

## Self-Narrative: the rural school as a place of belonging and self-training for a teacher

### ARTICLE

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### Abstract

In line with the process of self-formation of teaching identity, we reflect on the trajectory of a teacher in training, bringing to light memories that allowed her to look at the countryside as a place of belonging and personal, social and professional construction. To do so, we will use the self-narrative of one of the authors to contextualize events that marked her life since childhood, from her experiences in the countryside and her educational process until her arrival at university. In this process of revisiting his memories, we can say that his encounter with teaching became a family relationship, reaching a new level in the Pedagogy degree course, in the Rural Education discipline, when he had the opportunity to understand himself as subject of the countryside and as such, belonging to this identity territory.

**Keywords:** Self-narrative. Teaching. Rural School.

### **Narrativa de si: a escola do campo enquanto lugar de pertencimento e autoformação de uma professora**

### Resumo

Em consonância com o processo de autoformação da identidade docente, refletimos sobre a trajetória de uma professora em formação, trazendo à tona lembranças e memórias que a permitiram olhar o território do campo como lugar de pertencimento e de construção pessoal, social e profissional. Para tanto, utilizaremos da narrativa de si de uma das autoras para contextualizar acontecimentos que marcaram sua vida desde a infância, a partir das vivências no campo e do seu processo formativo escolar até a chegada na universidade. Nesse processo de revisitação das suas memórias, podemos dizer que seu encontro com a docência, foi se constituindo na relação familiar, alcançando um novo patamar no curso de licenciatura em Pedagogia, na disciplina de Educação do Campo, quando teve a oportunidade de se compreender enquanto sujeito do campo e como tal, pertencente a este território identitário.

**Palavras-chave:** Narrativa de si. Docência. Escola do Campo.

## 1 Introduction

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When we reflect on the life history of teachers, it is undeniable that it is intertwined with individual history and the mediating memory of our own experience. By remembering and writing about our own lives, we turn the exercise of narration into a composition that has already been thought out and now needs to be said and/or written. This brings us back to what Clarice Lispector said: "It's a good thing that what I'm going to write must already be written in me in some way. I just have to copy myself [...]" (Lispector, 1998, p. 30).

Like the author Clarice Lispector, in this article we have been led to copy one of us, in the hope of reconstructing the lessons we have learned along the way. With this premise, we bring you the narrative of one of the authors about her trajectory, which we wrote collectively, as part of a shared work, each leaving her own way and tone of writing.

The subjectivity in dealing with professional teaching knowledge ends up highlighting the teacher's knowledge, as well as the student's, their interests and needs, as well as sociocultural aspects in the teaching-learning process (Hofstetter; Valente, 2017). Studies that deal with the lives and work of teachers, especially those who work in basic education, are of great relevance to the academic world, as they can bring the world of research and the school floor closer together, breaking down the barrier between the world of higher education and basic education schools. Research into teachers' life stories has gained a lot of ground in recent years in academia, not only in Brazil, but in several other countries. These studies began around the 1970s, and authors such as Josso (2007), Humberman (2013), Nóvoa (2013), Martins and Tourinho (2017) and Passeggi (2008) have made significant progress on this subject over the years.

Understanding the life and work of primary school teachers results in a greater social good, given that this exercise brings us face to face with our school reality, experiencing all the experiences that permeate the teaching and learning process, in our place of struggle, in the daily toil between theory and practice.

We sought to analyze, through autobiographical narrative, the formative journey of one of the authors of this article, who, recently graduated in Pedagogy, brings with her significant memories about her process of identifying with teaching. Through her written account, we sought to identify the moments that led her to see the field as a place of personal and professional construction, as well as her process of forming a teaching identity within the process of self-education.

It is worth mentioning that the initiative arose from a proposal for academic work in the subject Field Education, taught by one of the authors in the 8th period of the pedagogy course, at the State University of Rio Grande do Norte / Pau dos Ferros Campus, in the 2020.2 academic semester. In the self-writing proposal, the students would have to present a narrative about their school and academic trajectories, intertwined with life experiences in the countryside and at school, making an interlocution with their entry into school student life until graduation. In order to construct this narrative, the following questions were raised: in what way is the countryside understood as a place where personal and professional life is constructed? In what way can the countryside contribute to self-formation? How can we recognize the countryside as a place of belonging and appreciation for teachers?

Then, in the very first year of the Master's course in Teaching at UERN/CAPF, this same narrative, mobilized by the above provocations, was part of the evaluation process for the curricular component "Advanced Topics in Memory, Training and Teaching", taught in the second semester of 2022. This narrative will also form part of the dissertation in progress on the memories of rural school teachers. In the course of constructing this narrative, we drew on various theoretical contributions, took care to improve our writing skills and extended our student life story to postgraduate studies. Therefore, the aim of this article is to reflect, through autobiographical narrative, on the trajectory of a teacher in training, bringing to light memories that allowed us to see the territory of the countryside as a place of belonging and of personal, social and professional construction.

## 2 Paths of self-narrative

In past eras, narratives were historically used to give an account of the great facts and deeds of humankind, whether disserting on the chronology of the world, the history of ancient civilizations, among many other examples. However, it was in the mid-19th century that narratives took on a new look, with life narratives standing out and marking a new narrative paradigm. As Goodson (2017, p. 27) said, "we should conceive of it as the beginning not of the 'age of narratives', but of the 'age of small narratives'".

This "narrative research" movement went beyond the great historical facts and deeds, entering different areas of society, with an emphasis on expressions involving artistic movements. The large number of productions that have narrated the lives of individuals, whether in literature, musical compositions or cinema, is notorious. We could see, increasingly latently, the creation of films using specific narratives in their plots. From this perspective, seeking to understand "[...] the broader social context of this type of narrative, we can begin to appreciate the dilemmas of qualitative work focused on personal narratives and life stories" (Goodson, 2017, p. 37).

We therefore began to use autobiographical narrative as a research method, as we believe that it understands the subject's experience and lived experience as the starting point for qualitative research. Josso (2020, p. 46) emphasizes that experience "[...] is forged and constructed at the intersection of the sinusoidal curves between the singularity of each path and the emerging alterity of all shared courses". For the author, the

[...] reflective work based on the narrative of self-formation (thinking, sensitizing oneself, imagining, being moved, appreciating, loving) makes it possible to establish the measure of social and cultural mutations in individual lives and relate them to the evolution of professional and social life contexts. The subjectivities expressed are confronted with their frequent inadequacy for a liberating understanding of creativity in our changing contexts (Josso, 2007, p. 414).

Our use of autobiographical narrative as a methodological procedure seeks to capture the marks of the life story of the teacher (author) in question, highlighting her experiences in rural areas, her schooling trajectory in the context of basic education, her formative itinerary in the academic space, as well as her identification with rural education and teaching. Writing this narrative brought out tensions, concerns, identity and training

processes, allowing the teacher to recognize herself at the same time as the author, character and narrator of her own story, as Portugal and Souza (2013) teach us. That said, we believe that being a teacher is learned and that this learning is not done in a void, but in a dynamic and procedural environment. This is what Moita (2013) said:

Nobody graduates in a void. Formation involves exchange, experience, social interaction, learning, an endless number of relationships. Having access to the way in which each person is formed means taking into account the uniqueness of their history and, above all, the unique way in which they act, react and interact with their contexts. A life journey is therefore a training journey, in the sense that it is a training process (Moita, 2013, p.115).

From the quote above, we learn that the difference between autobiographical narratives is that they are made with and/or by the subjects, and not about them, reconstructing parts of the individual's life through their own memories. For this reason, we opted for the autobiographical narrative, starting from the present in order to understand the social significance of a class of rural subjects. And this can never be reduced to the practice of simply telling a story, because therein lies the thought and feeling of valuing and belonging to it.

Anchored in the writings of Josso (2020, 2007), we then wove the author's life stories, seeking to understand the individual and collective movement in which she was inserted. We made use of self-writing, as it is "[...] a decisive approach to highlighting the epistemology of the subjects, so that their own training path can be carried out with full awareness of their own choice and the challenges for them in the present and in the future" (Josso, 2020, p. 45).

Furthermore, the autobiographical narrative allows us to "[...] review what has been lived, narrate what has been learned, experiencing a way of giving meaning and significance to my social/cultural being" (Martins; Tourinho, 2017, p. 153). Likewise, when we situate the self-narrative to build the trajectory of teacher training, we dialog with the praxis of self-mastery and professional training.

### 3 Autobiographical studies in teaching

The years leading up to the Second World War were followed by overwhelming technological advances, bringing with them enormous social pressure on education, especially on teachers. Teachers were required to train a qualified workforce to meet the demands of the job market and to reorganize, through education, a society dichotomized by the effects of the war (Nóvoa, 2013). In Nóvoa's (2013) view, the process of light urbanization caused a split between the professional life and the individual life of the teacher, causing a crisis in the teacher's identity. During this period, teachers found themselves excluded from educational restructuring processes and blamed for social inequalities.

In this sense, teaching practice was permeated by technicist characteristics, which defined the model that characterized the "good" teacher of that time. The understanding of teaching practice based on its functionality causes disagreements between researchers and teachers, as it leads to a reductionist view of the teacher, reducing "[...] the teaching profession to a set of skills and abilities, essentially emphasizing the technical dimension of pedagogical action" (Nóvoa, 2013, p. 15).

The interest in investigating the life trajectory of teachers dates back to the 1970s, as a result of research into the lives of humanity of two distinct natures: psychodynamic, with Freud's studies, and sociological, with the Chicago School (Humberman, 2013; Nóvoa, 2013; Martins; Tourinho, 2017). These studies are associated with biographical research and, consequently, with research into teaching. Thus, biographical studies in teaching focus on the beginning of teachers' careers, highlighting the key moments in their lives and training that influenced them in some way to embark on the path of teaching (Huberman, 2013).

It is clear from the specialized literature that autobiographical studies, especially in teaching, make it possible to analyze the dichotomy between university and elementary school, facilitating a certain rapprochement between the two institutions. The aim is to break down the "[...] conceptions that knowledge is produced at university and that elementary school teachers are just consumers" (Bueno, 2000, p. 9).

It's really important to change the way we look at the profession and the lives of teachers, and to understand the meanings and senses that teachers reveal in their practices. We can briefly revisit some of the experiences that have marked us throughout our lives and during our formative years, until we became teachers. This exercise of (re)visiting the past makes it possible to gain new insights into the conceptions that permeate teaching knowledge and practice. For this to happen, it is necessary to enter a universe guided by private narratives that can lead us to experiences of remarkable moments throughout the course of our lives (Goodson, 2017).

We then began to dialog with the autobiographical narrative of a teacher in training, opening the drawers of her memories, from which flowed traces of her childhood, marks of her relationship with the countryside and the passage to the encounter with teaching.

#### 4 Being and feeling rural: Tracing the paths of life and schooling

Through this autobiographical narrative, we discuss the school career and life experiences of the teacher/author. The story is marked by memories of her childhood, her relationship with her family and the place where she lived, grew up and studied. There is a universe of possibilities presented in this account, which is not restricted to talking about oneself, but opens up ways of understanding the results and the destination reached. After all, interactions promote experience, as Passeggi (2008) states. By getting to know the paths that the teacher/author took along the road of her life, we sought to clarify what led her to recognize herself and create an emotional bond with teaching, as well as to understand how her process of recognition with the rural territory where she was raised came about.

The author/narrator mentions the importance of environmental, social and cultural aspects in her professional identification in various parts of her writings, reaffirming Nóvoa's (1992, p. 7) view that "[...] it is not possible to separate the personal self from the professional self [...]". Speaking of her universe, of her place, this is how the author highlights it in her narrative:

I am the daughter and granddaughter of teachers. From a very young age, this was my world. My maternal grandmother, Dona Luiza de Gabriel Tubiba, as she was known, was the one who opened up the paths we would later follow. She was always my example of determination and fiber, due to her life story and the way she still faces adversity today. Dona Luiza made history, always fighting for education to reach everyone, without distinction of race, color or family background. (Teacher. Narrative. Pau dos Ferros. May 25, 2021).

When writing about herself, the teacher/narrator talks about her family and highlights the pride and love she has for her relatives. By remembering her grandmother as an example of determination and, in a way, a mirror for future generations, the author makes a link between her narrative and her life and profession, between her family environment and her professional space. This link between family history and professional identity highlights important traits that mark her personal and professional identity (Portugal; Souza, 2013).

Within her narrative, the author tells the story of characters from her family, situating them in time and space, emphasizing the marks they left on her history. This is what happens when she traces the path taken by her grandmother in teaching, in the same rural area that became her inspiration:

In the 1960s, Grandma began her life as a teacher as soon as she had finished normal schooling, which was enough to teach at that time. Later, shortly after the Manifesto of the Pioneers, specifically with Law No. 5,692 of 1971, many changes took place within education in our country. Grandma had to study teaching in order to continue teaching. Always a visionary, Dona Luiza didn't give up on education. She raised her nine children, worked as a teacher, was a fervent nun and a housewife. She fought until she got a school group for the farm where she lived, Sítio Capa, in the municipality of Pau dos Ferros/RN. There, she taught literacy to the children of the farmers in the neighboring communities and all her own children, as well as giving lessons in Marcelino Vieira/RN, on a horse, the most widely used means of transport at the time. Through the Brazilian Literacy Movement (Movimento Brasileiro de Alfabetização - MOBREAL), she ensured that many illiterate adults could at least sign their own names (Teacher. Narrative. Pau dos Ferros. May 25, 2021).

From this statement, we can see how the relationship with teaching came about, the beginning of the process of the narrator's identification with the profession, through



experiencing the example of her grandmother. Paraphrasing Nóvoa (1988), we understand that becoming a teacher can be linked to family relationships, influential intergenerational ties, as well as the realization of dreams, the marks left by former teachers, vocation and experiences, among other factors.

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My mother, Francisca, one of Dona Luiza's daughters, followed her profession and as soon as she finished teaching, she started teaching at the school group named after my grandfather, Escola Municipal Gabriel Antônio Chaves, sítio Capa, Pau dos Ferros/RN. A few years later, she married my father, Pedro Aquino, and moved to his house in Morada Nova, Pau dos Ferros/RN, where I was born and raised and where they still live today. She soon got a position as a teacher in another school group near my father's farm, Escola Municipal Vicente Ferreira de Aquino, Sítio Pedras Pretas, Pau dos Ferros/RN. This was my first contact with school life, even though I wasn't enrolled, because at the time, in the early 1990s, children under the age of 6 couldn't be enrolled, even though the 1988 Constitution already guaranteed the right of children aged 0 to 6 to attend nurseries and pre-schools, with reference to the National Early Childhood Education Policy, drawn up by the Commission set up by the MEC through Ordinance 1.263/93. (Teacher. Narrative. Pau dos Ferros. May 25, 2021).

This contact between young children and school is essential in the formation of citizens who are aware of their social role and understand what happens around them, because the school environment, understood as a literate environment in which knowledge is systematized and codified, is also loaded with values and cultural products that are shared through the exchange of experiences (Santos, 2020).

In some excerpts from the narrative, the teacher/author shows that she was delighted to see her mother "teaching", although today she recognizes that the didactic format she used was somewhat conservative, which would be known as banking education, characterized as "an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositaries and the educator, the depositor" (Freire, 2020, p. 80). And it was precisely in this scenario that she managed to become literate, even before actually enrolling in the municipal school system. She also remembers that the school's structural conditions were very precarious, with multigrade classrooms, badly deteriorated furniture and the roof that could collapse at any moment, conditions that we find in most rural schools. Corroborating this statement, Hage (2019) points out that:

In many situations, multigrade schools are located in small rural communities, very far from the municipal centers, and whose population does not reach the contingent defined by the education departments to form one class per grade. These are schools that often don't have their own building and operate in the home of a local resident or in party halls, sheds, churches, etc. They have precarious infrastructure and operate in very small buildings, inadequately constructed in terms of ventilation, lighting, roofing and flooring; they are in a terrible state of repair, with leaks, patches and improvisations of all kinds, causing risk to their students and teachers. Most of them have only one classroom, where school and community activities take place (Hage, 2019, p. 182).

The teacher/author also reports that, afraid that the school would close, her mother offered her space in her house to temporarily set up the classrooms. This was done. Despite losing her bedroom to the classroom, she stresses that she wasn't sad at the time, what mattered was not losing the opportunity to study and continuing to have her mother as a teacher.

With the enactment of the new Education Guidelines Law (LDB) in 1996, which incisively established that children from 0 to 6 years of age should be cared for in nurseries and pre-schools, she was able to enroll, so it was from then on that she really began to study and follow her path in school life. As stated by Santos (2020), LDB 9394/96, when it regulated nurseries (zero to three years old) and pre-schools (four to six years old) within the educational system, integrating them into basic education, sought to meet the demand and fight for the institutionalization of this level of education, historically linked to assistance. The struggle to keep schools in the countryside, whatever the level of education or modality, represents resistance and recognition of their place of origin, since keeping schools in the countryside guarantees that the people of this territory can assert themselves through education and a sense of belonging to the rural area (Santos, 2020).

The fight for the rural school has been confronted with various issues, ranging from the precariousness of the structure to the constant threat of closure. In the midst of these confrontations is the daily life of the teacher and their methodology for dealing with diversity and, in particular, with the multi-grade class. This struggle involves the search for quality education in rural areas and for an identity with the countryside, but also for the right to have access to school in the place where one lives. Therefore, a quality school in the

countryside and of the countryside, built on the foundations of the social struggles of the countryside and for everyone's right to education (Caldart, 2004).

The fact is that the existence of multigrade classes in rural schools, even without a contextualized pedagogical approach, has ensured the continuity of education in rural areas. The absence of proper establishments for schools in the countryside has been a more common reality than one might imagine in the history of Brazilian education. This reality is part of the teacher/author's narrative, when she describes how her home was transformed into a school, with her mother as teacher and, at the same time, janitor and school lunch provider, in her own home. Let's take a look at the following excerpt from the narrative:

And it was there, on the floor of my house, with my bedroom borrowed as my classroom, that I began to read my first words, do my first mathematical operations and write in my notebook, taking from the blackboard (an expression used at the time to say that I was copying what was written on the blackboard). My first class was multi-grade, and my mother separated us into rows of chairs according to grade level. The classroom had two blackboards, two bookshelves and one teacher to take care of it. The number of pupils was small, but with different ages and learning levels, a real challenge for any teacher. Planning was done separately, trying to do everything possible to make the teaching-learning process as successful as possible (Teacher. Narrative. Pau dos Ferros. May 25, 2021)..

In the multi-grade or multi-year classroom, the organization occurs by grouping students of different ages and grades/years in the same classroom, commonly bringing together students from localities with lower demand. As Bem and Silva (2019) describe:

When we talk about multi-grade classes, we have to identify them as classes where there is only one teacher, often taking on multiple roles. Therefore, multi-grade or single-teacher classes allow us to think about the contradictions that permeate the countryside today, as they operate in schools composed of a small number of students in each grade, so that teaching in these classes requires a great deal of effort from the teacher, as well as pedagogical skills to deal with the specificities of these classes (Bem; Silva, 2019, p.04).

The pedagogical organization of the multi-grade classroom is still common in rural schools. However, this cannot be seen as a major problem that justifies criticism of the quality of education. If this were the case, we supposedly wouldn't have quality problems

in multi-grade classrooms. The challenge to be faced is the closure of schools and the lack of a public policy aimed at training and the pedagogical organization of rural schools.

When talking about her childhood in the countryside, the teacher/narrator reveals the significance that this territory represents for her. She brings up the learning and experiences she had in the countryside, describes her relationship with her parents and siblings, and expresses the values she acquired in her family relationships. All around, there was the importance of life experiences as shaping the individual as a whole.

One of the most significant challenges posed by the rural school is getting there. About when the school was still confused with her own home. The teacher/author questions the frequent "adaptations" made by her mother to ensure the pedagogical organization of the classroom and her own life. However, then came the challenge of commuting and staying at school, living far away from her parents. The possibility of studying in the community of origin gradually gave way to the need to move to the city and continue her studies there.

In order to offer us a better education, my parents sent us to the city, when I was 8 and my brother was 7. I went to my aunts' house and he went to his godmother's. I don't know how we managed to stay apart for so long. I don't know how we managed to stay apart for so long. The farm we lived on was very far from the city and there was no school transport, so we had to stay there all week and only see our parents at the weekend. After this very difficult phase, which I think was the cause of a lot of pain, trauma and lessons, finally came the dream of school transportation, which was established by Law No. 10.709/2003, establishing that states and municipalities should guarantee school transportation for all levels and types of education. From then on, in elementary school, at the 4 de Setembro State School in Pau dos Ferros/RN, where I studied from the fifth to the eighth grade, from 2002 to 2005, I started commuting every day from the farm to the city to study. I've been back home ever since, thank God! I used to go to school every day on a pick-up truck, but comfort was the least of my worries. Mom found a way to put her classes at a different time to when I was studying, so that I could look after my younger sister, Nayara, who was only a few months old (Teacher. Narrative. Pau dos Ferros. May 25, 2021).

Memories of school, commuting and studying in the city become intertwined with memories of childhood and youth. In these memories, playing and working in the countryside reveal her roots, the cultural diversity of the families and communities she was part of. This culture is not seen as a nostalgic and romanticized place of country life, but

rather as an instrument of belonging. The harsh reality of the countryside is crossed by the need to survive, in which children are educated from an early age to deal with the specific social conditions of rural life.

I feel that my childhood was very different from that of some of my friends. I keep hearing stories about their childhoods and imagining how mine was the opposite of theirs. My parents have always delegated responsibilities to me since I was a child. My father grew tobacco (the raw material for cigarettes), beans, corn, cotton and sugar cane, as well as raising cattle, so he always had a task to delegate to my brother and me. Let's not forget that we weren't exploited, far from it. Today I'm grateful to my parents for having brought us up this way, because today I know how to value everything I have and I never expect anything to fall from the sky into my hands. My secondary education was at the Doutor José Fernandes de Melo State School, also in Pau dos Ferros/RN, which I finished in 2008, and I went straight to university in 2009, having passed my first entrance exam for the Geography course at the State University of Rio Grande do Norte/UERN. That same year I got married and became pregnant, and in May 2010, God gave me João Victor, the reason for all my struggles and to whom I dedicate all my achievements. Although it was a wonderful time in my life, it led me to drop out of my Geography course and take a break from my studies for a while (Teacher. Narrative. Pau dos Ferros. May 25, 2021).

Adulthood required the teacher/narrator to face a new challenge: motherhood. Everyday life forced her to choose between continuing her studies at university and becoming a mother. The break in her studies led to a re-signification of her life experience, resulting in different career choices until she became a teacher.

Seeking to find herself professionally, the author reports that she began to think about starting higher education again, since she couldn't go back to the Geography course, as the timetable was unfeasible, given that she had to work during the day. So she decided to do a distance learning course in Social Work, but she emphasized that she still wasn't satisfied, as her interest had always been in teaching. She then decided, in 2016, to take the National High School Exam - ENEM, in order to enter the Pedagogy course. With success, she was finally able to pursue the course she wanted so much.

The emotion and love for the profession is expressed between the lines of the narrative, when she says: "I couldn't wait for the day of enrollment to arrive so I could enter that building, walk through those corridors and be enchanted by the classes of those I

aspire to be one day, the teachers of the Department of Education at UERN, Pau dos Ferros Campus" (narrator/author).

The teacher reports that during the pedagogy course she faced many challenges, including strikes, shutdowns and, in 2020, the Coronavirus Pandemic, which she considered to be the biggest challenge of all. With the pandemic, social isolation was instituted, necessary for health care, which made remote teaching the appropriate way to continue teaching at UERN. Thus, she refers to education during the pandemic:

Until it arrived, I had thought that the greatest academic challenge was the internships that I had to combine with home, work and university, but I realized that nothing can compare to a time of uncertainty, fear and struggles that were imposed on us and that we had no other choice. Remote learning came along to challenge us, not just the students, but also the teachers and the entire academic community. We had to reinvent ourselves and face our fears and anxieties head-on. And it was in this context, in the eighth term of my undergraduate degree in Pedagogy, that I was able to come into contact with the discipline Rural Education, a wonderful curricular component, with discussions of great relevance to the educational environment, and I can say with much propriety that I consider it a discipline that is all too necessary in teacher training. And it was from this course that I began to plan my new dreams, entering the master's program with a research project on teaching in rural education (Teacher. Narrative. Pau dos Ferros. May 25, 2021).

According to Germano (2011, p. 253), " awareness implies a departure from the spontaneous apprehension of reality and a critical stance in which man assumes an epistemological attitude". And it was in this vein, after coming into contact with the subject of Rural Education in the 8th term, that the author was able to better understand the context in which she was taught literacy, the legal bases that supported rural schools at the time she studied, the struggles faced in implementing policies to recognize and value the people who live in rural areas, and who make up Rural Education.

According to the author's accounts, during the presentation of the narratives proposed by the teacher of the pedagogy course, she was able to perceive, even amid embarrassed voices and sobs, the marks of lives permeated by barriers and struggles, also realizing that our memories took us back to a past that drives us every day to fight harder for a new future. She says that "all of us, narrators of ourselves, even behind the screens,

let our feelings show at that moment" (Teacher. Narrative. Pau dos Ferros. May 25, 2021). According to Josso (2007),

Working on questions of identity, expressions of our existentiality, through the analysis and interpretation of written life stories, allows us to highlight the plurality, fragility and mobility of our identities throughout life. In addition to the findings that question the conventional representation of an identity, which could be defined at a given moment thanks to its achieved stability, and which would be deconstructed by the play of social displacement, the evolution of reference values and socio-cultural references, there is the awareness that the question of identity must be conceived as a permanent process of identification or differentiation, of defining oneself, through our evolving identity, one of the emerging signs of visible socio-cultural factors of existentiality. (Josso, 2007, p. 416).

At the end of her writing, the teacher expresses her emotion and the importance of narrating, of knowing herself and feeling that she is the subject of her own story, expressing in a global and dynamic way passages and events that occurred in the various dimensions of her life (Moita, 2013). This is clear when she says:

Almost two years on, I find myself going through my drawers for the second time, traveling through the memories of important and emblematic events that served as stepping stones in the construction of my self, and which contributed greatly to my process of self-knowledge and belonging to my roots and origins. As I open my drawers, I search through the memories of the past for experiences that intersect with my formative process, with the aim of discussing my trajectory as a person from the countryside and a young teacher (Teacher. Narrative. Pau dos Ferros. May 25, 2021).

According to Josso (2007), this is how studies with self-narratives and life stories are configured. These offer the author/narrator a reflection on her own history, while at the same time making her aware of the different passages and representations of herself, enabling a new process of self-formation through her own experiences.

## 5 Conclusions

The aim of this article was to reflect on the significant moments in her life and training that led the teacher/author to understand the field as a place of self-knowledge and

personal and professional construction. In addition, the aim was to trace the way in which her teaching practice has been constituted, based on the lessons she has learned in this space and their contributions to her self-education.

To this end, the author, through her narrative, revisited fragments of her trajectory through memories of the events that marked her life history and training. She asks herself how she sees the field as a territory for building her personal and professional life, and as a place for building her personal and social being.

In this process of revisiting memories, we can say that her encounter with teaching was formed in her relationship with her family of teachers, but it was above all during her degree course in Pedagogy, in the subject of Rural Education, that she had the opportunity to understand herself as a person from the countryside and, as such, belonging to this place.

The author is currently a postgraduate researcher and is very proud to say that she investigates the world of rural education. She also makes it clear that, whenever possible and when it suits her, she makes herself understood and represents herself as a rural subject. This representativeness may seem to be just a piece of information about her territorial location in the spaces where she presents herself, but it resonates much more strongly within her, as it represents the structures that sustain her life and drive her memories.

In order to elucidate in what sense the field has contributed to her process of self-education, the author explains that this territory goes beyond a geographical space, because it is based on what she has learned from it that she continues to build her identity as a teacher. It is in this sense that she can now see the countryside as her place of belonging.

She points out that it was in the countryside that she had her first contact with the educational environment and that she was able to interact with the various subjects and sectors that make up the countryside universe. These interactions are responsible for the constitution of her teaching practice and her process of self-education.



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