can serve as support for teachers in other school contexts.

Furthermore, we hope that this experience report will inspire other educators to explore and implement active methodologies in their teaching practices. The integration of diverse sources and approaches, combined with careful and reflective planning, can transform the classroom into a dynamic and participatory space. By promoting an active and collaborative learning environment, we contribute to the formation of more critical and autonomous students. In this way, we reinforce the importance of an education that not only transmits content, but also forms conscious and participative citizens.

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