

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i5.1716>

Voices that Weave Knowledge: A Biographical-Narrative and Hermeneutical-Critical Approach to Understanding the Experiential Knowledge of Rural Educators in the Department of Boyacá, Colombia

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Abstract

This article presents oral narrative as a central methodological strategy in the qualitative and critical-hermeneutic approach, highlighting its capacity to interpret and give meaning to human experiences in specific social and cultural contexts. Based on the experiences of four rural primary school educators of retirement age, a qualitative design was used that integrated the subjective voice of the participants, allowing for the joint construction of situated knowledge. The narrative not only facilitated the reconstruction of personal trajectories but also enabled a reflective dialogue between researchers and participants in an interpretive and circular process. The active role of the researcher and the richness of the context allowed for a deeper understanding of the explicit and implicit meanings of the life stories, shaping the research as a space for shared understanding and symbolic transformation.

Keywords: Oral Narrative, Experiential Knowledge, Critical Hermeneutics, Life Stories, Rural Educators.

Introduction

This article is derived from the doctoral thesis entitled *Rural Educators of Retirement Age in Boyacá: the Construction of Knowledge of Experience through their Narratives*, attached to the Doctorate in Education Sciences of the Pedagogical and Technological University of Colombia, its main purpose is to expose key methodological aspects and the results obtained around the knowledge constructed by rural educators of basic primary school close to their retirement, in the department of Boyacá, Colombia.

The research delves into the complex network of meanings that make up experiential knowledge, understood as subjective and collective constructions that emerge throughout the professional teaching practice. To this end, a qualitative methodological design was developed that integrated two complementary approaches: narrative analysis and the hermeneutical-critical approach. This methodological articulation, proposed as a contribution to the research field, made it possible to transcend the description of experiences and deepen the interpretations that educators give to their life and professional trajectories.

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From a biographical-narrative perspective, the research assumed the life story not only as a source of data, but as a practice of recognition and resignification of the subject. The voices of four rural educators were the central axis of the study, and their narratives offered a space to express, reflect and resignify their experiences, turning them into a source of pedagogical knowledge deeply rooted in the territory, the community and personal history.

The methodological approach made it possible to evidence the subjective transformation that educators have built throughout their pedagogical practice, by recognizing that knowledge does not arise only from academic training, but also from the daily experiences that impact and configure the teaching identity. In this sense, the study distanced itself from positivist approaches, by giving value to the emotions, gestures, silences and meanings that are part of the educational experience lived.

Thus, this research was consolidated as a space of confluence between the personal, the emotional, the reflective and the interpretive, highlighting how the knowledge of experience becomes a pedagogical and cultural legacy. Through the narratives, connections were woven between theory and practice, reaffirming the role of the rural educator as a social actor and transformative agent in the society where he or she works.

Methodological Paradigm: Oral Narrative and the Hermeneutical-Critical Approach in Social Research

Oral narrative, as a privileged means for subjects to relate what constitutes them as human beings, their emotions, feelings, experiences and experiences, stands as a fundamental tool in qualitative social research (Bruner, 1991; Goodson, 2003). Through this resource, subjects not only transmit their experiences, but also interpret, organize and give them meaning, making them accessible to those who are part of their social and cultural environment. Oral narrative, in this sense, transcends the mere transmission of information, becoming a vital setting for personal history to be integrated into the culture and life of communities (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995).

From qualitative social research, narrative is established as a resource that favors reflection and traces the path towards understanding not only the events that have influenced the life trajectory of individuals, but also the historical and cultural processes that shape societies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This approach recognizes the value of subjectivity, situated experience, and context as central elements in the construction of knowledge.

In line with this approach, the research adopted a qualitative design, focused on the observation of reality through the subjective perspectives of the four participating educators. Through description, comprehension, and explanation, this type of study made it possible to account for the social constructions that subjects make based on their own experiences, mediated by their voices and their particular contexts (Flick, 2015).

Qualitative research is also characterized by its inductive nature, in which the subjects provide a holistic vision of the phenomenon studied. In this process, the review of documents, the emerging findings of the fieldwork and the interpretive reflection of the researcher are intertwined (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015). The researcher does not limit himself to applying a pre-established theoretical framework, but simultaneously examines the facts and previous studies in order to construct a theory consistent with the observations of the field. In addition, this approach favors the constant generation of questions, before, during and after data collection, moving in a circular, flexible and deeply interpretative process

Recognizing the dynamic and changing nature of the human condition, qualitative research allowed the intersection of multiple realities, interpretations, and experiences, enabling an in-depth analysis of social phenomena in various scenarios (Creswell, 2013). This approach recognizes that knowledge is constructed in a situated way, in constant interaction between subjects and their context.

In this sense, the researchers did not limit themselves to acting as facilitators of the process, but were actively involved in the construction of knowledge, participating in the interpretation and analysis of the data. This active role responds to the conception of qualitative research as a participatory and reflective process, where the subjectivity of the researcher is recognized as part of the analytical process (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The approach adopted made it possible to understand the perceptions, emotions, experiences, and meanings that rural educators gave to their experiences, leading to a comprehensive reading of the interactions between individuals, groups, and collectivities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). From a double perspective, both internal and external, not only the explicit elements of the discourses were analyzed, but also the implicit and underlying meanings that emerged throughout the interviews and observations.

In short, the qualitative approach facilitated the analysis of phenomena from a comprehensive and processual perspective, which transcends simple description. In addition, it fostered a communicational and dialogic process, in which the participants were not mere informants, but co-builders of meanings. Research thus became a space for exchange and deep understanding, where knowledge emerged as a product of a shared experience (Patton, 2015).

Research Focus: Critical Hermeneutics as an Interpretative Framework

From a qualitative paradigm, the methodology of this research was based on a hermeneutical-critical approach. This approach, based on oral narratives, made it possible to analyze and understand the realities of rural educators of retirement age, promoting constant reflection on the construction of meaning through the story (Gadamer, 2006; Ricoeur, 1996). In the social sciences, critical hermeneutics is adopted as a way to interpret and reconstruct subjective realities, especially in research focused on life histories (Flick, 2015).

Recognizing the importance of the contexts where the subjects develop, the research considered the geographical, social and cultural conditions of the participants as key factors in the formation of their identity and pedagogical knowledge. Based on the premise that individuals are reflective agents and not passive objects of study, the hermeneutical approach focused on the recognition of the other from their lived experience, incorporating the temporal and historical dimension in interpretation (Taylor, 2003).

By integrating critical hermeneutics, the aim was to transcend the mere description of experiences and favor reflective and interpretative processes, placing teaching voices in dialogue with their own historical context. This approach not only made it possible to interpret the rural educational reality, but also fostered the subjective transformation of the participant through reflection on himself, in a process of resignification of his or her history (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005).

Interpretation, in this framework, was not an end in itself, but a means to question the narrative and cultural structures that shape the teaching experience. The critical analysis of narratives made it possible to open spaces for new understandings, making visible those dimensions of

experience that have traditionally been marginalized or silenced (Freire, 1970; Ricoeur, 1996).

This approach fostered a liberating dialogue, in Freirean terms, where educators were able to express their ways of feeling, acting and understanding life from its situated reality. Critical hermeneutics, then, became an instrument of emancipation, by vindicating the value of what has been experienced and allowing educators to reconstruct their trajectory from consciousness, dignity and hope (Freire, 1993).

Finally, this approach offered a solid methodological platform to recover those personal and work experiences that had remained on the margins of memory, allowing their resignification. Narrating one's own story not only made it possible to recover one's voice, but also to reconstruct a sense of humanity and social belonging at the end of a significant professional stage.

Type of Research: The Biographical-Narrative Approach as a Space for the Teaching Voice

The research adopted a biographical-narrative approach with the fundamental purpose of creating a space where the voice of those educators who have dedicated long years to the exercise of their profession, building knowledge and knowledge from their own experience, would be valued as a constitutive element of the pedagogy and culture of a society. It also sought to make visible those conditions that, often ignored, have had an impact on the construction of a society that has as active subjects not only teachers, but an entire educational community.

The biographical-narrative approach was presented, in this study, as a way to represent, complicate and understand the processes of creation and assignment of meaning to the pedagogical thinking of educators. Through the possibility of symbolizing the daily life and universality of their work, their relationships with the educational community, their students, their ways of approaching pedagogy and their own academic and research reality, it was intended to achieve a systematic understanding of their becoming subjects of an educational culture, immersed in a particular situation (experiential knowledge) and in a specific time (the historical process to the present day).

The documentary review revealed that the biographical-narrative approach has its own identity, based on two fundamental pillars: its contribution to the way knowledge is constructed and the transversality it offers for "communication" between various areas of knowledge, with an important support in narrative.

In this sense, biographical research makes it possible to construct a new field of study, fosters interest in basic research on biography as a guide for reflection on practice and experience, introduces changes in teacher training based on the generation of diaries of the training experience, considers that the personal is deeply linked to the political (in terms of representation and vindication of democracy), and it values the study of narratives as forms of representation of reality as opposed to visions based on mathematical or propositional models.

Today, research based on life stories has become an essential resource for exploring the experiences of individuals from a biographical and autobiographical perspective. This approach, widely adopted in the social sciences, gives voice to those who have been protagonists of various processes, expanding the traditional limits of educational and social research. Through various sources such as life stories, testimonies, photographs, diaries and interviews, it is possible to reconstruct the meaning of the events from the perspective of those who lived through them, offering a broader and contextualized approach to the social and educational reality.

As a way of understanding the subject from his subjectivity based on the visibility of his voice, biographical-narrative research presents two important traditional currents: one, of French influence, focuses on the narration of stories that arises from the formation of the subject and acts as a form of expression of his human condition; the other, of English origin, has a central component that understands and explains the conditions of social phenomena. It could be said that the former attends to the singularities of the subjects, while the latter contributes from the collective.

In essence, biographical-narrative research is presented as an opportunity to "vindicate the voice" of educators, both novices and experts, about their concerns and their professional lives, while at the same time representing a break with the usual ways of investigating and understanding the social.

The study of the trajectory of educators and the use of the narration of their experiences has gained great relevance in educational research, allowing a detailed understanding of the teaching and learning processes, as well as the challenges and achievements that the subjects have faced throughout their careers. In addition, this approach offers an opportunity to reflect on their professional and personal lives, interpret their own development, identify aspects that require transformation and strengthen their identity as educators, which contributes both to their individual growth and to the improvement of their work in the classroom.

It is therefore concluded that the biographical-narrative method is characterized by its experiential basis, the consideration of time, the knowledge of the subjects and reflection. The use of narrative in education is due to the fact that human beings are storytelling organisms that, individually and socially, live told lives. In this sense, Connelly and Clandinin (1995) indicate that history, by allowing reflection on the events experienced, provides spaces to relive what happened through a look at the past. This exercise becomes an experience when it is intentionally recounted. In the understanding that one of the central purposes of biographical-narrative research lies in the understanding and telling of the life story of a person, favoring the reflection that has become experience through this process, the text became the most important product, since it is from the lines that compose it that a life is retold and, therefore, it is revived. In other words, the research sought that the narratives would allow educators to understand the historicity of their learning, the lessons of their experience in order to reconstruct an image of themselves as a historical subject, situated in their time and space, acting and suffering in the course of their history

Participants: Rural Educators of Boyacá, Voices of Experience

The population participating in this research was made up of four rural educators – three women and one man – of primary school, of retirement age, but still active in the work in the department of Boyacá, Colombia. These teachers, who carry out their work in educational institutions facing challenges of the context, limited access, difficulties in obtaining resources, multi-graded groups and the link with the community, have built throughout their personal and professional careers fundamental knowledge to understand the knowledge of experience that has guided their human and work performance. These have allowed them to face the challenges of the rural context, adapt pedagogical strategies to the needs of their students and strengthen their identity as people and educators. Built in social interaction and throughout a life trajectory, knowledge constitutes a valuable legacy for educational processes and the training of future generations of educators. Given the qualitative nature of the methodological design, the selection of participants was not determined in quantitative terms, but was characterized by the depth and richness of the

experiences they can contribute to the study.

Population and Sample: The Depth of Life Stories

The research, being qualitative and based on life stories, required a detailed analysis of each participant. The choice of four educators allowed for an in-depth exploration of their experiences, facilitating the interpretation of their trajectories and the construction of meanings around rural teaching. This number of participants made it possible to take a detailed approach to each story, ensuring that the individual experiences were understood in their complexity and depth.

The four participants were strategically selected to represent diverse experiences within the field of rural education, spanning different generations, trajectories and geographical contexts. This allowed us to capture a broader vision of teaching in these communities. Their stories reflected the transformation of the teaching role in different times and contexts, which contributed to a greater understanding of the educational dynamics in rural areas and the factors that have influenced their professional development. In addition, each educator has a diverse life trajectory, which made it possible to contrast and compare realities within the educational exercise in rural areas. Their stories brought diversity in key aspects such as gender, professional trajectories, years of experience, roles played within the education system and sociocultural conditions, marked by family, economic and educational factors that have influenced their personal and professional development and their vision of teaching.

Since the research required a detailed exercise with each life history, the number of participants was delimited in a way that guaranteed a rigorous analysis without compromising the quality of the interpretation. It was considered that the choice of four educators made possible a balance between the depth of the study and methodological feasibility, ensuring that each testimony was approached with the necessary rigor to extract significant knowledge.

The number of participants made it possible to identify points of convergence and divergence in their histories, facilitating the construction of analytical categories that would account for the learning acquired, the challenges faced and the transformations in rural education over time. Through the analysis of their stories, it was possible to understand both the similarities and the differences in their trajectories, which enriched the understanding of the educational phenomenon in the rural context and allowed for broader reflections on its impact and evolution.

The selection of the sample was carried out through intentional sampling or by criteria, ensuring that the participants met specific characteristics that allowed for an in-depth exploration of the construction of experiential knowledge.

Inclusion criteria:

- Active educators of retirement age (55 to 70 years) who worked in rural primary education institutions in Boyacá.
- Minimum 20 years of experience in teaching in the rural context.
- Geographical diversity within the department of Boyacá, considering different municipalities and socioeconomic conditions.
- Willingness to participate in oral interviews, relate their experiences and reflect on their life experience.

- Ability to reconstruct their professional career through the biographical narrative

The life stories collected in this research arose from the analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with each of the participating educators. This methodological process allowed us to reconstruct their personal and professional trajectories, giving voice to their experiences, challenges and achievements within the exercise of rural teaching. The recognition of educators immersed in research as key actors in the construction of knowledge was a central axis in this study, their stories not only reflected individual experiences, but also allowed us to understand the social, historical and educational context in which they have developed their work. Through their experiences, the dynamics of rural education, the transformations in the role of the teacher over time and the difficulties they have faced in their professional practice were made visible.

Each of these educators has built their professional identity from various experiences that have marked their lives and those of their students. Their testimonies, beyond being individual stories, make up a collective memory about the teaching vocation, the commitment to education and the impact of their work on the communities where they have worked.

Instruments: Unraveling the Teaching Experience Through Dialogue and Observation

By proposing the interview as a constituent element of the research methodology, the central purpose was to assess and optimize the contributions that educators, from their subjectivities, propose as important sources of reflection, understanding and analysis. The interview, in this sense, is assumed as a process of dialogue where the totality of the being emerges, a natural mode of interaction that develops in the encounter. This act does not contemplate questions but general topics, in which the researcher wishes to inquire in relation to the purpose of the study in order to delve in detail into some elements of the story.

The semi-structured interview, as a technique for collecting information typical of qualitative research, provided structure and flexibility to the research. Unlike structured interviews, which follow a rigid script, and open interviews, which lack a predefined scheme, this interview, by combining previously established questions, allowed the possibility of adapting them according to the development of the conversation. This favored delving into relevant emerging aspects, which arose spontaneously, giving greater richness and depth to the data obtained.

Among its main characteristics, its ability to generate detailed and contextualized information, the dynamic interaction between researchers and the participating educators, the clarity and reformulation that guaranteed a better understanding and the construction of significant stories that contributed to the analysis of the phenomena studied were highlighted. For this type of interview to be effective, it was essential to establish adequate conditions during its application, generating an environment of trust that motivated educators to share their experiences spontaneously and sincerely. Active listening skills and follow-up questioning were also key. In addition, the interview was planned considering the time available and the ethical aspects related to confidentiality and informed consent.

In summary, the relevance of the semi-structured interview within the research lay in its ability to capture the complexity of teaching trajectories in the rural context. Since this research was based on life stories, this instrument allowed access to the personal stories of the educators, understanding not only the facts of their professional careers, but also the interpretations and meanings they constructed over time. It also facilitated the identification of common patterns and differences among the participants, which enriched the analysis and interpretation of the knowledge of experience.

Finally, the semi-structured interview represented an essential methodological resource for this research, allowing an in-depth and flexible exploration of the experiences of rural educators of retirement age. Its combination of structure and openness made it possible to collect meaningful information, favoring the understanding of the impact of teaching on the lives of the participants and on the communities where they have worked. In this way, it became a key tool for the construction of knowledge around the knowledge of experience in rural education.

As an initial part, a guide was designed to present the research intentionality, where each participating educator had the opportunity to analyze the main thematic aspects to be addressed within the interviews: childhood, access to the educational level, socio-economic context, family, experiences in access and performance in the labor field, challenges and opportunities, personal and professional relationship with the community and the rural context, and approach to retirement.

The semi-structured interview guide comprised 101 questions designed in four thematic blocks, but in the course of the interviews some questions were addressed by them within other concerns, allowing a smaller number of them. Four interviews were conducted with each educator independently and the development time of each one ranged in intervals of 30 to 40 minutes. It was structured in four thematic blocks, each focused on a key aspect of the personal and professional trajectory of educators. The formulation of the questions in the interview guide was carried out under criteria of clarity, relevance and depth, ensuring that they were open and oriented to the detailed narration of their experiences. The flexibility of the interview allowed the participants to have the freedom to expand their answers, incorporating aspects that they considered relevant and that enriched the analysis of the knowledge of experience.

- **Childhood, Access to Educational Level, Socio-economic Context:** This section aimed to explore key aspects of the participants' lives, including their origins, significant experiences, family influences on their professional careers and the environments in which they grew up. Historical and social events that impacted their childhood were also addressed, as well as the economic and educational conditions that marked their access and permanence in the school system. In addition, their habits, interests and customs were inquired about, with the purpose of comprehensively understanding their personal and professional development.
- **Family, Experiences in Access and Performance in the Labor Field, Challenges and Opportunities:** This section focused on key aspects of the personal and professional trajectory of the participants, exploring the composition of their family of origin and the one they have subsequently formed, as well as the impact of significant family figures. Topics such as the distribution of roles between men and women in the work and family sphere, the experience of facing illnesses and the loss of loved ones, and the decision to dedicate themselves to teaching were addressed. Likewise, their professional training process was analyzed, from normal school education to university, and the work path that led them to their current place of work. Positive and challenging experiences in their teaching practice were also inquired about, including frustrations, working conditions, social perception of the teacher, predominant values, academic preferences, and aspects related to hiring, promotions, and salaries.
- **Personal and Professional Relationship with the Community and the Rural Context:** In this space, dialogue was fostered about the relationship of teachers with the communities in which they have worked, including interaction with students, families, colleagues and managers, as well as with other sectors such as the church, commerce and government. The perception that other people have about their work was explored, from the

perspective of the educator himself, and fundamental values such as responsibility, commitment and the meaning of education were reflected. In addition, the experience of working in rural contexts was addressed, considering the characteristics of the communities, the conditions of access and the reasons that led them to work in these environments. The impact of teaching in multigrade and unitary classrooms was also analyzed, along with significant situations within the classroom or in their daily work that have marked their professional and personal career.

- **Approach to Retirement – Reflections:** In the final stage, participants were invited to reflect on the political, social and economic changes that have influenced their profession from its inception to the present. The transformations in family dynamics and student profiles over time were explored, as well as the evolution of the teacher's social image and the growing demands on the school. In addition, the modifications in the educational system throughout its years of service were analyzed, highlighting both the advances and the difficulties in pedagogical models, curriculum, evaluation and educational policies, with special emphasis on the relationship between education and rurality. School management, the role of directors and coordinators, and the impact of the education system on their professional and personal development were also addressed. Finally, the participants shared their perspectives on the challenges still pending in education, the unfinished tasks and their contributions to the new generations of teachers, offering advice, recommendations and reflections on the legacy they leave to the profession.

Within the research process, the collection of information was not limited only to the verbal responses of the participants. The analysis of the semi-structured interviews, within the framework of the biographical-narrative methodology, required a comprehensive approach that would capture not only the discourses expressed, but also the non-verbal manifestations that accompany them. To this end, an observation guide was designed for the analysis of non-verbal expressions, structured in four main dimensions: (1) emotional expressions, (2) body and gestural language, (3) silences and pauses, and (4) context and environment. Each of these dimensions was presented with a series of indicators that would allow the participants' reactions to be recorded and analyzed, thus providing a more complete view of their testimonies.

This guide was structured in five dimensions that covered different aspects of non-verbal language:

- **Emotional expressions:** It focused on identifying manifestations such as crying, smiling, changes in breathing and modifications in the tone of voice, in order to interpret the emotions that arose during the narration.
- **Body language and gestures:** It recorded postures, hand movements, body inclination and eye contact, which could show attitudes such as security, discomfort or nervousness.
- **Silences and pauses:** It considered the moments in which the interviewees stopped their story, differentiating between brief pauses and prolonged silences that could denote reflection, doubt or emotional containment.
- **Context and environment:** Evaluated the conditions in which each interview took place, including the place, the time elapsed, the interruptions and the influence of the environment on the conversation.

Each of these dimensions had specific indicators that facilitated the detailed recording of observations during the interviews. The information collected through this instrument

complemented the narrative and hermeneutical-critical analysis, allowing a more complete and in-depth interpretation of the educators' experiences.

The importance of this guide lay in the fact that, in qualitative research, emotions and meanings emerge not only from what is said, but also from how it is said, as indicated by the thematic analysis of Riessman (2005). By including this analysis in the interpretation of the life stories, the understanding of the knowledge of experience built by rural educators was broadened, allowing an account of their trajectory from a more holistic and enriching perspective.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and transcribed verbatim. The analysis of the data was carried out through an interpretative approach, seeking to understand the meanings constructed by the teachers in their narratives. An open coding of the transcripts was carried out, identifying recurring themes and patterns in the stories.

Subsequently, a more in-depth thematic analysis was carried out, grouping the codes into conceptual categories that would allow understanding the key dimensions of the rural teaching experience. NVivo software was used to facilitate the organization and analysis of qualitative data. The interpretations were contrasted with the existing literature and validated through data triangulation and discussion with other researchers.

Data Analysis Strategies

The interpretation of the data in this research was based on the complementarity of two approaches: hermeneutic analysis and narrative analysis. This methodological combination made it possible, on the one hand, to explore the individual structure and internal coherence of each story, and on the other, to identify shared patterns and meanings in the experiences of rural teachers close to retirement. In this way, the singularity of each life story was sought to be respected while identifying transversal analytical categories and tacit knowledge relevant and emerging for the context of rural teaching.

The analysis was developed on two interrelated levels:

- **Narrative Analysis:** It was used as an initial strategy to understand the structure and meaning of each testimony. Key milestones in the personal and professional trajectories of the participants were identified, as well as the emotions, challenges and reflections that marked their development in the educational field. This approach sought to maintain fidelity to the voice of teachers, highlighting the way they built their identity and gave meaning to their teaching experience in the rural context. In this phase, attention was paid to the discursive elements used by the participants, the way in which they structured their memories and learning, and the meanings attributed to their experiences.
- **Hermeneutical Analysis:** It was applied to interpret the reports in dialogue with the objectives of the research and the theoretical framework. Connections were made between teaching experiences and the historical, social, and educational dynamics that influenced their professional development. This process made it possible to transcend the mere description of the narrated events, seeking to understand the underlying meanings and their relationship with the sociocultural context.

This methodological approach ensured that the analysis not only organized the information into categories, but also accounted for the construction of meaning and the evolution of tacit

knowledge in teachers. The combination of both approaches made it possible to comprehensively read the narratives, highlighting both the events experienced and their significance in the construction of their knowledge and their impact on rural communities.

The analysis process was developed from the following steps:

1. **Transcription and Familiarization:** A detailed transcription of the interviews was made, paying attention to pauses, silences and emotional expressions that provided meaning. Subsequently, a repeated and meticulous reading of the stories was carried out, allowing an immersion in the narrated experiences and the identification of recurring elements.
2. **Initial Coding:** Key fragments were identified in the participants' speeches, grouping words and concepts relevant to the study. An inductive approach was employed, allowing the categories to emerge from the narratives themselves, rather than imposing a predefined structure.
3. **Categorization and Grouping:** The initial codes were organized into units of meaning, aligned with recurring themes such as childhood, access to education, teaching vocation, experiences in rural areas, and personal and professional challenges. Connections were established between these units, generating preliminary categories that facilitated the structuring of the analysis.
4. **Thematic Analysis and Contextualization:** The preliminary categories were compared with the theoretical references of the study, ensuring their coherence and relevance. A thematic analysis was carried out to identify patterns and cross-cutting themes in the reports, and the teaching experiences were contextualized within the framework of the social and educational dynamics of the rural context.
5. **Interpretation and Synthesis:** Based on the thematic and contextual analysis, the final interpretative categories were consolidated. These categories structured the findings of the research and allowed an in-depth interpretation of the teaching experience in rural areas, highlighting the tacit knowledge built by the participants throughout their professional lives.

Approaches to Narrative Analysis:

For the narrative analysis, different dimensions proposed by Riessman (2005) were considered, adapting them to the specific context of the research:

- **Analysis of Thematic Content:** Focused on "what is said", rather than on the way it is said. The aim was to identify common elements among the participants, focusing on the content of their narratives.
- **Analysis of the Narrative Structure:** Attention was paid to the way in which the stories were told, considering both the thematic content and the way in which it was narrated. The feelings, emotions and actions that emerged through the stories were highlighted, seeking a balance between "what was said" and "how it was said".
- **Interactional Analysis:** The dialogic process between the narrator and the researcher was emphasized, recognizing that narration is a process of "co-construction" in which both create joint meanings.
- **Analysis of Narrative Performance:** Narration was considered as a form of performance, in which communication is not limited to verbal narration, but also involves the active participation of the audience through language and gestures.

Methodology for the Analysis of Teaching Experiences through Narrative and Hermeneutical Approaches

The study adopted a methodological strategy that combines narrative analysis and hermeneutical-critical analysis to understand in depth the trajectories and perceptions of educators in rural contexts. The first phase consisted of data collection through semi-structured interviews, in which teachers shared their personal, training, professional and social experiences. These interviews were recorded, transcribed and organized considering their temporal sequence, allowing the identification of key episodes in the construction of their identity and pedagogical knowledge.

The narrative analysis focused on structuring the stories around their past, present and future temporal dimension, facilitating the identification of recurring patterns and significant moments in the teachers' careers. In addition, a thematic coding was carried out that allowed detecting emerging categories related to aspects such as childhood, training, relationship with the community and work experiences. This approach made it possible to understand how teachers reinterpret their stories, giving them new meanings and strengthening their professional identity.

On the other hand, hermeneutical-critical analysis complemented this perspective by interpreting the stories in their social, historical and cultural context. This method facilitated the identification of interpretative categories that emerge from the discourse, such as the construction of knowledge, the challenges in rural education and the transformations in teaching practice over time. The integration of both approaches made it possible not only to describe individual experiences, but also to analyze how they relate to the structural and social conditions that condition them, revealing tensions, changes, and learning in the teachers' careers.

This methodological process was enriched by considering elements such as the temporal perspective, the holistic vision of teacher development, the superimposition of reference planes and the interaction between specific and general approaches. The combination of these methods ensured a comprehensive understanding, which situates personal experiences in a critical interpretative framework, thus allowing for an in-depth reflection on the role of the teacher in rural contexts and its impact on the community.

In short, this methodological strategy made it possible to build situated knowledge, which not only documents the voices of teachers, but also contextualizes them within the social, cultural and educational conditions that shape them, facilitating a more complete understanding of their work and its evolution over time.

Results: Teaching narratives and configuration of knowledge in rurality: a view from experience

This section presents the results constructed from the qualitative analysis of the narratives of four rural teachers close to retirement, whose experience has been forged in contexts marked by structural inequalities, community roots and a deep link between personal life and pedagogical vocation. Far from offering a simple collection of testimonies, the research proposed an interpretative approach that allowed us to understand teaching as a vital and situated experience, crossed by historical, affective and social dimensions.

The production of emerging knowledge was methodologically articulated around narrative and hermeneutical-critical analysis, making it possible to read the teaching trajectories in depth. Based on semi-structured interviews and attention to non-verbal expressive elements, life stories

were reconstructed that not only reflect individual itineraries, but also collective tensions: between duty and desire, between vocation and precariousness, between social transformation and the limits imposed by educational policies.

Although the stories presented unique features, points of confluence were identified that allow us to talk about knowledge built in and from experience. These convergences were organized around four emerging categories: *knowledge of social experience, biographical, situated, and integrative*. Each one responds to a different but interrelated interpretative dimension, from which teachers elaborate meanings about their work, their environment and their place in the educational system.

In the *social dimension*, the reports show how teaching is inscribed in a network of family, community and school relationships that shape professional identity. In the *biographical*, the way in which educators give meaning to their trajectories becomes visible, reconfiguring their vocation over time. The category of *situated* knowledge reveals the ability of teachers to interpret, adapt and resignify their practice according to the territory they inhabit. Finally, *integrative* knowledge emerges as a reflexive synthesis that connects the various levels of the teaching experience, especially on the threshold of retirement. This analysis was developed from an inductive and hermeneutical logic, where theory and experience meet to illuminate new understandings about the work of rural teachers. Thus, the narrative corpus became a space for the production of knowledge, making visible the epistemological dimension of experience and its transformative power.

The knowledge derived from social experience is built on the network of daily relationships that people establish with their environment, characterized by its dynamism and its capacity for constant transformation. In the field of education, the knowledge that teachers develop throughout their careers cannot be separated from the personal, family, school and community contexts in which they are inscribed. This knowledge does not respond only to academic or technical logic, but emerges from interaction with the concrete realities that shape educational practice and demand sensitive, contextualized and pertinent responses.

Educators, when they follow their professional path, accumulate experiences that are sedimented in the memory and updated through the story. Narrating allows us to organize, understand and project the experience, offering a space for reflection where the implicit learning in the moments lived is recognized. Storytelling also fulfills a fundamental social function: by sharing stories, links are generated and the exchange of knowledge is promoted that strengthen both individuals and educational communities. This relational dimension of the story turns the experience into a formative resource for others, allowing the knowledge acquired to expand and acquire new meanings.

In turn, the knowledge that emerges from experience has a critical power, since it makes it possible to analyze the structural conditions that cross the lives of educators and their students. Through reflection on what they have experienced, teachers can identify patterns of exclusion, inequity, or marginalization, and from there, build strategies that aim at social transformation. This critical view not only strengthens pedagogical practice, but also places the teacher as a key actor in the processes of change towards a fairer and more inclusive education.

Finally, this knowledge based on experience is projected towards future horizons, functioning as a guide for present action. By recognizing the value of what they have experienced, educators not only consolidate their professional identity, but also assume an active role in the formation

of critical subjects committed to their reality. Thus, the knowledge of social experience becomes a source of meaning and an indispensable tool for the ethical and transformative exercise of teaching.

The Knowledge of Biographical Experience is built from the subject's ability to review, reinterpret and give meaning to his or her life journey. It is not only a matter of remembering past events, but of attributing to them a value that allows us to understand how they have contributed to forging one's own identity, both personally and professionally. In the field of education, this type of knowledge is particularly valuable, since it offers teachers the possibility of recognizing the impact that their experiences have had on the way they understand teaching, connect with their students and face the challenges of their pedagogical work. From this perspective, the teaching practice is enriched by integrating the biographical dimension as a source of critical reflection and as a basis for more conscious pedagogical decisions.

This knowledge is not limited to the individual sphere, but is intertwined with the social and historical fabric that frames each life experience. Biography, understood as a narrative construction, allows us to discover how sociocultural conditions have influenced the development of personal and professional trajectories. Through the narrative and critical analysis of these experiences, educators can establish relationships between their stories and the contexts of inequality, exclusion or transformation that they have had to live. In this process, hermeneutical interpretation acquires a central role, as it enables a more complex and profound reading of the structures that run through the lives of the subjects, revealing power dynamics, resistances and possibilities for change.

The Knowledge of Biographical Experience, as integral knowledge, articulates emotional, cognitive and social aspects. It does not originate exclusively in institutional spaces of formation, but is nourished by interpersonal bonds, introspection and the meaning given to significant experiences. Sharing life stories thus becomes a pedagogical act that allows for mutual understanding, fostering dialogue between generations and opening paths for personal and collective transformation. In this sense, narrating one's own biography not only strengthens self-knowledge, but also contributes to the construction of a more humane, reflective and committed education with its time.

Situated Experience Knowledge is configured from the constant link between the teacher and the environment in which he or she works. Each teaching situation is profoundly marked by the particular conditions of the context in which it is developed, which makes pedagogical practice a unique and dynamic process. In this framework, the function of the educator goes beyond the simple transmission of content: he becomes a subject who interprets, reconfigures and adapts his pedagogical work taking into account the social, economic, cultural and political realities that affect both his work and the lives of his students.

This type of knowledge also emerges from interaction with other members of the educational community, such as co-workers, families and social actors in the environment. These exchanges generate a network of shared knowledge that enriches teaching practice, turning learning into a dialogic and collaborative experience. Thus, the educational work is nourished by multiple voices, allowing the teacher to construct pedagogical responses that are coherent with the territory they inhabit and with the specific needs of their students, thus strengthening the relevance and relevance of school content.

The situated nature of this knowledge implies a critical awareness of the structural inequalities

that affect the educational field. Recognizing that each context presents unique challenges leads the educator to take an active role in transforming the conditions that hinder the right to equitable and quality education. In this sense, Situated Experience Knowledge not only enables an in-depth understanding of the conditioning of the environment, but also encourages teachers to design pedagogical strategies that promote social justice and the empowerment of their students as political subjects capable of influencing their reality.

The Integrative Experience Knowledge is built as a complex fabric in which multiple dimensions of the teacher's life converge: the personal, the professional, the emotional and the social. It is not a simple accumulation of experiences, but a reflective process in which the educator gives meaning to his story, connecting the different moments of his trajectory in a deeper understanding of his identity. This knowledge allows us to articulate the experiences of the past with the decisions of the present and the projections towards the future, configuring a comprehensive view of their role in school and in society.

Far from being fragmentary, this knowledge arises from the teacher's ability to resignify what they have experienced, identify the most significant learning, and understand how these influence their way of teaching, relating, and transforming their environment. The narration of one's own experience, together with spaces for critical reflection, allows us to recognize the coherence or tensions between personal biography and professional practice, opening the possibility of adopting a more conscious, ethical and committed attitude in the teaching practice.

In addition, the Integrative Experience Knowledge implies a positioning that recognizes the social impact of educational work. As teachers reconstruct their history and link it to the stories of their students, colleagues, and communities, the collective dimension of knowledge is strengthened and a vision of education centered on the human, the meaningful, and the transformative is consolidated. This knowledge, in constant evolution, accompanies the educator in his personal and professional growth, and allows him to leave traces on those he accompanies, forming part of a pedagogical legacy that transcends generations.

Contributions and Implications of Knowledge of Experience in Rural Education

The results of this research offer relevant contributions to both the theoretical and practical levels of rural education, by making visible the value of knowledge from experience as a central axis in the training and professional development of teachers in rural contexts. From a conceptual perspective, this study reinforces the understanding of teaching knowledge as a situated construction, intimately related to identity, personal trajectories and environmental conditions. Narrative and life stories emerge as powerful methodologies to systematize and recognize that pedagogical knowledge that, historically, has been minimized by dominant educational policies and academic discourses.

In terms of training, these findings invite us to rethink pedagogical models in higher education institutions, integrating experiential knowledge as a fundamental component of initial and continuing education programs. The implementation of spaces for reflection on practice, learning based on experience and the use of life stories as training inputs can significantly strengthen the preparation of new educators. At the social level, the role of rural teachers as cultural agents and transformers of their communities is highlighted, which raises the need to strengthen the ties between school and territory for a more relevant and committed education.

Likewise, this research opens new lines for future exploration. It is suggested to delve into how to effectively integrate the knowledge of rural teachers close to retirement into current training

processes, as well as to analyze the impact of this knowledge on student learning. It is also key to investigate the consequences of the low institutional recognition of this knowledge on the valuation of the rural teaching profession.

From the methodological point of view, the use of biographical-narrative and ethnographic approaches is encouraged, as well as the development of participatory research in which the educators themselves are co-investigators of their experiences. In addition, comparative studies between regions would enrich knowledge about the dynamics of teaching knowledge in different contexts, facilitating the design of policies more adjusted to local realities.

At the level of public policies, a more contextualized and flexible educational approach is proposed, which considers the cultural and linguistic diversity of rural territories. This implies designing adapted curricula, strengthening the autonomy of rural schools and formally recognizing the knowledge built in experience. Continuous training with a territorial approach, collaboration networks between teachers and the documentation of successful practices must be essential components of this transformation.

Finally, a prospective vision is proposed that positions rural education as an engine of social change. From this perspective, schools can become dynamic centers of local development, strengthening community identity and promoting educational practices that respond to the real needs of the territory. The valorization of knowledge from experience not only improves the quality of education, but also contributes to dignifying the teaching profession and building a more humane, rooted and transformative education.

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