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Education in Latin America at the turn of the 20th century: 'epistemologies of the South' versus 'education in complexity'

Edukacja w Ameryce Łacińskiej na przełomie XX i XXI wieku: „epistemologie Południa” a „edukacja w złożoności”

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja w Ameryce Łacińskiej, trendy teoretyczne, polityczne i ideologiczne, epistemologie Południa, edukacja w złożoności.

Streszczenie: W niniejszej pracy przedstawiamy wyniki teoretycznych badań pedagogicznych, których celem było określenie teoretycznych, politycznych i ideologicznych trendów przenikających latynoamerykańskie pole edukacyjne od końca XX wieku do początku trzeciej dekady XXI wieku, które zapewniają wsparcie dla rozwoju nowych paradygmatów w edukacji regionalnej, w szczególności do analizy epistemologii Południa i edukacji w złożoności. Autorzy stwierdzili, że od końca XX wieku do początku trzeciej dekady XXI wieku edukacja w Ameryce Łacińskiej znajduje się pod wpływem lewicowych tendencji teoretycznych, politycznych i ideologicznych, które opowiadają się za rozwojem tak zwanych epistemologii Południa, pełnych kultywowania i ochrony tradycji. Z drugiej strony, jako alternatywa, od końca XX wieku kształtuje się edukacja w złożoności z jej wizją zrjonalizowanego i świeckiego życia społecznego, tworząc nowe paradygmaty w edukacji regionalnej.

Key words: Latin American educational field, theoretical, political and ideological trends, epistemologies of the South, education in complexities.

Abstract: In this work we present the results of a theoretical pedagogical research, which objective was to determine the theoretical, political and ideological trends that permeate the Latin American educational field from the end of the 20th century and until the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, which provide the support for the development of new paradigms in regional education, in particular, to analyze the epistemologies of the South and education in complexities. Authors found, that from the end of the 20th century and until the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, the education in Latin America is influenced by leftist theoretical, political and ideological tendencies, which advocate the development of the so-called epistemologies of the South, full of cultivation and protection of tradition. On the other hand, as its alternative, since the end of the 20th century, education in complexities has been taking shape with its vision of rationalized and secular social life, creating new paradigms in regional education.

Introduction

Education plays a central role in the life of nations, and a nation could never have a healthy existence without effective and critical education. It must be a center of censoring thought, a kind of intellectual power that society requires to reflecting, understanding and acting. On the other hand, education, like any social institution, demands a permanent review of its approaches and of the political-economic, legal, and socio-cultural mechanisms that give it life. The above leads to meditate on the theoretical, political and ideological trends that support the new paradigms in Latin American education.

It is worth specifying that the study of the educational systems of Latin America in the period that covers the end of the 20th century – the beginning of the 21st century, dedicated their works Andrade-Oliveira, 2010; Bordón, 2010; Buenfil-Burgos, 2000; Cavarozzi, 2010; De-Alba, 2003; Díaz-Barriga, 1988, 1993, 1995, 1996; Clark-Burton, 1983; Didriksson-Takayanagui, 2010; Freire, 2002, 2012; Gómez-Sollano, 2001; Kent, 1995; Orozco-Fuentes, 2001; Pacheco, 1993; Richard, 1982; Rodríguez-Gómez and Casanova-Cardiel, 1998; Rodríguez, 2022; Rubiano-de-la-Cruz, 2010; Tedesco, 2010; Tunnermann, 1991, 2001, 2003, 2009; Vollmer, 2010, among others.

In their works, researchers find that at the end of the 20th century, education, from being an instrument of liberation, became “a promoter of the alienation of reason and the impossibility of one’s own thinking”; it became an institution that legitimizes social inequality; it is an “[...] ideological apparatus at the service of the State that tends to reproduce the conceptions and values of the class in power; it is one of the institutions which task is the normalization of the subject for the conditions of today’s society” (Díaz-Barriga, 1995, pp. 207, 208).

In the opinion of scholars, the development of Latin American education at the beginning of the 21st century determines the “[...] new scientific era: the era of possibilities or probabilities in scientific matters [...] the crisis caused by the uncertainties that have taken the site of ancient certainties [...]”, since “[...] the physical laws themselves, instead of expressing certainties, today express probabilities” (Tunnermann, 2001, p. 261).

The objective of this work was to determine the theoretical, political and ideological trends that permeate the Latin American educational field from the end of the 20th century and until the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, which provide the support for the development of new paradigms in regional education, in particular, to analyze the epistemologies of the South and education in complexities. The method used, the documentary-bibliographical analysis, allowed the approach to the perspectives and lines of work in the field of the present study getting closer; promoted the re-creation of existing developments on the studied problem; favored the identification of trends and gaps in knowledge; produced new understandings and interpretations of the problem.

Theoretical-pedagogical trends in Latin America at the end of the 20th century

At the end of the 20th century, the development of the Latin-Caribbean educational systems was carried out from the adaptation of the neoliberal model for the economic impulse. Hence the implementation of pragmatic pedagogy, educational technology, resilient pedagogy occurred. Also, in these decades, the indicators of educational quality in the region have suffered significant declines. These processes encouraged severe criticism from Latin American academics (Buenfil-Burgos, 1998; De-Alba, 1995; Díaz-Barriga, 1988, 1993, 1995, 1996; Clark-Burton, 1983; Freire, 1997; Kent, 1995; Orozco-Fuentes, 1999; Pacheco, 1993; Richard, 1982; Rodríguez-Gómez and Casanova-Cardiel, 1998; Tunnermann, 1991, among others).

Therefore, a theoretical current arose that, from neo-Marxism, the Frankfurt School, resistance pedagogy, etc., visualizes as a fundamental problem the lack of a social project that articulates educational proposals, facing the challenges of the moment: social inequality, the unemployment, malnutrition, insecurity, violence, corruption, drug trafficking, migration; and, in turn, allows direction and orientation to the specific needs of the different sectors of society.

Its representatives perceive a crisis of confidence and credibility in educational institutions at all levels and hold globalization and neoliberalism responsible for it, which aim at the deregulation and privatization of Latin American educational systems, causing the educational field to become segmented, polarized, and stratified. They believe that recurrent and persistent illiteracy, low school average, high failure rates and low terminal efficiency, partial school coverage and poor quality of pedagogical content were derived from this.

Academics have no doubt that the objective of the Latin-Caribbean educational systems has always been to prepare for professional life and provide a general culture; however, they are convinced that their primary function is to instruct internalize "[...] the official norms of exploited work, of the Christian family, of the bourgeois State" (Lourau, 1975, p. 14); that "[...] the relationship of division between the antagonistic classes and the domination of one of these classes over the other" be institutionalized (Baudelot, Establet, 1981, p. 20).

On the other hand, following the institutional pedagogy, based on the Weberian conception, the educational institutions of LATAM, in which domination is supported by elements of a legal order based on the norm gestated in an economic market system with characteristics fundamentally of domain monopolized, are governed by a constellation of interests (Weber, 1984, p. 696). From there, the contemporary Latin American school no longer meets the bourgeois political-cultural aspirations (typical of modernity) to train new citizens under the ideas of freedom, fraternity, equality, enlightenment, emancipation of reason.

Now its goal is to quickly prepare "trained labor" equipped with minimal skills to carry out his work; to educate clients, faithful followers of the culture of consume-

rism, capable of satisfying their needs easily and "being happy" with what the big transcontinental brands offer them. The questions such as classical fundamental education, reflection, critical thinking, abstraction, imagination, are left out of this type of instruction.

Latin American education in the "liquid society" and "vigilant capitalism" of the 21st century

In postmodernity, or more correctly, from Bauman's perspective, in the "liquid society", the school hides and distorts culture, under the postulate of maintaining control over man's ideology (Bauman, 2003). In the "vigilant" (or "controller") capitalism, in which we live, the population (consumers) is monitored at every step, using ICT as a means of manipulating the masses, using increasingly sophisticated methods (Harari, 2014). Thus, the "domination" of the people occurs at the level of the psyche (hidden and decorated with harmless and very attractive "candy wrappers"), therefore, survival strategies, abstention from this "enchantment", are changing. In his search for the path "towards the light", "liberation", man denies all the old values: family, career, homeland, etc.; he seeks freedom in relationships, excessively uses indecent vocabulary, and explores other resistance tactics (Zhizhko, Beltrán 2022, p. 17).

According to Mamardashvili (2020), today more than ever we don't dare to name things by their own name, recognize deceit, lies, cynicism, indirect violence, rudeness that surround us. We are inserted in the pseudo-linguistic structures that we create ourselves and we cannot get out of them. From there are born the new axiological categories that are distinguished by an absolutely new way of mentally capturing things (Mamardashvili, 2020).

It is evident that in the 21st century, there are structural changes in all areas of Latin American life, and this situation, forces educational researchers to question the pedagogical discourse and to change the approaches referred to the way of conceiving and practicing instruction. In this process, they take into account that pedagogical problems, far from being purely didactic, are closely linked to broader socio-cultural, political and economic problems.

For them it is unquestionably, that education does not exist outside of politics, as evidenced by the fact that developed countries invest massively and rapidly in their educational programs. Thus, public spending on education in the European Union corresponds to 5.1% of its GDP; in Iceland, 7.7%; in Sweden 7.2%; in Belgium, 6.7%; in Estonia, 6.6%; in Canada, 5.2%; in the US, 6.1; in Australia, 6.1%; in Israel, 7.1%; in Saudi Arabia, 7.8%, while in Brazil, 6%; in Argentina, 5%; in Colombia, 4.9; in Mexico, 4.3%; in Salvador, 4.1%; in Ecuador, 3.7; in Guatemala, 3.1%; (UNESCO-IE, 2022).

Likewise, developed countries are at the forefront of educational research: in the European Union, 300 dollars per person are invested in this area, in the Scandinavian countries, more than 400 dollars, in the United States, 600 dollars, in Japan, 700

dollars. Otherwise, in almost all LATAM countries, less than 10 dollars per person is invested in research and development (CEPAL-STAT, 2022).

Thus, the context of the modern world that is characterized by post-industrial development, "vigilant capitalism", "liquid society", seems like a two-edged sword: on the one hand, it shows its harmful nature for the development of education in LATAM; on the other hand, it serves as a catalyst for the union of the efforts of Latin American academics in search of a solution to the existing problem, so that they focus on creating new epistemological proposals. This situation opens up new claim possibilities so that scholars can build real collaboration networks that go beyond the limits and divisions of their own countries, in order to solve common educational problems.

Epistemologies of the South versus education in complexities

However, in this process of exploration and experimentation of new forms of organization of educational systems, of new approaches for the pedagogical foundation, it is important not to overreach, to be prudent, and to consider possible impacts and derivations. Unfortunately, at the regional level there are already some examples of excesses in the implementation of some theoretical approaches.

Therefore, in 2022, a large educational reform project begins in Mexico involving the professional pedagogical training of all basic and secondary education teachers. It is that on August 28, 2022, the Ministry of Public Education of Mexico reported that in public and private schools of basic, upper secondary and pedagogical professional education, the new 2022-2023 school year will begin in person, 29 million 849 thousand 46 students, of which 24 million 479 thousand 952 are in basic education; five million 244 thousand 352 in upper secondary education; and 124 thousand 742 in pedagogical professional education (SEGOB-SEP, 2022). In this school year, for these almost 30 million Mexicans, the "new" *Plan and Study Program Basic Education 2022* with the ambition of erecting the *New Mexican School* (hereinafter, NEM) was proposed. In order to teach classes at the NEM, a teacher training process will begin in all schools in the country.

The *Plan* considers the following aspects as fundamental: the community as the core of the educational process; a graduation profile that seeks to train active citizens, participants, respectful of human rights and their diversity, self-confident, with high self-esteem, emotional stability, physical, sexual and reproductive health, who live with others and with the environment in harmony, with a highly critical, own and independent thinking that includes the cultural knowledge learned from their locality (SEP, 2022).

To achieve the above, it seeks to develop the following capacities as transversal axes throughout the entire process: critical thinking; critical interculturality; inclusion; gender equality; esthetic education; reading and writing in the approach to cultures, and healthy living. This, in turn, is organized into four disciplinary fields:

knowledge and scientific thought; idioms; ethics, nature and society; and from the human to the community (SEP, 2022).

The acquisition of these competences will ensure the *New Mexican School* that seeks “that the training of girls, boys and adolescents, at all levels, grades and modalities of basic education, allows the construction of an idea of the human being embodied in the collective subject that forms a whole with nature”. Likewise, the NEM seeks to “decolonize” the deconstruction of the subjective processes that establish a situation of oppression, and that require the construction of other alternatives of thought and action for emancipation (SEP, 2022).

The *Plan* recognizes the role of “knowledge” that are essential contents, equal in hierarchy. However, the latter will be interdisciplinary and will seek to solve the problems they find for the benefit of the communities of each school through the active participation of the students, thus promoting a profound transformation of Mexican society (Frade-Rubio, 2022).

The important feature of this document is that it is based on the ideologies of the left, in particular, on so-called epistemologies of the South, which recognizes that since the beginning of the conquest there has been a relationship of domination that it arises between a colonizing subject and another colonized that leads to an epistemic imposition of the strongest on those “historically victimized, exploited and oppressed by global capitalism and colonialism”; an assassination of the cognitive processes and the ways of knowing existing in the peoples that were colonized (Boaventura-de-Sousa, 2009, p. 12).

To transform this situation, Boaventura-de-Sousa proposes building a “new paradigm” that implies the inclusion of popular knowledge, not necessarily scientific, generated in the peoples that have been silenced by Western culture: indigenous peoples, women, the poor, oppressed and exploited, people with disabilities, the Afro-descendant population, etc. This would result in the construction of “global cognitive justice” that would translate into “decolonization”, would remove the “European construction of the minds of the conquered” (Boaventura-de-Sousa, 2009, pp. 41-50). These ideas served as the basis for the NEM.

Apparently, the NEM proposal is very tempting: the project, first of all, meets the aspirations of vulnerable groups, the least listened to; makes contributions for the improvement of the community through the active participation of students, etc. However, the ideas of the *Plan* have already received critics. Thus, Frade-Rubio (2022) considers that it could present serious constitutional problems, since

Although it is true that there are many contributions that emerge from popular knowledge, such as the use of medicinal herbs, proverbs, sayings, poems and songs, as well as family values, there are also others that have very negative consequences [...] Article 3 of the Constitution states that Mexican education must have unrestricted respect for human rights and these, by

definition, are "inalienable, imprescriptible and above all individual"; that is to say, that each boy, girl, adolescent or young person cannot be subsumed to a collective subject that emerges from the community and that is embodied in nature [...] education must be secular and that: "The criterion that will guide this education will be based on the results of scientific progress, it will fight against ignorance and its effects, servitude, fanaticism and prejudice" (Frade-Rubio, 2022).

On the other hand, it is also important to consider "the lessons of history", especially of the 20th century that brought to humanity several tragedies of genocide, wars, massacres, destruction caused by the simplistic or linear vision of the world: extreme left in the USSR (and its satellites) or the extreme right in Germany, Italy, Japan, which consequences are still being experienced in the 21st century (the war that the Russian Federation started against Ukraine, etc.).

In addition, it is not possible to think of "tradition" as a dimension that, coupled with the social and symbolic instruments of modernization, would serve as a normative basis for social actions and relations. In the words of Beck, Giddens and Lash (2001), modernity is not a linear process, but guided by the very plurality of the social order, which gains voice only in a context of reflexivity, generating a multiplicity of possibilities of being modern. Hence, reflexive modernization would be marked by the constitution of a "post-traditional society", in which the disconnection between tradition and memory associated with institutional reflexivity, would redefine the very statute of tradition, dissolving its moral and normative character in a process increasing "dis-traditionalization" (Beck, Giddens, Lash, 2001, p. 31).

In short, the processes of educational modernization cannot be thought linearly, "[...] the return to the religious and the mystical that jumps out in our current social and cultural context, would be an expression of the reflective dimension itself on the brutalization caused by those secularized discourses that seek to legitimize the spread of strategic rationality over an increasingly broad set of social institutions" (Touraine, 1994).

As an alternative to these radical epistemologies of leftist order, in the Latin American educational field emerge the positions that call for carrying out an in-depth analysis of pedagogical theory, looking for answers to the questions: What is education? What do we educate for? What is the best way to educate? What is the "ideal of man" that seeks to form in the XXI century? Given the dynamic, non-linear, interdisciplinary, heterogeneous, multiform and transversal character of the educational task and the construction of knowledge in today's knowledge society from the educational field that implies a diversity of challenges, they analyze educational phenomenon from complex thought and substantiate the education in complexities.

Thus, following complex thought, the determining elements of the educational process are openness, freedom, approximation, accessibility, logical pluralism; hen-

ce, it must be approximate, tentative, open, adaptive (like a living system). Teaching cannot cause learning, but rather condition it; determine it through uncertainty, chaos and disorders. Here, what the teacher teaches is not a dogma: the verification of the veracity of the acquired knowledge is done by the student in practice (Pagels, 1989).

Education does not have to focus on memory, didactics, programs, indicators, measurements, impact, skills, competitiveness, evaluations, criteria that characterize contemporary instruction. Rather, it is a system of increasing complexity, where complexity is a phenomenon that is based on the degrees of freedom that this system exhibits: the higher the degrees of freedom, the greater the complexity, or the lower degrees of freedom, less complexity. An increasing complex phenomenon is one that gains information, learns, or becomes non-linear (Morin, 2003).

In this new understanding of education, the current main feature of its formal variant, institutionalization and severe structures, is inadmissible. This process cannot be rigid, predictive as is the case with intentional conventional education. Nor is the transformation of the structural behavior of individuals granted in accordance with the ideal of man corresponding to the socio-political and economic aspirations of each culture (Maldonado, 2014, p. 17).

It is important to mention that from complex thought, in the Latin American educational field, attractive trends in the search for alternative solutions to educational problems emerged in the first two decades of the 21st century. Thus, one of the topics of discussion is ecosophical education. The epistemological foundation of these debates is the "complex transparadigm and transmethod, rhizomatic deconstruction in planetary decoloniality as a liberating project" (Rodríguez, 2022, p. 100). Such lines of research are proposed as: transepistemologies of knowledge, transcomplex transmethodologies and transcomplex transepistemologies of education.

It is that in the reconstruction of the ecosophical transformation of the student, there is the imperative of ontoepistemological liberation in light of the meaning of the categories "human condition", "learning", and "feeling-thought". This means empowering oneself from the greatness of what he/she is as a human being capable of transfiguring the world, "[...] to name things, to perceive, to understand, to decide, to choose, to value" (Freire, 2012, p. 39); and from there understand his/her value and that of the context where he/she is inserted; mastering the "art of living wisely on the planet", where feeling-thinking is a value of enormous ecosophic transformation, a significant rupture in the student, since: "[...] what I know, I know with my whole body: with my critical mind, but also with my feelings, with my intuitions, with my emotions [...] I must never despise them" (Freire, 2002, p. 63).

Consequently, ecosophy is a "cosmic existential proclamation, critical which exegesis follows a plural reasoning with a cultural and complex sense, but at the same time, involved with the destiny of man and the Earth, which converge in the social, spiritual, mental and environmental aspects" (Pupo, 2017).

Conclusions

So that from the end of the 20th century and until the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, the Latin American educational field is influenced by leftist theoretical, political and ideological tendencies, which advocate the development of the so-called epistemologies of the South full of cultivation and protection of tradition. On the other hand, as its alternative, since the end of the 20th century, education in complexities has been taking shape with its vision of rationalized and secular social life, creating new paradigms in education in the region.

Knowing in depth these contemporary pedagogical ideas would be vital for professionals from the governing bodies of education in LATAM. Thus, they would have more openness, they would become "non-linear" and more creative, ceasing to reproduce the old doctrines (whether leftist or rightist), risking their peoples to fall into the abyss of radical cultivars. Therefore, all these positive steps that Latin American governments undertake from one six-year term to the next to improve their educational systems would be successful and would give real positive results.

Likewise, there is hope that in this movement to modernize Latin American education, in the struggle for the rationalization and secularization of social life with the elements of cultivating and preserving tradition, the former will win, beginning the search for the new areas of opportunities for the regional educational field, registering in the complexities of the new global scenario and the international educational space.

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