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## EDITED BY

José González-Monteagudo,  
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## REVIEWED BY

Ángel Freddy Rodríguez Torres,  
Central University of Ecuador, Ecuador  
Marcelo Moraes e Silva,  
Federal University of Paraná, Brazil

## \*CORRESPONDENCE:

Conceição Leal da Costa  
✉ [mccl@uevora.pt](mailto:mccl@uevora.pt)  
Camila Aloisio Alves  
✉ [camila.aloisioalves@gmail.com](mailto:camila.aloisioalves@gmail.com)

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# Echoes of research and training with biographical narratives: ways of knowing and understanding from lived experience

Conceição Leal da Costa<sup>1\*</sup>, Camila Aloisio Alves<sup>2\*</sup> and Hervé Breton<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Departamento de Pedagogia e Educação (DPE), Centro de Investigação em Educação e Psicologia (CIEP)—Universidade de Évora, Évora, Portugal, <sup>2</sup>Faculdade de Medicina de Petrópolis (FMP/UNIFASE), Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, <sup>3</sup>Département des Sciences de l'éducation et de la formation, équipe, Éducation éthique santé (EES), Université de Tours, Tours, France

This article aims to present the formative results obtained through the research-action-training device “Biographical workshop: learning about life and profession” (BW), proposed and implemented as a university extension activity in a higher education institution in Northeastern Brazil. Inspired by the epistemological and methodological bases of biographically oriented approaches in Education, the device was built with the intention of promoting, through biographical narrative, a reflective exercise both individual and collective focused on the exploration and reconstitution of personal and professional trajectories of the participants. The analyses produced from the narratives in its scope allow us to understand the different elements that give body and meaning to the trajectory of the participants in the course of their academic and professional training. Moreover, it was possible to apprehend the formative process inscribed in the mobilization of the narrative records, oral and written, and its effects for the participants. We conclude that BW is a powerful research-action-training device in that it articulates and values both the subject and the professional who is formed through lived experiences, integrating the spheres of life for an implicated, reflective and conscious professional action.

## KEYWORDS

research-training, biographical workshop, self-narratives, experiential learning, professional development

## 1 Introduction

Experiential learning, in a context of validation of prior learning, can mobilize narratives of self, whose purpose is to allow the manifestation of professional knowledge and expertise constituted in the exercise of the profession and its context. As it has been argued, “*narrative practices participate in the expression in words of the contents of experience (the theoretical), but also of the effects experienced in contact with these contents (the experiential)*” (Breton, 2021, p.38). From this perspective, it is possible to consider that narrative practices are privileged instruments to evidence experiential learning, whose construction processes can be understood through the analysis of its forms of expression and its formative dimensions, placing them at the interface between memory, body, and language. It is noted that at the international level, there are several devices used that pursue such principles, but we did not find much dissemination of the processes that integrate them in the literature on the subject (Goodson et al., 2016). In this

text, we will present some Vocational Education Training (VET) based on narrative “in the first-person perspective” that trigger, apprehend, and understand the process of constructing knowledge through narrative activity and the passage from experience to language, from text to story. The authors’ experience in Portugal, Brazil, and France has allowed them to formalize experiential learning in formative meetings with professionals in the fields of education and health, which allows us to assume that narratives in adult education allow for the manifestation of embodied knowledge acquired in individual and collective life. We will highlight the analysis developed and our understanding of how the texts developed through processes of writing, rereading, and rewriting.

## 2 Materials and methods

In order to give shape to the echoes of narrative research and its contributions to the production of knowledge about the translation of lived experiences into experiential learning, we present a research-action-training device “Biographical Workshop: learning about life and profession” (BW), which was proposed and implemented as a university extension activity in a higher education institution in Northeastern Brazil. It was carried out during the months of June and July 2021, at a distance, synchronously, and counted on the participation of 10 people: students from undergraduate and graduate stricto *sensu* courses in Education, mostly teachers from Elementary and Higher Education. Inspired by the epistemological and methodological bases of biographically oriented approaches in Education (Dominicé, 2000; Delory-Momberger, 2005, 2006, 2008; Passeggi, 2011, 2021; Pineau and Legrand, 2014; Leal da Costa, 2018; Leal da Costa et al., 2018; Breton, 2020a, 2021), the device was built with the intention of promoting, through biographical narrative, a reflexive exercise both individual and collective (Breton, 2020b, 2021; Passeggi, 2021). We note, finally, that in this workshop, aimed at exploring and reconstructing the personal and professional life course of the participants, it was assumed that the way they lived, expressed, and understood their experiences are not governed by determined principles, but by interpretative processes. BW therefore intended to contemplate such processes and the ways in which narrative practices participate both in expressing in words the contents of experience and in understanding formative dimensions of experience (Breton, 2021).

It was sought that the participants could tell and take ownership of their life stories, through their words and their sharing. In these dialogical encounters, a process of awareness about a set of elements that participated in their experiential learning took shape and was unleashed: social forces, mobilized resources, support network, unique people and places, etc. By looking at these elements, it was possible to perceive and appropriate the interfaces between the spheres of life and profession, associating to this phenomenon the idea that by activating life experiences we can organize them narratively (Pineau and Legrand, 2014), construct or reconstruct meanings, integrate them into the biographical arsenal, and take hold of the ways of acting that were constituted in the course of a life trajectory. In this sense, we admit the triple function of BW: a training device that triggered in the participants the search for meanings in the construction and reconstitution of their stories; a form of action, which finds in language the possibility of narrative construction; a training proposal that materializes through the reflective exercise about oneself, about

the other and about the surrounding world. Inspired by Pineau (2005) and Passeggi (2016), this was a work that assumed a triple perspective: reflective, formative, action.

To this end, BW was developed over six virtual meetings, one per week and lasting 3 h each. The conception was inspired by a previous experience (Leal da Costa, 2018; Leal da Costa et al., 2018), carried out with a group of initial teacher training students, in the scope of the University of Évora. With regard to development, autonomous work was planned for the individual writing of the narratives between each of the sessions that took place via the digital platform. After a first session of presentation, including participants, trainers and the theoretically framed proposal, the following three sessions were dedicated to explore three generative axes of reflection: (1) relations with the space of action; (2) construction of ways of acting within this space; (3) changes provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic in their ways of acting in the space of action. The fourth session was devoted to cross-readings among peers with a view to exploring the three-dimensionality of experiential training: self-formative, heteroformative, and eco-formative (Pineau and Legrand, 2014). According to Pineau and Legrand (2014), the force of the self (autoformation) comes to be an amalgam that creates a dialectical field of tensions between the action of others (heteroformation) and that of the environment (ecoformation). From this field of forces, influences, and tensions emerges the action of the subject that appropriates what he experiences and builds knowledge and know-how that organize his ways of being, being, and acting with himself, with others, and in the world. The narrative was reconstructed and shared in the fifth session.

The last session was intended to conclude the work through a synthesis of the processes experienced in BW, understanding the transformation that took place through experiential learning. To this end, the participants were asked to carry out a future projection exercise, shaping a project to change practices and/or (re)direct personal and professional paths or focuses, in line with the re-significations and experiential learning that were revealed in the narratives written during the workshop. Throughout the sessions, the trainers took on the role of mediators between what was proposed to be worked on each day, organizers of the subgroups and animators of the discussions, and producers of syntheses and interpretations shared with the participants.

These narratives, produced during the BW sessions, became the object of an analysis and interpretation of qualitative nature, mobilized in this article in the third person. To this end, we used interpretation keys that allowed us to grasp the longitudinality, diachrony, and chronology (Breton, 2022) of each participant’s trajectory in order to identify the key events experienced by them, as well as the resulting significant learning. In this way, we sought to understand the processes of social nature that seem to have influenced such learning; the construction of the participants’ professional action, their training process, taking into account the resulting experience of incorporation of experiences and learning. Therefore, the focus is here directed to the content produced in the first two guiding axes, since the third axis has already been explored in another publication (Passeggi et al., 2022) and thus we complete this work, enabling a more complete and robust socialization of the knowledge construction process with this narrative research.

It should be made explicit that the narratives of all participants who completed the training in AB were included. The steps of the analytical work were organized as follows: first, a floating reading was

performed in order to perform a new appropriation of its content, since as trainers, the two authors of this article already knew the narrative production. This was followed by a second reading with a view to constituting the corpus of analysis from an inductive perspective (Blais and Martineau, 2006), which allowed arriving at the temporal sequencing of the material and its subsequent thematization in emerging metaphors (Breton, 2022).

For the presentation of the results according to the themes found, the excerpts of the narratives were anonymized in order to preserve the participants' identity. For coding, it was adopted the resource of identifying them by the letter "p" for participant, followed by a numbering that respects the reading order of the narratives.

### 3 Results and discussion

To present the results, it is important, first of all, to situate the key concept of trajectory that will guide the reflections proposed in this section. By trajectory, it is assumed that in the course of a life, the path that is traveled by an individual is built through a field of tensions marked by moments of changes, reorientations, and transitions during which the structures of existence are transformed and adapted (Delory-Momberger, 2009). The experiences that embody this path, forming a trajectory, are made up of moments of discoveries, hesitations, doubts, and certainties that evolve at different rates, sometimes accelerated, and sometimes decelerated. Based on this key concept, it is understood that lifelong learning is not the product of an accumulation of compartmentalized experiences, but rather a weaving of different moments marked by the continuity or discontinuity of projects and by the dialogue between different dimensions of life and their temporalities.

The concept of trajectory opposes, therefore, to the idea that the construction of professional action is a sum of experiences that are superimposed and imposed on individuals, disregarding the protagonist and active dimension of the same in the course of their lives. Although individuals are subjected to external forces that guide the course of training and professional practice, they act, react, adapt, transform, and integrate what they experience, constituting unique and singular ways of being formed throughout life. Given that it is also an objective of narrative research to examine the dynamics of the inferential processes that take place during narrative activity, particularly during the transitions from experience to language, and then to analyze the narration of experience (Breton, 2020a), it is this last step that has detained us in this article.

In this sense, by analyzing the narratives produced within the scope of BW, we unveiled the trajectories that participants constructed and that took shape through the requested narrative and reflective exercise. Although this form is conditioned to the guiding questions of each axis of BW, they mobilized lived experiences by the participants that become narrative situations (Breton, 2020b) to be told and shared in group. The analysis, therefore, paid attention to modes of composition of narrative through its expression in the first person. The goal of analyzing these modes of composition (duration of experiences captured and causal inferences made) was to understand the causal relationships between lived events produced in the stories that participants told.

The following subsections were organized according to metaphors emerging from our interpretation of the narratives, from which it was

possible to unveil points of intersection between the trajectories of the participants, thereby articulating the singularity and plurality of their journeys.

#### 3.1 Triggers of the trajectory: a path does not begin without a starting point

The occurrence of significant events experienced by the participants in the course of their trajectories led the analytical work to identify a set of influences that led them to make the choice of moving into the field of educational sciences. It was possible, therefore, to capture in their narratives the triggers of their trajectories, events understood as initial milestones that exerted a central influence on their lives and characterized by the family sphere and the relationships established within it. Considering the strong gender influence that crosses the teaching profession (Aaad, 2006; Passeggi et al., 2021), we identified in the narratives the figure of women, who through their roles, led the participants to enter the universe of education.

I loved it when at night, on her third shift, for some family circumstance, my mother would take me with her to school. When the moment came when I needed to announce my choice, my desire for professional training [...] it is this memory and this place that they said about me. That's when I enrolled in the vestibular to become a teacher (P6).

...my mother early on inserted doodles, drawings, notebooks and reading into our routine. She was my first teacher, and, at home, she was responsible for teaching me the first letters and the first mathematical operations (P7).

The choice for this profession came about because I had failed the second grade of elementary school because I could not read [...] in 2007, when I was 10 years old, I was transferred to another school (where) I found the teacher of my dreams: Aunt Socorrinha...it was thanks to her that I learned to read and write. [...] She was my inspiration to follow the teaching career, because she was a true educator (P3).

The influence that these figures exerted left traces that had repercussions on the professional choice, showing that the direction toward a certain field of action has its origins in the life history of individuals and in the events experienced throughout the stages of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. The importance of considering these factors in the scope of adult education in their life trajectory unveils the representations of what it is to be a professional that are contained in the experiential baggage of each individual. These representations will necessarily be put into dialogue with new ideas and conceptions about the profession, leading each one to establish dialogues that are often not heard, or are made unfeasible, or even not considered as elements to be worked on and integrated in the course of academic training. The narratives, in this sense, come to be a privileged vehicle in the construction of interconnection between the spheres of life, because by serving as a means of expression they make

visible and name the prevailing and socially imposed stereotypes (Sarmiento, 2009).

If on one hand we have the influence of the role played by women, on the other hand, we perceive the influence that the participants themselves have exerted on other people's lives. This is a second striking element that emerged from the narratives and that highlights a dimension of reciprocity that runs through informal educational experiences:

The love for teaching started very early, still in my adolescence when I decided to tutor a cousin a little younger than me. At first it was all part of a "joke," I think it was part of that desire that most girls had to be a teacher [...] I put into practice everything I did with the dolls [...] for me it sounded more like fun than a "job." Even so, I received a monthly "salary," a symbolic amount, for the services rendered (P5).

It was a challenging experience (assisting a teacher who was going through health problems), a twelve-year-old girl needing to exercise such responsibility in leading a class of six-year-olds, but it was a great learning experience (P7).

The action of teaching other children at an early age led some participants to enter a circuit of offering what they knew and receiving learning and recognition, discovering themselves in the course of their lives. Such discoveries are one of the first elements that will compose their ways of being and acting in their training trajectories. Finding, discovering, or rediscovering the meaning of these experiences as an adult in training brings out and puts into dialogue the epistemic subject—which is built through the knowledge that is acquired—with the biographical subject—which is forged based on the exploration of its history, which reflects on what it has lived and draws learning from what it has experienced (Passeggi, 2016).

Resilience in the face of numerous obstacles experienced by almost all of the participants was also a central element in their trajectories. In their narratives, poverty, lack of resources, and difficulties in access to schooling can be understood as social determinants that produce barriers, but also as drivers of overcoming strategies.

Getting here was not easy and required renunciation, resilience, perseverance, faith, and the help of many hands [...] to get here, the first obstacle I needed to overcome were the geographical and social boundaries that separated me from access to knowledge [...] there were 36km traveled daily in school transportation and a multitude of new challenges to be overcome (P7).

My father was illiterate and my mother attended until the 3rd grade of elementary school, [...] my mother had a dream, to live in Sobral to put her children in school. This happened, they sold the only cow they had to feed their children and the dwelling house, which had been built with the help of my paternal grandparents and on their land (P8).

In the wake of these events, the overcoming strategies were built both with the help of the support network, constituted by family and

friends, and by the mobilization of internal psychic resources that could sustain the construction of meaning around the search for reaching their goals. In the wake of work of Freire (1992, 2002, 2011), the narrative exercise served, therefore, to highlight not only the subject who went through difficulties, but also the one who takes hold of and empowers himself with the strengths he possesses. We understand, therefore, that these experiences, besides marking their trajectories, constitute levers to conclude high school and reach higher education.

Besides the financial and social difficulties, this passage between levels of education was also marked, for two participants, by the construction of a transition between their roles as mothers, housewives, and workers.

With the passage of time and the non-approval in three vestibular attempts, I continued working and following life [...] in this course, I got married and had my first son, when he turned 3 years old, I decided to go back to school, to take a preparatory course to take the vestibular again, and it worked out well. During the preparatory course I discovered a second pregnancy, I then thought of giving up (P8).

The intersection of narratives with gender issues is again present and shows its strength as a process of subjectivation that is constructed, in turn, narratively (Butler, 2002). That is, through the stories one tells, which one incorporates in the course of a life story, gaining materiality through choices and directions that are not only the fruit of an individual performativity, but above all of social regulations integrated as the norm.

When I finished high school at eighteen years of age, I did not immediately enter a higher education course, because I soon got married and needed to work as well. I spent sixteen years without studying, only working, taking care of the house and the children [...] it was then that I realized that the world did not revolve only around this context, so I decided to make a leap, I took the vestibular (P2).

Both P2's and P8's excerpts point to a moment of reflection and perception of the desire to explore new ways of being and being in the world, allowing us to understand that entering the profession can also be a movement of expansion of the possibilities of self-realization, in which the knowledge acquired as a mother, wife, and worker are incorporated as bases for action, reinforcing that the compartmentalization of life in predefined paths imposed as standard lets slip the richness inscribed in the trajectory, in their awareness, and in the knowledge acquired. With this, we emphasize the concept of biography (Alheit and Dausien, 2005) in the exercise proposed in BW, by means of which we articulate, via narration, the different scopes of the experiences lived by the participants, giving them a moment of (re)elaboration and (re)integration to the biographical arsenal of each participant. The return to or encounter with this moment and the experience of its effects is a trigger of a formative process integrated to the logic of biographical construction (Alheit and Dausein, 2005).

Understanding that the encounter with the triggering elements of decisions and changes carries with it developments that marked the trajectories of the participants, the next subsection will address the developments caused by them.

### 3.2 Path drivers: when the path grows and expands

Entering university marks a turning point in the participants' trajectory. A turning point is understood as the passage between an existing configuration in the life trajectory to the beginning of a new configuration, i.e., a transition that reorients and changes the route (Abbott, 2009). It is from these turning points that participants encounter the means that will give a more delineated and diversified outline to the desired profession. To this end, a set of remarkable events can be highlighted. The first concerns the encounter with contents that meet their centers of interest: "I loved her classes (Psychology of childhood and adolescence), because she talked a lot about the human being in all phases of life, and this attracted my attention. It was from this subject that I started to like my course..." (P2). Beyond the contents, in this new training universe, the trajectory of the participants widens, expanding its perimeter through the diversity of lived experiences: "In the Pedagogy course, I found a new universe, new friends, new concepts, new learning that motivated me to question and reflect on my own experience, of personal life and of the teaching practices I had lived until then" (P9).

Besides having put the participants in contact with the universe of professional training, graduation represented an opportunity to change their lives, making it possible to respond more effectively to the financial and social limitations that the participants and their families were facing.

...my entrance to study pedagogy...a very important moment in my life, because it represented my choice of profession and mainly the possibility of changing the path of my own history. When I set foot in the university, I was sure that nothing would ever be the same again...(P10).

In the construction of this change of life, the internship experiences stand out for their importance and for the resulting learning experiences. In addition to putting participants in contact with work realities, internships were elements that triggered broader perceptions about the existing distances between the prescribed and real dimensions of professional practice. As Bondía (2002) points out, the subject who is informed and knows is not the same as the subject exposed to experiences, who lets himself be affected by what happens to him. If experience is what happens to someone, it is in the space of events, encounters, and affectations that the senses are erected.

Years later, now in the beginning of my college education, I went to do an internship in a public school. When I arrived, I was amazed, because I would have the opportunity to put into practice all the theories I was learning in college. There I started to realize that the theories were very different from practice and that education was a very complex field to work in (P5).

...in the sixth period, I passed the selection process to be an intern...it was there that I learned that the university did not prepare me for the school routine. No one at the university discussed how the moment of welcoming very young children at the daycare center would be and there I was very scared with many children crying and not knowing what to do with the crying

children and I would touch their shoulder and say don't cry. Today I know that the way I was acting was not welcoming...(P10).

The confrontation with the gap between what is learned in theory and the exercise in practice, in addition to triggering discomfort and anguish over the lack of previous resources to solve complex and immediate problems, also brings about an awareness on the part of the participants about the need to persist and move forward in the trajectory, as evoked by two participants: "Bringing the two together (theory and practice) was only a desire of the academy. And to change this required a lot of willpower from both the school and the university" (P10); "All this made me take a reality shock. It was not what the university taught and I asked myself: how was I learning one thing, if the reality was different? This caused me a certain uneasiness, but I still went to school to do my internship" (P5).

The experience of this "reality shock" that triggered "a certain uneasiness" points to a movement that the narrative allows us to question and that is part of the exercise of distancing from what was lived and reflecting on it, trying to give it meaning (Cavaco, 2009). The continuity of the studies, despite their gaps and barriers, indicates that the meaning built around the professional choice was solidified over time, encompassing the very limitations of the training area, not limited only to their idealizations.

The confrontation with barriers was not only between theory and practice, but was also present in the participants' daily lives. Social, geographical, and financial conditions continued to impose themselves in the course of the training trajectory, causing the participants to mobilize a set of resources to build solutions to overcome them: "During college I used to leave my son and daughter with my mother and sometimes with another person who helped me to take care of them. A suffering period, today I think and reflect on the reflections of my choices in my life." (P8). The role of the support network proves to be central in the construction of the participants' professional education trajectory, without which it would be very difficult to overcome certain barriers in order to enhance and expand the choices made and the paths to be taken.

There were many challenges, such as transportation, distance, as I had to travel every day for an hour and a half, often on foot to get to the university, lack of technological resources to help on the way, such as notebook, cell phone, internet access, which I only conquered halfway through the course with the savings from the scientific initiation scholarship (P7).

This path (through graduation) was not lonely, quite the contrary, at each stage I always had dear people supporting me, from my family who were always by my side, friends from college, like my class friend, who became my friend-sister and her mother, with whom I lived for five years, adopting us as a family from the heart... (P9).

In this way, the formation that was built along the academic training is not only scientific and technical, it is above all relational in the most extensive sense of the term. In other words, the set of relationships that were established inside and outside the university walls created a web of connections, links and ties that both strengthened the participants in their trajectories and taught them to

build ways of acting on their lives in the course of their training. The links that each participant created in the course of their trajectories with their colleagues reveals, through their narratives, the complexity of the connections that sometimes sustain, sometimes drive, sometimes stabilize the course of their trajectories, constituting a fabric on which they were able to evolve in their professional constructions. According to [Josso \(2006, p. 379\)](#), “*we are in life because we exist through a multiplicity of simple or complex ties.*” It is understood that this learning of social nature, which was woven silently to the detriment of the visibility given to the theoretical contents learned, actively participated in the construction of the professional actions of the participants, to the extent that it allowed them to advance in their trajectories.

### 3.3 Path shapers: when the path gains firmer and clearer contours

The completion of the undergraduate degree and entry into the job market mark another major turning point in the trajectory of the participants. From this moment on, the knowledge acquired and the knowledge built is put into practice through a socially recognized professional identity. However, from the point of view of experiential training, social recognition is only a gateway that, as it is opened and crossed, leads individuals to new formative experiences that will gradually shape their trajectories.

When I was selected to formally work in a school, all my previous experience brought a new vision about my students, the classroom gained a new esthetic; I believe that the individuals I met in the previous stage touched me deeply, starting a slow process of professional becoming (P4).

The professional becoming, evoked by P4, points to the process of putting into dialogue the arsenal of acquired learning, which serves as a basis and reference, with the new encounters that take place from the effective entry into the profession. It is understood, therefore, that by highlighting such experiences in their narratives, the participants pointed to the experience of a passage: from an academic universe to another, the professional one, which triggered in them a process of enlargement of their personal and professional identities. This passage, as a milestone in their trajectories, can be understood as a formative experience, to the extent that it set in motion a tension between certain crystallized references and new constructions of the self ([Josso, 2008](#)).

...I confess that the first year as a teacher, although it was in the same curriculum that I graduated, working in the same subjects that I had studied, was difficult, difficult in the sense of detaching myself from the student to the teacher, in looking at those people who were my teachers, as my co-workers (P9).

The P9's narrative points to a learning process of appropriation and legitimization of her role and of her place of speech and action that takes place as of her entry into the labor market. This learning to be incorporated, in the case in question, it was necessary to put into practice certain strategies—“I looked for reference in the attitude of teachers who were indispensable to me in my training” (P9)—which

were expanded and diversified based on the reflective exercise of self-observation and “openness to the new” (P9).

Over time, trying out different methodologies, analyzing each one, the positive and negative points, dialoguing with students, reflecting on my pedagogical posture, I felt more confident and found myself in this training scenario, thus establishing the unique and singular teaching identity... (P9).

The perception of P9 is in line with the experience of P8, who highlighted the dimension of self-training ([Pineau and Legrand, 2014](#)) in the daily work processes, in the tensions and reflections that emerge from meetings with students and peers, supported by the search to progress in the trajectory and give it firmer and clearer outlines.

...I understand that the process I am going through of perceiving the school routine did not start at a certain time or on a certain day, but with a search for knowledge, to understand how this stage of basic education happens, I have been self-training (P8).

Self-training dialogues with the construction, by the participants, of pedagogical and educational strategies mobilized in the face of challenges imposed by professional practice. The field of work, with its countless variables, became a provoking element of an articulation of the meanings of being, being, and acting in the world, as shown in the narrative of P1:

When I arrived at the school... there were notices graffitied on the inside walls of the school's sports court, according to which, if I did not release the sports court, I would die, I would be “executed.” At that moment, the ground opened up and I had to fall into this hole and ask myself? What will I do as a principal, what is my role in the life of each one? (P1)

Faced with such an extreme situation, P1 valued the network of support inside and outside the school walls as a vehicle for the production of co-constructed solutions: “And it was in this delicate situation, supported by teachers and the Project of the Secretary of Sports (Project 2o Tempo), that we opened the school to listen to these marginalized young people in need of many necessities” (P1). The sharing was not limited to the perimeters of such a network, but extended toward the young people and as a result: “we built a partnership with them, bringing them into the school, through the projects that our educational community believed in” (P1).

The situation narrated by P1 brought into relief the formative dimension inscribed in the heterobiographical processes ([Delory-Momberger, 2005](#)). That is, the effects produced in each individual of listening and welcoming the story of the other, who occupies a speaking position and a unique and singular role, are generators of knowledge and expertise that gain materiality through the encounter. It is understood, therefore, that the singular plural dimension inscribed in each encounter is an element that shapes professional practices.

The questions about how to do, how to respond to demands, how to become capable of being part of a certain collective were also addressed in the narrative of P5. Her first professional experience was marked by doubts, fears—“...I got scared when in the first planning they started to talk about constructivism, something that until then

*I only knew about in theory and that I really did not think would work in practice*” (P5)—that like P1, found answers in the institutional support network: “*whenever any doubt arose, I was there wanting to know how it was done right and ‘disturbing’ my more experienced colleagues. They always had a lot of patience and availability with my anguish in relation to the children*” (P5).

The presence of the collective in both narratives highlights how much it is integrated to the processes of social nature that influenced the learning of the participants, demonstrating that it comes to be a force both propulsive and modeling of professional action. In allusion to work of Josso (2006) and the metaphor of sailor’s knots, the author says: “*As the knots in our existence become conscious, we create an existential knowledge and a physical space that can help us do what is necessary to untie the knots in our lives and create other knots to do so*” (p. 379).

These ties are not restricted to colleagues, they extend to children, which places them in a position of agents of the professionals’ training and not only as a target audience of their actions. Starting from the centrality of children as competent, subjects of speech and rights, Leal da Costa and Sarmiento (2018) understand that it is through the interaction of teachers with them and their families that experiential learning is built. Although not technical, these learnings are fundamental in the exercise of the profession, because “*it is in contact with real situations, with non-standardized children, with the diversity of populations, that teachers redefine the way they see the world, which forces them to rationalize emotionally about teacher action*” (Leal da Costa and Sarmiento, 2018, p. 83).

In my very first class, I had the opportunity to work with two children with special needs, one of them had mild autism [...] another boy had no movements and for me it was difficult to know if he understood what I was talking about [...] Faced with these challenges I often questioned myself about what it was to be a teacher, what I had to know, if I was really prepared, and I found that I was not, because we never prepare for the new, for the unknown. However, my preparation happened every day in the encounter with the children (P5).

The experiential training that takes place in the encounter with the children, as agents of this process, has also become a source of affirmation and expansion of meaning around professional action, as reported by P3:

My work space is a very special space for me, because I deal with adolescents in a state of vulnerability, who need public policies to succeed in life [...] when I look at the young people I accompany at work, I remember a lot of me, in my adolescence, a young resident of the periphery, who very much needed assistance not to give up on his studies.

Through P3’s account, we can understand how the spheres of personal and professional life have a close relationship and, like a network, each point that makes it up participates in the weaving of a whole that is expressed in the being and in the actions of professionals in their daily work. Besides reinforcing meanings and amalgamating the personal and professional spheres, this weaving

serves as a catwalk for the creation of new connections and new projects.

I had been in the classroom for over ten years and over time, I felt the need to expand my horizons, I believed in my educational practice and knew that it contributed a lot to the development of children, but besides wanting to share my experiences, I also wanted to experience new practices. For this reason, in 2017, I accepted an invitation to be pedagogical coordinator in a Child Education Center... (P5).

As life does not stop, in the second year of my professional career, I received an invitation by the leadership of my community to assume the pedagogical coordination of the school, so I accepted and returned to my community with the desire to contribute to the educational process, including living together with my first teachers (P9).

It can be understood that the many remarkable events experienced by the participants, from the triggering moments to the modulating ones, carry with them the formative power in act, because they mobilize social, cultural, ethical, and political processes that trigger learning about how to be, be and act in life and in the profession. The construction of the participants’ professional action occurred, therefore, in a continuous way, but not linear and constant, experiencing moments of acceleration, deceleration, rupture, turning points, and transformation.

The BW served as a research-action-training device, connecting these spheres by means of the memory that was requested in the course of the sessions—“*the first guiding question of this third stage of the workshop made me remember my last two professional experiences*” (P4)—and also through the encounter promoted between the professional who gives shape to his history, revisiting it with the look of the present moment—“*(auto)biographical writing is capable of providing a self-evaluation, behavioral change, not to mention the exercise of looking at oneself, listening to oneself, becoming and perceiving oneself as a subject of knowledge*” (P1). This writing of the self that is renewed the moment it takes shape is a source of discoveries, rediscoveries, and learning: “*the Biographical Atelier makes me discover that I am an epistemological subject, able to confront theory and practice, besides allowing me a long identity journey, which enables me, through reflexivity and pedagogical maturity, to unveil my identity*” (P1).

One of the powers of the device is in allowing, through narration, that the participants put in course the dimension of narrative identity (Ricoeur, 1990), through which a unity of self is built, integrating the dimensions of their lives. However, this unity is not static in time, it evolves and does not cease to be made and undone, as does the meaning given to the events lived. To set in motion this formative dimension that takes place through narrative exercise is to offer the adult in training the opportunity to work on the construction of meaning in his life (Alves, 2021).

In this sense, it is interesting the account of P10, who in his narrative evoked that when he took on a coordination role he became “*aware that just as children are unique, the path of each teacher is also unique and singular. And facing the challenge of training them, P10*

stressed that “*each teacher is a universe in itself, because each teacher had his own formative process throughout his history to become a teacher.*” The biographical narrative practice triggers, therefore, ways of knowing and understanding that arise from the expression in words of experiences that generate learning that are integrated to the trajectory of individuals.

From the singularity evoked by P10 comes the richness of the experiential formative process that biographical narrative allows us to capture. But it is not restricted to this level, for by understanding that this singular acts and reacts with the social, co-constructs with the forces that engender it on a plane of mutual influence, the plural of formation is accessed not by its generalization, but by the construction of points of intersection between individuals, capturing what unites them.

Thus, the experiential, biographical, and narrative perspective reaffirms its pertinence as a theoretical-epistemological approach capable of bringing to the center of the formative process the subject that learns by means of what is lived, highlighting the protagonist and active dimension of his being in society.

## 4 Conclusion

In a view of the results obtained, we can conclude that the theoretical and methodological bases that sustain the BW allowed the development of a research-action-training device that mobilizes the life story of each participant as a starting point to express, through words, the lived experiences, giving them form and meaning and making visible the knowledge and experiential learning that were woven during their trajectories.

By combining narration, reflection, sharing, and co-construction of knowledge, BW triggered a formative process that is embodied through the collaborative exercise between participants of exchanging knowledge and experiences between them. The narration, as a means and support of these relationships of sharing and collaboration, led the participants to better understand the dynamics of interpersonal and group relationships, as well as the importance of building relationships of mutual learning between the different subjects present in their trajectories. The combination of the records produced, oral and written, also allows us to uncover experiential learning contained in their trajectories. This produced a dialogue between research, action and training through processes of learning and development, transforming the subjects and the contexts.

From a hermeneutic point of view, the narrative of the self-brought to language processes that we understand to have contributed to the construction of points of view about the world of life through which the subject inscribed himself and became involved, acted and understood, being able to consider himself as an agent and author of his becoming. Therefore, we argue that the mobilization of these types of devices in the course of the formative process of professionals, aiming at experiential learning and professional development, serve as triggers to value the person and the professional, and that this happens in close relationship.

Understanding that teacher training is an important agent to ensure the quality of education, the development of innovative devices, such as BW, is fundamental, as it allows participants to understand how their life stories create bonds and connections with other subjects and with the content of their practices. This work is

made possible by alternating the times of expressing one's own narrative and receiving the narratives of others. During the training course, these collective dynamic included times of synthesis, which allowed us to examine the accompanying devices, the formalization of procedures, and the thematization of the elements we understand as transversal to the individual stories.

We conclude by pointing to the fact that the study did not encounter difficulties in being carried out, given that it is an unfolding of the formative process triggered by AB. In view of the learning produced, the incorporation of research-action-training devices in the development of professionals in different scenarios requires mobilizing collaborative work, cooperation and learning incorporated to the work contexts in order to give the professional projects meanings of life.

## Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding authors.

## Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Universidade Estadual Vale do Acaraú. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

## Author contributions

CL and CA: responsible for Biographical workshop, writing, and proofreading. HB: responsible for writing and reviewing the text. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.



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