

The Narrative Productions Methodology in the Pedagogy of Alternation: contributions to the Professional Project of the Youth¹

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ABSTRACT. The present work aims to assess the contributions of an Agricultural Family School - EFA in Minas Gerais to the formation of its students. To do so, semi-structured narrative interviews were carried out with five students on their life and student trajectory, besides evaluation interviews on the development of the Youth Professional Project at the EFA with the participant students and a teacher from the institution. The paper has as theoretical-methodological framework the Methodology of Narrative Productions. The results suggest approximation between the proposal of the Methodology of Narrative Productions and references from the pedagogy of alternation used by the EFAs; the importance of Agricultural Family Schools for a contextualized education to the rural people and the difficulties faced by the alumni to the implementation of the Youth Professional Projects.

Keywords: rural education, pedagogy of alternation, narrative.

A Metodologia das Produções Narrativas na Pedagogia da Alternância: contribuições para o Projeto Profissional do Jovem

RESUMO. O presente trabalho busca avaliar as contribuições de uma Escola Família Agrícola de Minas Gerais para a formação técnica de seus estudantes. Para tanto, foram realizadas entrevistas narrativas semiestruturadas com 05 (cinco) estudantes sobre sua trajetória de vida e estudantil, além de entrevistas de avaliação com os estudantes participantes e uma professora da instituição sobre o desenvolvimento do Projeto Profissional do Jovem na EFA. O artigo tem como marco teórico-metodológico a Metodologia das Produções Narrativas. Os resultados sugerem aproximação entre a proposta da Metodologia das Produções Narrativas com os referenciais da pedagogia da alternância utilizados pelas EFAs; a importância das Escolas Famílias Agrícolas para uma educação contextualizada para os povos do campo e as dificuldades enfrentadas pelos egressos para a implementação dos Projetos Profissionais do Jovem.

Palavras-chave: educação do campo, pedagogia da alternância, narrativas.

La Metodología de las Producciones Narrativas en la Pedagogía de la Alternancia: aportes al Proyecto Profesional de la Juventud

RESUMEN. El artículo busca evaluar los aportes de una Escuela Familiar Agrícola de Minas Gerais a la formación técnica de sus estudiantes. Se realizaron entrevistas narrativas semiestructuradas con 05 estudiantes sobre su vida y trayectoria estudiantil, además de entrevistas de evaluación con los estudiantes participantes y una profesora de la institución sobre el desarrollo del Proyecto Profesional Juvenil en EFA. El artículo tiene como marco teórico y metodológico la Metodología de las Producciones Narrativas. Los resultados sugieren una aproximación entre la propuesta de la Metodología de Producciones Narrativas con los referentes de la pedagogía de alternancia utilizada por las EFA; la importancia de las Escuelas Familiares Agrícolas para una educación contextualizada de la gente del campo y las dificultades que enfrentan los egresados para la implementación de los Proyectos Profesionales de la Juventud.

Palabras clave: educación rural, pedagogía de la alternancia, narrativas.

Countryside Education and its Specifications

In the past 20 years, Countryside Education in Brazil has made significant progress when it comes to building and implementing educational policies aiming to attempt the needs of people from the countryside and their formative demands in search of a qualified and contextualized education. The movement for Countryside Education has as a principle the respect for countryside people's reality, therefore, the understanding and respect for the different time dynamic and more flexible spaces considering the susceptibility to bad weather and the seasonality of their productions, cultural organization, in short, to the peasant lifestyle. (Esmeraldo et al., 2017).ⁱⁱ

However, data about Rural Education in Brazil show a notorious situation of inequality, presenting a group-age distortion rate 30% higher than the urban situation (UNICEF, 2017). Although the progress in educational policies could be leading to an overcoming of the situation, the current political scenario does not seem to be propitious for a continuous progress of the Rural Education's conditions, once that social and union members' movements from the Countryside whom were responsible for gathering political strengths in the 90's and

at the beginning of the XXI century are now ostracized because of the recent reorganization of the political scenario toward a far right (Santos, 2018).

Considering the de-population, especially of young people, in the countryside, one of the biggest challenges the schools face is to offer the possibility of visualizing the future and the aim to construct a life project for those who aspire to continue living in the countryside (Freitas & Santos, 2015). The Escolas Famílias Agrícolas (EFA)ⁱⁱⁱ, are now considered one of the most promising alternative to face and confront the de-population affecting the youth in the countryside (Freitas & Freitas, 2012), providing the young people from the countryside with a contextualized, humanistic and technical education, focused on the agricultural activities. The EFAs work with the Pedagogy of Alternation, which is organized in order to articulate between in-school activities and activities that take place in the community. The studies and researches made by the students in those activities are focused on increasing knowledge about their social reality and integrating this knowledge to the curricular content (Gimonet, 2007). At the end of the graduation process, students are supposed to elaborate what is called "Projeto Profissional do Jovem^{iv}", a

technical course conclusion project based on agriculture and integrated into the secondary program in order to bring together all the technical learnings acquired during the graduation process. When the project is implemented, it is also used as a professional base and serve as an income generator to the recently graduated student, from which the student will be able to achieve their autonomy and develop professional activities able to potencialize the familiar and their community's economy.

This scientific article intends on presenting the results of a research which objective was to evaluate, by using the Narrative Production Methodology (Balasch & Montenegro, 2003), how did an EFA from Minas Gerais State in Brazil, contributed to a humanistic and technical formation of the participants. This research was guided by the hypothesis that raising awareness and increasing knowledge about the social context and historical background in which students are included could help the Projeto Profissional do Jovem be more suitable to their reality and, therefore, more efficient¹.

In order to present the results achieved by this research, the present article is organized in 3 sessions. In the first one, the pedagogical proposal of the research will be described and the

instruments used in the Pedagogy of Alternation will be presented, also as their articulation with the Narrative Production Methodology and the explanation about how the actual field application worked; in the second session, it will be discussed about the presented information by showing data and raised reflexions; finally, the final considerations will be disclosed.

The relation between the Escolas Famílias Agrícolas and the Narrative Production Methodology

Although Pedagogy of Alternation has received little attention of the Brazilian academical field until the beginning of the XXI century (Teixeira et al., 2008), it has been developed since 1935, from educational experiences originating and developed by small agricultural workers from France and one priest from that region who has dedicated himself to educate young people from the countryside without sending them away from the rural area (Nosela, 2012). Many changes have occurred since then, but the Pedagogy of Alternation still has as fundamental objective a humanistic formation, the development of specific technical skills for young people from the countryside and the social and economical development of the area in which the schools are inserted. In Brazil, the Escolas Famílias Agrícolas (EFA), as some of the schools oriented by

this model of education are called¹, emerge in the year of 1969 with these purpose, highlighting the knowledge from the agricultural workers and the concrete experiences from the alternation students. The EFAs are usually organized by the rural labor unions of each area, aiming to support local development (Nosella, 2012).

The EFAs expect the engagement of the student (in alternation) throughout the entire formative process, anchored on their life experiences, historical background and socio-cultural context. The activities are developed during School Time - intensive periods of presencial classes - and during Community Time - intensive periods of presencial formation in the countryside communities through oriented pedagogical practices. Several pedagogical tools (Gimonet, 2007), or as Begnami (2019), prefers, didactic mediators are used to articulate School Time and Community Time; among them are: (a) Study Plan; (b) Mutual Placement; and (c) Reality Notebook.

The Study Plan (SP) organizes the activities to be carried out in the students communities and during school meetings. The SP are usually planned considering meaningful topics and themes for the EFA's community and their students, and it guides learners' readings about their own experiences during Community Time

relating those experiences to the academic content studied. The SP organizes students' contents and thoughtful experiences by presenting different research and documentation tools about the specific theme for each elaborated plan (Gimonet, 2007; Begnami, 2019).

The studies carried out by the students during Community Time are organized in texts, figures and graphs in their Reality Notebooks and are discussed during an activity called Mutual Placement. This activity implies the discussion and questioning of the theme of study during the reality research after an oral presentation of the results and data's documented by the students during their Community Time (Begnami, 2019). During those discussions about personal experiences and others experiences, students get an overview of the study theme put in place by the Study Plan (Gimonet, 2007).

On the Reality Notebook, students organize the exchanged information, insights and thoughts that have emerged during the studies and debates. The original proposal assumes each learner should elaborate "a progressive, detailed and precise study about the familiar professional area in which they were acting" (Gimonet, 2007, p.32).

From the knowledge gained and produced during the application of the previously described pedagogical tools and its dialogue with the community, the student will give their first step forward the elaboration of their life project through the Projeto Profissional do Jovem (PPJ). The PPJ is

... the result of a detailed analysis of the familiar-background situation, the agricultural production infrastructure, production planning, environmental and climatic conditions, public policies, market reality and customers' market, the artistic and cultural aspects, among other topics around students' reality, in their familiar sphere, their city and area, which, allied with the knowledge provided by CEFFA's methodological proposal, the learners' capacity, their motivation and planning will constitute their proposals for professional insertion (Franca-Begnami, 2013, p. 235).^{vi}

The PPJ offers the student the opportunity to plan a professional activity guided by the professionals from the EFA through a robust study about its context. As a result, the EFAs seek to accomplish both of the Pedagogy of Alternations' core-activities, the full development of the student, in the humanistic and technical spheres, and the development of the students' surroundings throughout technical actions and policies made by former students in the communities.

However, according to a research made by Franca-Begnami (2013) with EFA's Bontempo former students about the Projeto Profissional do Jovem (PPJ), only 14% of the pupils have put their projects into practice and 34% tried to put it in practice but gave up because it did not work out. When it comes to the level of interest, 38% say they were interested in implementing the projects. According to the research made by Couto (2016), 24 of 58 former students from the Agriculture Technical Course from CFR, Açailândia, were not able to get public investment when trying to access the PRONAF - Jovem (a Brazilian program dedicated to finance small farmers and agricultural families in order to invest in their production); 14 former students had no interest in implementing the project and 11 did not own a rural property to implement it. Nevertheless, 25 of 58 former students kept on working in their familiar land and 8 have evaded from the rural area to the urban area. The author of the research understands that, even though there's a low percentage of former students evading the rural area, the lack of investment and access to land are the main reasons for the non-implementation of the PPJ.

According to Galindo (2014), the lack of effective public policies directed to youngsters living in the countryside and

the difficult access to the ones already existent present to be the most important factor for the rural depopulation. The credit viability and access to land for investment are seen as priorities when it comes to building autonomy, emancipation and dignity for these young people, as a way of ensuring their continuance in the countryside instead of demanding their departure in order to live well. “It is necessary to think about public policies that promote autonomy instead of authority; that promote protagonism instead of dependency; that consider youngsters as strategic individuals for the sustainable and solidary development in the countryside” (Galindo, 2014, p. 127). According to this author, it is urgent to think about policies in accordance with this youth and not only for her, but with their effective participation.

In some Escolas Famílias Agrícolas in which the PPJs’ implementations are historically more consolidated, as the case described by Oliveira and Benevenuto (2019) at a EFA in Jaguaré/ES, the implementation of the PPJ by the former students reaches 51% when it comes to the students applying their projects in their familiar practices. The other 49% were not able to develop their projects by a variety of reasons, such as “natural causes,

financial resources, family modifications” (Oliveira & Benevenuto, 2019, p. 21).

Given this scenario, it was evaluated, through narrative interviews, how the EFA researched has contributed to the human and technical formation of the participants. By using the Narrative Productions Methodology, interviews were made with students from the last year of the Secondary School and Technical Course focused on Agriculture from the EFA starting on the second semester of 2019. The EFA’s Study Plan during that period was connected to the development of the Projeto Profissional do Jovem, and that was the focus of the studies. With that in mind, the objective of using the NPM would be to evaluate if the methodology could contribute not only for students’ experiences’ expansion as a countryside person, but also evaluating how this experience and identity could attribute meaning and influence the development of the PPJ.

The Narrative Productions Methodology starts from a set of semi structured interviews, in which the interviewee presents their experiences and perceptions about a specific topic. In this specific research, the interviews were based on the theme defined by the institution for the Study Plan in use during that period of time, about the development

of the PPJ. For that matter, the first narrative interview approached the familiar and scholarly background of the student until the current moment, with the development of the PPJ. During the interviews, researcher and interviewee dialogue about different aspects of the studied phenomenon, taking under consideration that the participant, during this interaction, describes, revisits and rebuilds their understanding about those experiences. After the first interview, the interviewer elaborates a written narrative about the discussed topics during the interview and presents it to the student. During the reading of this first narrative, researcher and participant discuss those information's and they are able to include new topics to detail the reported facts, explain aspects shortly explored and/or expand the current narrative in order to embrace other topics that could facilitate the comprehension of the theme in the context of study. These interviews are repeated once or twice, and for each interview the narrative will be completed with the new elements addressed. At the end, interviewer and interviewee will have an elaborated and validated text made in partnership, able to expand the comprehension and understanding about the peasant lifestyle for the interviewees and contributes to the knowledge

production about the community (Balasch & Montenegro, 2003) and, therefore, can subsidize the development of the Projeto Profissional do Jovem.

Research in motion - on the countryside

Students were selected according to their interests after a proposal's presentation and a conversation with students from the last year of the EFA's Secondary School, also known as *Ensino Médio* in Brazil. The researchers were responsible for preparing the first interview's script, considering students' experiences with the theme of study according to the Study Plan as the main topic of the interview.

The first narrative interviews took place during school time at the EFA in August, 2019. In these first interviews, 5 students participated and spoke about their life and school background and trajectory; they also approached the theme of study plannings and the writing process of the PPJ until that moment. From that, all the interviews were transcribed and the research team gathered periodically to analyse those narratives, notes and hypotheses about the collected information. Considering the surveys, new interviews' scripts were written, this time they were personalized in order to fit each

student's information, based on the findings from the first interview.

In October 2019, the second round of interviews with the students took place, they started by recapturing what was discussed in the first interview and after that, discussing with more details about the planning process and development of the PPJ, since students were now in another moment of the project. After this second round of interviews, one more time the researchers made the transcription of them and got together to analyze data and information gathered. The narratives are, finally, brought together in a text and they become the final narrative from each student.

Through the first semester of 2020, participants - former students now - were interviewed one more time by the researcher. These semistructured ^{vii}interviews were elaborated to assess the process. In those interviews, a few topics were assessed: 1) the difficulties found during the process; (2) the importance of the surveys for the development of the PPJ; (3) the NPM's contributions in the gathering of these informations. In the first semester of 2020, a monitor from the EFA was also invited to participate in a semi structured interview, when school activities were already finalized. The procedures used in this research are

characterized as a participant observation. As the name itself suggests, the participant observation assumes the researcher as a participant and, therefore, capable and able to interfere in the studied context (Flick, 2009). In this author's view, the participant observation increasingly applies to other methodologies, especially ethnography.

Research in motion - discussions and results obtained from the process

During the interviews, one of the criteria was to approach the life trajectory and history of the students, rescuing memories connected to the peasant context related to their familiar background and childhood.

There was also an effort on rescuing their experiences related to their school trajectory, from their first time at a school until the moment they entered the EFA, in order to discuss the contributions and changes facilitated by the EFA in their lives. It also addressed the theme, planning and writing process of the Projeto Profissional do Jovem of each student and, finally, an evaluation or assessment of the research process and the contributions of the Narrative Productions Methodology to their identity, formative and technical process.

When analysing the final narratives, built together by interviewer and

interviewee, it was possible to identify some common categories, so that some themes are interconnected in the interviewees' narratives becoming, somehow, more evident. These characteristics will be presented below, they were divided in three sessions, 1) Memory in motion - interpersonal formation in school life; 2) The PPJ in the interviewees' narrative; 3) Former students and teachers assessment. Results and data will be presented below.

Memory in motion - interpersonal formation in school life

In the interviews, 4 out of 5 students claim they had difficulties with the communicative skill before entering the EFA, they affirm to have struggled before with shyness and the feeling of being embarrassed to speak. These difficulties are constantly connected with memories of distress, in some cases, related to complicated experiences in urban schools, before their entrance in the EFA.

Iolanda^{viii}, one of the interviewed students, studied in another EFA during elementary school, before entering the researched EFA. She reveals that, ever since the other EFA in which she studied, she already experienced a learning process based on the deconstruction of stigmas related to the countryside. When she

graduated from the elementary school, she moved to the researched EFA in order to complete her basic studies in a school nearby her house and also because she knew other former students from the EFA. She met the researched EFA because of the school's principal, who was always trying to work from the base with the community around the school, promoting the school's proposal, talking about the selection process for new students and also trying to communicate to the families about the school's proposal, which differs from other educational institutions.

Before entering the school in which she has studied during elementary school, Iolanda states to have studied for a semester in an urban school, located in the town to which her sub district belongs to "I went to study in the town, in a State School. It was completely different, I thought I would not be able to follow their rhythm, that I was not learning anything, actually. Beyond that, I was not talking to anyone, I was always by myself, quiet." (Iolanda, 2019). It is possible to observe a distressed and a seclusion situation lived by the student from the countryside when in an urban school, announced by the feeling of not-belonging, being displaced.

If it wasn't for the EFA I don't know what I would be now, I think I would be extremely shy... I was so shy, so shy... that when I started studying in

that state school, I arrived there and started to cry... the first day I went there, I wanted to go home. I didn't know anybody and I had no one to talk to for a long time. (Iolanda, 2019)

From the feeling of being displaced, Iolanda reports to have intense problems related to the feelings of being embarrassed and shy and she also said that, in the researched EFA, this characteristic was addressed:

One day I stopped to think about the process of putting away this shyness and I started with presenting my name, because even in [the first EFA she studied] and also here [researched EFA] I had to talk to someone, I had to tell people my name, had to tell them where I was from. Then I had to present everybody from the classroom, and then I would not be speaking by myself anymore, I would have other people to talk to me. That was how I started to feel less shy, because whether I wanted it or not, I would have to start speaking if I wanted to get good grades, I would have to say something. (Iolanda, 2019).

This sentence by Iolanda reveals the importance of the pedagogical strategies presented by the EFA, strategies that try to encourage students' collective participation and insertion based on their autonomy development. Besides the deconstruction of her shyness reported by the student, she also shows her discoveries regarding her own identity as a black young woman and her understanding of herself in the world

and regarding the world, in a context where other black students encouraged one another, building a space full of diversity and possibilities.

... Before [studying in the EFA] I used to straighten my hair, I didn't even know what African-ancestry meant. The [researched] EFA helped me a lot, with things that I had no idea of. Like, braids, I never imagined myself wearing braids. It was through Carolina, one day Ana and I said: "let's make some braids? Let's!". Ana was the first one, she didn't like it a lot on the first day... But then, after some time, she liked it, and then it was my turn. I was thinking "should I do it?", then just went there and did it. I liked it and I'm wearing them until nowadays. All because of Carolina. She thought that on the day I put it I would immediately take them off (laughs), she thought I wouldn't like it. I told her I thought the same. I thought I would like to take them off at the same time, and now I don't ever want to take them off. (Iolanda, 2019).

The deconstruction of shyness and empowerment of the black identity also appear on Margarida's reports who comes from a *Quilombola* community in a different village in Minas Gerais: "the EFA helped me strengthen my identity. I was one of those people who had a lot of stigmas and prejudice around being *quilombola*, but the EFA gave us a task of finding and discovering our own backgrounds. I realized that there's nothing shameful about being a *quilombola*, it's the opposite of that." (Margarida, 2019). That

also confirms the educational proposal defended by the EFA, encouraging students to learn deeper about their own origin, history and ancestry through different dynamics in which those themes are frequently inserted.

... Basically everything about me has changed ever since I joined the [researched] EFA, that's because here we don't only learn about academic subjects, but we also learn about how to be citizens. I did not know any of the social movements, today I know them, I participate, I know their causes and all. When I first arrived here I found it weird to hang out with so many different people. Today I don't find it weird, I hang out, I talk and I interact much more with visitors. I used to be very shy, but now I'm not that shy anymore, I'm still a little, but not as I was before. (Margarida, 2019)

Communication problems also appear in Larissa's narrative, a student from the same community as Margarida. However, since Larissa is white, she presents a different point of view when it comes to her understanding of herself and the strengthening of her peasant identity. Larissa comes from a small family located in a more distant community, far from the other houses. The interviewee didn't share her childhood with other children of the same age, and therefore she lived more individual experiences during her childhood and she only started having more contact with other kids her own age when she turned 6 years old and joined a

rural school located 10 km from her place. In that school, she reports having a less engaging and non-contextualized education, in which the pedagogical proposals followed the same model as the urban schools, even though it was not located in an urban area.

It is important to point out the difference between the rural school and the countryside school, for the purpose of better explaining the roots of many discomforts experienced by the students before their entrance in the researched EFA, considering that even though they were studying in rural schools close to their homes, they have experienced a formative process that was different from what the EFA seeks to offer as a countryside school.

The urban-centered education transported to rural schools has contributed and still contributes to a discouragement of the young peasant's process when it comes to education and sustainability. The lack of a school focused on the countryside reality impacts in the countryside sustainability because it undermines the familiar agriculture reproduction. (Franca-Begnami, 2013, p. 232).

The idea of a rural school is constantly followed by diminishing stigmas, in which the individuals living in those locations are usually associated with lateness, to something outdated, that will

soon disappear, or stop-existing. “For a long period of time the rural education lacked specific policies focused on the countryside people’s context, at the same time, the curriculum and the pedagogical practices were subordinated to the urbanistic way of teaching.” (Machado, 2017, p. 18323). It is possible to notice an education model that does not set as priority a formative process based on students' protagonism so they can become active individuals in their own reality and story.

The activities offered by the EFA reinforce the need of recognizing the fight of these people and their experiences in the countryside as a space for critical, political and social formation, in order to claim the acknowledgment and the appreciation of their cultural practices. With that in mind, the EFA seeks to deconstruct the relation between their experiences and existence with the lack of appreciation for their lifestyle, recognizing the diversity in the subjects’ formation process.

Differently from rural education, the countryside education is proposed by a diverse range of social movements connected to the countryside, and because of that, whenever we talk about countryside education it is inevitable not to think about social fights, workers as the protagonists and subjects of pedagogical actions. Thereby, countryside is not only the opposite of urban, but is a place of countless possibilities. (Machado, 2017, p. 18326).

From that, it is possible to understand the impact of a contextualized education in the life of the students, through which it is possible for them to recognize themselves as part of their formation processes, as the proposal of the countryside schools and the work that the Escolas Famílias Agrícolas seek to develop.

The EFAs propose to put in practice a pertinent and meaningful education considering students reality; therefore, they use and develop, through the Pedagogy of Alternation, specific pedagogical instruments, articulated in a Formation Plan, in order to relate the school with the families and the community, the study with work, experience with science, in a perspective of learning in order to transform. (Franca-Begnami, 2013, p. 232-233).

Regarding the kind of education that Larissa reported living in the rural schools before her entrance in the EFA, schools located in the neighbor district from the one where she lives, she points out about how unmotivated she felt regarding the pedagogical proposals inserted in that context, speaking about the belonging feeling when she started at the EFA:

The experience from other schools to this one is really different, and regarding the methodology, here [researched EFA] is way better than there [other schools], because there we have a conventional education, they teach nothing beyond... Here during our classes they show us our own reality, and things we didn't

know about ourselves. We learn about our community. I am not saying that the textbooks are not efficient, but most of the time the books are not focused on our own reality. (Larissa, 2019).

The student also reports having problems with communication ever since she was very young, when she talks about the development of her performance in public, encouraged by the dynamics proposed by the EFA.

I changed after I started studying at the EFA. I used to be very shy and here the door opened by the school is wonderful. Here they teach us about how to live with different people. And I don't feel shy anymore when I have to present a project, I am free. Sometimes, I feel shy, nervous, but not as I felt before. Speaking in public used to be awful, I only did it at the church. In the beginning it was hard, but afterwards I got used to it. Now whenever people call me to present something, I'm ready (laughs). (Larissa, 2019).

It is notable the importance of the EFA in these students' lives, which is confirmed once again by the effect of the proposed practiced based on the critic reflexion of the Self, the deconstruction of stigmas and the collective processes experienced.

... The school helps me to recognize my identity. Like, the study plans are focused in the community, which is our property. The first study plan I had here at the school was about my ancestry, family, my family's origin, where we came from. It was a rescue

of culture, traditions, and a lot of things. (Larissa, 2019).

Although the shyness was the challenge to be overcome by these three interviewees, the pedagogical proposal was also capable of contributing to the overcome of other difficulties, such as irritation, impatience, strugglings to having a good partnership with peers, in groups, as it was reported by Pedro. For him the insertion strategies proposed by the EFA, in which the interpersonal skills and interactions are developed, showed to be very efficient in his development, impacting directly in the quality of his learning process. The enhancement of the communicative ability supports the students formation as citizens, with the understanding that interpersonal relations are a fundamental part of the full development of a student, which is one of the pedagogy of alternation pillars.

The only student who did not report having any problems related to shyness was Lúcio, who is part of a family that has a peasant's identity well consolidated for a long time, since his grandparents, and this was the only family with this characteristic among all the interviewees. The families of the other interviewees develop gainful occupations in other functions, working with agriculture only for their own consumption and on a small scale. These

families do not have a good structure for the development of the agricultural activities, they live in properties without an adequate space for this end.

Lúcio's parents are farmers who develop planting activities in their property that, beyond of being used for their own consumption, as all the other families of the other interviewees, also commercialize their organic and agroecological products. In this narrative about a familiar trajectory in which their experiences are centered in agroecological practices with the soil and the planting, it is possible to understand that Lúcio is part of a family in which the interpersonal formation, understanding of the Self and of their identity is being developed collectively. His mother has already being part of social movements such as the union of the farmers and nowadays she develops their activities in the property with the technical support of the *Rede de Intercâmbio de Tecnologias Alternativas (Rede)*, Alternative Technology Exchange Network (ATEN) in english, which works in order of the promotion and qualification of the agroecological productions experiences and the popular organization. Through the follow-ups to families and groups and through the implementation of training, the ATEN strengthen experiences and also the

political actions of the base organizations and leaderships.

In the face of their familiar experiences, it is possible to see a connection between the learnings Lúcio has in his home with the learnings provided by the EFA, which is interconnected to the EFA's proposals, that has as a pedagogical principle the students' involvement through their whole learning process, based on their life experiences, historical trajectory and sociocultural context.

The pedagogy of alternation tools are extremely important for the development of the activities that are put in practice in their family's properties, in which technical knowledges learned at the EFA are applied, during the community time; and deepening theoretically in the activities developed at home through the pedagogical tools during school time.

The final narratives of all the students have revealed the fundamental role of the researched EFA for their lives in the countryside and the importance of the knowledge about agroecology appreciation, which contributes for the strengthening of the peasants' identity considering the proposals by pedagogy of alternation in which the goal is to develop the person and the environment.

In this EFA, the studies about family, ancestry and community, the seek for their origins, are guided in order to promote contextualization about themselves and they impact positively in the consolidation of the students' identities; the development of their communicative skills through the realization of collective activities; the insertion in social movements and understanding of themselves in relation to the world, which shows some of the purposes present in the strategic tools proposed by the EFA.

The PPJ in the interviewees' narrative

The Projeto Profissional do Jovem is an end of course curricular activity that seeks to articulate the technical knowledge learned through the course with the sociocultural and familiar contexts and also their perspectives for a life project during their formation process. The objective is the elaboration of a detailed academic paper or project that seeks to project and provide a strategy of future and income generation for the former students. This pedagogical activity is characterized as a strategy of socio professional insertion of the youngsters in their countryside (Franca-Begnami, 2013).

The PPJ integrates into the training plan of the EFAs as one of the pedagogical activities developed during the three years

formation of the secondary school. The students should be, since the beginning, oriented to dig deeper and plan their projects themes. The students have freedom to choose the theme they want to work with, however, it is necessary that this choice is made according to the familiar conditions, the properties' structure, after a study about their potential market and the offered possibilities by the public policies and its viabilities (Franca-Begnami, 2013).

The interviews had the objective of reflecting about the specific themes chosen by the students, about the contribution of the PPJ to their technical learning and to their effective socio professional insertion.

When it comes to the PPJs planning process, in the researched EFA the guidance and orientation were carried by a specific monitor, usually once a week. This orientation also happened online, remotely, when necessary, because this monitor divided his working routine between the EFA and another paid activity.

The students Margarida and Larissa planned their PPJ together as a pair. Their projects were about free-range chicken farming, planned to be implemented in the property of Larissa's family, however, during the interview process, the students revealed that the implementation would not be accomplished right after their

graduation at the EFA. Their main goal was to enter university, which has raised some questions by the families about the implementation and maintenance of the project. Since the students desired to enter university - which actually happens to occur since both of them started a Countryside Education Course degree - this maintenance would be compromised because of their absence, which could overload the families. According to the students, even through alternation, during school time the maintenance would be in charge of their families. Both of them have confirmed that, after the conclusion of their courses and having the possibility of investment, the implementation could be accomplished. Therefore, although the desire of continuing studying is legit and it has a meaningful contribution to their developments and professional insertion, it is possible to see that the realization of the PPJ did not take under consideration an analysis of the familiar production context, which could not only enable its implementation but bring contributions for the increase of its production, the enhancement of the students' learning and the deeper understanding of the production style adopted by their families. On the other hand, it shows that the learning offered by the EFA has contributed to the main goal of the students.

Pedro's PPJ was about the production of garlic and its commercialization, also planned together with a peer who did not participate in this research. The implementation would take place in a ranch in which both of them were interns during their formation at the EFA, since none of them had a good structure in their property for the implementation, considering that both Pedro and his partner live in houses in the urban area. Pedro reported that their plans were interrupted by the pandemic, but also by the distancing of his project partner and lack of investments. Towards this scenario, there was the need of looking for employment in a city located close to his town.

Iolanda planned her PPJ with two other students, developing the theme of the project about a paid fishpond in the property of one of the students from the group. This theme was not related to the Iolanda's real conditions, familiar structure or life experiences. For a long time, the student worked with her uncle in the planting and maintenance of a garden from which they commercialized their products in the region. Iolanda revealed her uncle had to stop his planting activities in order to develop other paid activities to assure the family income, emphasizing the needed pluriactivity^{ix} of the peasant and family in

order to survive in the countryside facing the lack of access and resources to invest in agricultural activities. Iolanda was also not able to implement her PPJ.

Another participant, Lúcio, planned to develop a *mandala* garden using only medicinal herbs in his family's property. This planning was integrated with a familiar project focused on the establishment of a partnership with the Alternative Technology Exchange Network (*ATEN, also known as REDE in portuguese*), in which they would provide the herbs to a manipulation pharmacy in Belo Horizonte for the production of homeopathic medicine. The structure of his PPJ would be used as a guide for the development of this partnership. Lúcio did not implement his project because, also due to COVID-19's pandemic, his family did not receive the seedlings in order to start planting. Because of that, the partnership with the ATEN had to be, temporarily, interrupted. In one of the interviews, Lúcio has affirmed that his project would be initialized as soon as the activities were normalized.

The PPJ's evaluational interviews with the former students revealed that none of them were implemented. The fact that these young students graduated right before the beginning of the social isolation due to the pandemic of COVID-19 has

influenced these results. However, the narratives show that, for some students with access to land, the PPJ was not thought in order to integrate and contribute to the production developed by their family or their life conditions, revealing itself as a difficult to be effected proposal because of the need for extra workers or resources in order to be implemented.

Other PPJs show what literature (Breitenbach & Troian, 2020) already points out about the youngsters from the countryside's difficulties, relating to the lack of access to land and resources to the development of their activities. In Iolanda's narrative, it is possible to notice that the access to resources issue and the tough survival possibilities in the countryside directly affect its population. The situation is different for Lúcio, whose family has access to the structures needed and whose familiar production was articulated with the PPJ since the beginning. His narrative makes it clear that the pandemic was a temporary obstacle.

As for the difficulties faced by the students to implement their projects, the narratives suggest that the familiar articulation affects their development. The comprehension of the proposals' objective and the collective evaluation, together with the family, is fundamental to its implementation. As for the challenges in

order to face these difficulties, according to Freitas e Santos (2015), the need is

to somatize efforts, policies and specific programs collectively with the young peasants in order to guarantee to them the rights of being professionally inserted in the countryside and from the land getting the needed conditions for their survival. The strategy might be to bet on these youngsters' training and in the dialogue with their families every time possible and necessary, in order to prepare them to access the public policies. (Freitas & Santos, 2015, p. 182).

Despite the non-implementation of the projects, all students recognize that the PPJ is an activity that can generate income and they affirm that through the PPJ it is possible to learn how to structure a good project with all the needed requirements for its implementation.

Former students and teachers evaluation

During the evaluation interviews with former students and a teacher it was a focus to reflect about the process of elaborating the PPJ, its dimension as a pedagogical tool and about the contribution of the Narrative Productions Methodology through this process.

Regarding the importance of the EFA in the full education of the students, in which it is sought to train students in the technical/professional,

intellectual/academic and also cultural/social skills, for the full development of the students as subjects and citizens (Gimonet, 2007), the students' narratives revealed about the EFAs power to help develop their identities as countryside citizens and help them develop socially in order to participate in public gatherings, meetings and spaces. This characteristic appears in Margarida's report about the EFA's contributions during a post-graduation moment:

Now as a former student I realize that the EFA brought me many contributions. For instance, as an agricultural technician I believe that it brought me a contribution in knowledge I get to share with my family. I can make my ideas be heard by them, together with their ideas and then, mix them in order to make something better. But what the EFA helped me the most was in my formation as a citizen. In learning things that if I was studying in another school I wouldn't probably learn. Today I know how to be more critical, more constructive. (Margarida, 2020).

Margarida's narrative reveals some contributions surrounding her social and technical development, in which her communicative skills were developed, her interpersonal relations were enhanced and her technical knowledge was validated. That reflects in her posture from a positive self perception, her trust in herself and the credibility she gained among her familiars as an agricultural technician.

The full development of the students is directly connected to the development of the environment, pillars that guide the pedagogical proposal from the Training in Alternation Family Centers (CEFFAs) (Gimonet, 2007). During an interview, the monitor talked about the importance of the researched EFA in the community's development:

The EFA has a great importance in the community, considering it brings together many people from the surroundings, not only students, because of the *Folia dos Reis*, the cultural meetings they have there, this strengthens the feeling of being part of a community, the sense of community. It is very important and it provides many moments for the people, moments of being together with different people, from other places. So the EFA, beyond reinforcing the feeling of community, it is a meeting spot, meeting with other spaces and ideas. It is quite life-changing knowing that people want to make a communitary garden in the EFA and take this knowledge to their lives, I feel this happens a lot in those spaces. (Carmen, 2020).

Regarding the PPJ, the students' perspective shows they understand the tool as a potential income generator; a proposal capable of teaching how to structure projects focused on the technical agricultural area.

The PPJ is well structured. Anyone who reads it after it is 100% ready will know where it will be implemented, why it will be implemented, who will be involved

and how long it is going to take (Lúcio, 2019).

We can work through the PPJ, make money through it. (Iolanda, 2019).

Carmen, the monitor, presented her perceptions and ideas about the potentialities and limits regarding the tool, although she says she has a more superficial vision because of not following the full process, since she was also in charge of other teaching functions.

... only a few students get to implement their PPJs, because apparently it became a tool that students do only for red tape, which is not its actual purpose. There is a lack of support from the EFA and for the EFA. It lacks continued training for teachers, who need to be in contact with other ideas, keeping up with the contemporaneity. (Carmen, 2020).

Although Carmen understands the importance of proposing the PPJ's elaboration according to one of the principals of the pedagogy of alternation, "in which the student, considering their professional interest, will discuss together with the EFA team and their family a possibility of income and professionalization" (Gerke de Jesus, 2011, p. 87), Carmen also highlights the limitations faced by the monitors and by the EFA concerning the work conditions and continued training. Regarding the financial struggles, since the beginning of

the research in the year of 2019, the EFA is used to work with the monitoring staff reduced, uncertain payment and lower values than what was applied before.

In the timeline of the Escolas Famílias Agrícolas of Minas Gerais, Begnami (2019) characterized the year of 2019 as:

The beginning of a new legislature and new State Governance. Struggles to communicate with the new government. Public audience in the Legislative Assembly charges dialogue, the immediate transference of resources for the EFAs. Attempts of public funding of Amefa did not have positive results. The state is over 6 months late with the transfer of resources and pays only the per capita value of FUNDEB. The 1st year of Zema's government, the Permanent Commission of Countryside Education is not recomposed nor convened to gather. The AMEFA faces great difficulties to keep functioning and dismiss many employees. In front of this scenario of zero funding, the AMEFA's reduced staff engages itself in the adventure of elaborating projects in order to keep themselves alive and with that optimize the technical follow-up to the EFA^x.

According to the presented analysis, considering the former students and monitor perspectives about the technical training provided by the EFA, with the evaluation about the elaboration process of the PPJ and the fulfillment of the research, the reports suggest that although the EFA develops an important job providing a contextualized education, it has faced

many problems with the transference of resources from the state government to the institution in the year of 2019, which persists also in the school year of 2020, getting even worse in function of the pandemic situation. In this period, the activities developed by the monitors at the EFA started competing with other activities targeted to their livelihood. Still considering the technical education, specifically regarding the school year of 2019, Carmen speaks about some of the difficulties faced by the school that year:

In 2019 I really believe there were some struggles, because it was a time when we were lacking an agricultural teacher for a long period; exactly this year the school started to stay only 15 days with the students, so the productive units were in a low and the monitor who was guiding the PPJ was working in a home office system too, which has influenced in the quality of the projects since there was no one to take over this role in person, following-up from the writing process of the students until the development of the themes effectively. (Carmen, 2020).

These difficulties are also present in Carmen's report (and practices), who used to teach three disciplines, Arts, History and Agroindustry, revealing the overloaded monitor journey in front of the workload because of the reduced workforce. These conditions have impacted the training of the monitors in order to follow-up with the themes being developed by the students.

The monitor shared about the limits that, in her point of view, impacts in the technical education provided by the institution:

... there are some limits inside the EFA, I believe they happen because of the teachers' team, the way things are put aside... There is the pedagogy of alternation which works pretty well, I believe we connect well with the pedagogical instruments and with being away from school, at home. But at the same time I feel it is quite a lot and that sometimes things end up getting lost. There are many teachers who are not interested in following-up with the new ways of teaching and in inserting the identity discourses in all the disciplines, the matter of identities, of women's rights, LGBTQIA+ matters, race and ethnicity, the black culture and art, even because more than 90% of the students are black, so we still fail a lot in this matter. (Carmen, 2020).

She reinforces the need of the school working in a more specific way with the construction of the projects, such as the writing and the resources for data structuring, which could be treated in a more emphatic way during the orientation. This situation affects the development of the activities developed by the EFA. Larissa's narrative about the technical formation at the EFA points to a few challenges faced by her during her formation:

Regarding the contributions the EFA brought about the technical practice I believe it was really weak, because of the teachers and their influences. The teachers should be more well-

prepared. Regarding the technical part it was weak, but when I think about the social part, it was good, I had improvements. About my learning process at the EFA, it was not satisfactory, specifically for those reasons. (Larissa, 2020).

Regarding the contribution of the Narrative Productions Methodology in the research process developed at the EFA, in the perspective of some students, the narratives helped them to rescue some meaningful memories and brought them the opportunity to rethink their practices.

With the narratives I was able to understand how much I have changed, I have grown. It helped me to remember my past and see where I am now. In the PPJ the narratives did not contribute as much, but mostly because it was something more technical, more specific for the PPJ, but for my life project I believe it has helped because when I rethink what I have lived, I have more determination following what I want to achieve. (Margarida, 2020).

The narratives helped me to think more about the project, and thinking more, we realize we need to change a few things. It has influenced the writing process and made me think more about the theme because of the questions asked. (Larissa, 2020).

Regarding the contribution of the Narrative Productions Methodology as a pedagogical tool for the EFA, Carmen reflects about the similarity of the narratives proposal with what is proposed by the EFA; regarding an education based in the importance of the life experience in

order to practice and understand the pedagogy of alternation (Gimonet, 2007) and in order to build and exchange knowledge.

I believe the narratives are really related to the EFA. It connects very well with the idea of a contextualized education, which means looking at one's own history, and also about what Paulo Freire speaks regarding emancipation, becoming the protagonist of one's own history. So I believe the narratives contribute a lot in this direction. The difficulties came, for sure, from the pandemic, the reorganization of the time table at the EFA, because indeed there's a lot going on. (Carmen, 2020).

When questioned about noticing any differences between the PPJs of the students who participated on the research and the students who did not participate, Carmen explained that the students who participated of the research are already the ones who naturally stand out in the school activities, which makes it more difficult to observe and measure the specific contributions made by the research in this activity.

One of the limits presented in the development of the NPM with the students is related to the beginning of the research activities when the students were already getting more involved with the writing of their papers through the Study Plan (SP), they had already started writing and structuring the proposals. The former

student Larissa, evaluates that “the narratives could have happen right in the beginning of the PPJ in order to follow-up until the end of it, because the interviews took place when we were almost finished with our projects and also now after our graduation, if it was since the beginning it would be perfect.” (Larissa, 2020).

Regarding the possibility of articulating the NPM with the contents worked throughout the secondary and technical school in agriculture, together with the Study Plans and the PPJ, according to the evaluation of Carmen, the monitor, the combination could contribute to a better planning of the PPJ through the reflection of the possibilities and difficulties for the realization of their projects, and also for a better understanding of the learned content through the pedagogical tools that were used.

Final considerations

The strengthening of the peasant's identity and the insertion of the young adults in the productive processes in the countryside are structural challenges for the Countryside Education Movement. The analyses of the Narrative Productions Methodology use as a pedagogical activity articulated with the pedagogy of alternation tools in an EFA from Minas

Gerais with the intention of assisting these challenges was the goal of the project presented in this paper.

The narratives of students from the technical course focused in agriculture have highlighted the importance of the EFA in their learning process, not only in the identification, but also in the reflective process of these students about the peasant's lifestyle, their challenges and peculiarities. They also emphasized the importance of this appreciation and of the pedagogical practices used so that the young people would assume themselves as the protagonists in the social processes for the recognition of their rights and their identity. The narratives have spotlighted, therefore, the importance of the EFA in the development of a full education of the young people from the countryside, articulating with curricular content and their lifestyle.

Although the narratives have revealed that the development of the PPJ fulfills a relevant technical role in their professional training, some of the questions brought up by the narratives and evaluation interviews show that this dimension of the formative process - one of the main references for the productive inclusion of the young peasant in the countryside production - faces some difficulties. Considering the fact that the

pandemic caused by COVID-19 has affected directly in the implementation of the PPJs by the former students, at the same time the research shows that the students already faced other problems for the implementation of their projects related to the access of land and resources, lack of articulation connected to their familiar production and a satisfactory assistance in order for these difficulties being considered during the elaboration process. These problems, however, can not be evaluated punctually, rather than inserted in the complexity of the context in which these youngsters from the countryside live and the context of the EFA itself.

Concerning the role of the EFA in the formative process, it is evident that the development of its activities is severely compromised by the non-compliance of the financial transferences, forcing teachers who are still teaching to share their time between different paid activities - and the needed continuous formation - in order to guarantee theirs and their families maintenance.

The analysis shows the difficulties faced by the institution regarding the technical formation of the students and that turns into complications related to the lack of resources for the maintenance of the institution's employees and of the

structure, which shows a process of degradation of the EFAs.

Regarding the Narrative Productions Methodology as a pedagogical tool for the EFA and the possibility of articulating the NPM to the tools of the pedagogy of alternation, data suggests a similarity between the proposals of the NPM with the pedagogy of alternation, in which “the experience must be considered, at the same time, as a learning support, knowledge storage and learning space, considering experience as the starting point for learning.” (Gimonet, 2007, p. 29). Through the narrative, as well as through the proposal of the pedagogy of alternation by the EFAs, it is possible to “allow students to become aware of the process through the questions asked and thought of” (Gimonet, 2007, p. 35). This articulation allows a contextualized education, in which reflecting about the past is a fundamental part for building a future. When thinking and reflecting through experience, it is possible to overcome generalizations and mistakes about, for instance, the lifestyle and culture of people from the countryside, considering their specificities.

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ii All quotes and citations from the text were translated from the original.

iii “Escolas Famílias Agrícolas” stand for “Schools of Agricultural Families” in english.

iv “Projeto Profissional do Jovem” stands for “Young Professional Project” in english.

v In Brazil there are other schools called by different names using the Pedagogy of Alternation as a model, according to the referrals. (Nosella, 2012; Begnami, 2019)

vi All translations by Rhaissa Ramon, unless otherwise noted.

vii Considering the COVID-19 pandemic and scenario, starting from the first semester of 2020, all interviews were held through phone calls or instant messaging apps, in which, considering the availability and accessibility of each participant, one of the written options were chosen.

viii All names from the interviewees were altered in order to preserve the identity of the sources.

ix The pluriactivity is a phenomenon characterized by Carneiro (1998) and related to the ... reduction of employed people in the agricultural business, since there is an association with the increase of people living in the countryside but working with non-agricultural activities. (Carneiro, 1998, p. 2);

^x Available at <https://amefa.wordpress.com/efas-na-linha-do-tempo/>. Accessed on March 12th, 2021.

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