

Pedagogy and quality education: an overview to the rural teacher's training

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Abstract

This article aims to present a critical reflection in light of quality and the pedagogical knowledge within the school context as a very important education subject. It parts from definition of quality and its relation with pedagogy; it also seeks to reflect on the formation of rural teachers from a critical perspective framed on the alleged correspondence between quality and education. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn to highlight a summary of the proposed thesis and some open questions to forward future works.

Key words: Quality, education, rural teacher, pedagogy, rural.

Introduction

Pedagogy is not just another discipline on man parallel to others, but it is also a kind of social super-knowledge which re-prepares and re-builds senses produced by those under perspective of formation of young individuals, within a determined historic-cultural horizon.

Rafael Florez (1993:49)

We may name pedagogy as the transmittance of a truth which function is to provide any subject with attitudes, capabilities and skills he did not have previously, and which he should bear by the end of such pedagogic relationship. As a consequence, it could be named as psychopedagogy transmittance of a truth which function is not to provide any subject with attitudes, capabilities and skills, but rather modify the way of being of such subject.

Michel Foucault (1994:102)

* Article of reflection derived from the research: Marginality in education public policies in Colombia 1994-2001: Sociabilities and subjectivities in current configurations of colonial modern world system of the Pedagogic Studies Interdisciplinary Group –GIDEP, human development line and education contexts. San Buenaventura University, Medellin. Researcher: Edwin Muñoz Gaviria.

The topic of quality is a situation stated by education policies¹ of competitiveness and trading for education and social development, this implies, to perform a review from the various points of view that critic and support its postulates. It could be argued, that discussing it bears various versions, characteristics of certain type, structure or method, which defined and oriented toward the educative act, also includes reflection by pedagogic subjects, and therefore, the question for pedagogy in this context. In other words, it becomes necessary to re-build, in general, some pedagogic conceptions that contributed to create what professors Echeverri and Zuluaga (2003) named conceptual field of pedagogy.

Within this perspective, various questions are asked on the role of quality in education scenario, and its possible contributions to pedagogy as knowledge of education; in other words, a critical review is made on theory of quality under a vision of the society or societies involved in management of late capitalism in search of its relationship to pedagogy.

For this work, revealing concepts of quality, pedagogy and education will be very important, with a differential approach from a linguistic pluralism and conceptual, which will allow to approach these topics from multiple conceptions and readings. Although it is necessary for a review of these theories, to consider them within a real context, and such context is the education scenario, therefore, the rurality topic and training of the rural teacher is brought in, and how this teacher should meet requirements of quality policies. It is not a matter of weakening or demonstrating hate to the topic of quality, it is rather, a constant concern about how it is approached in education context. Let's carefully examine this problem.

Material and methods

Theoretic framework on which the research was based on corresponds to contributions by critical theory, studies on modernity-coloniality, pedagogic anthropology, and analytic of power regarding policies production. The methodology of work is supported on narrative analysis as a strategy of analysis of speech and development of qualitative research techniques, aimed at analysis of education public policies issued in Colombia between 1994 and 2001.

The research is within the qualitative approach with hermeneutic orientation founded on analysis of speech. In research on planning and public policies, the number of studies in recent years have increased, driven by a post-structuralist posture on "analysis of the speech". This approach of the study of policies recognizes historical and cultural specifications of particular methods of knowledge of the world (Sharp and Richardson, 2001).

Analysis of speech has various meanings and scope, in concordance with a wide diversity of application possibilities, and based on three key categories: modern-colonial world system, marginality, sociabilities and subjectivities; varying from strictly linguistic approaches focused on communication, to approaches which include ideas and actions as parts of the speech (Sharp and Richardson, 2001). This implies that general treatment of the speech includes various approaches in which it may combine various elements of text, through systems, and action.

1. A theoretic route used to approach the analysis of public policies is the one which may derive from Michael Foucault's proposal. This author provides a perspective of analysis of modern societies from character constituting power relationships (1998). His genealogical approach allows to do a "history of the present", that is, how we have turned into societies and modern subjects (Foucault, 2000). For the author, power is neither an institution, or a structure or something of which some one would be gifted, it is rather a complex strategic situation in a given society (Foucault, 1981). This notion of power refers to establishment and transformation of a field of forces, in which instead of a state of domination, it operates as a productive network which crosses the whole social body (Foucault, 1998).

For this research, speech is understood as “a specific assembling of ideas, concepts, and categorizations which are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular scenery of practices, and through which meaning is given to physical reality and social” (Hajer, 1995:44). From a foucaultian perspective, the social change is conceived as a process and result from disputes and contradictions, where various systems of meaning or speeches, compete for influencing the society, and therefore, structure changes of the society may also be conceptualized as changes of relative influence of various speeches. For Hajar (1995), analysis of speech involves taking a glance at how systems are defined, built in particular forms, and given preeminences, how other topics and understanding of effects are not included, interest in power relations at stake.

Results

The project had the following researching advancements:

Regarding categories of modern – colonial world system analysis, it was possible to approach current geopolitical conditions giving sense to current configuration of such system regarding education, for such purpose, research contributions by the following authors have been taken into account: Marco Raul Mejia and Alberto Martinez Boom. Regarding marginality analytical category, a conceptual approach was made to theories of advanced marginality, through theories such as: Zygmunt Bauman (2006) and Olic Wacquant (2007). Finally, the category of subjectivities – sociabilities analysis, was given a theoretic investigation aimed at sociological theory related to integration and subjectivation, in the perspective of authors such as: Giddens (2003) and Elias (1999).

Discussion of Results

Some annotations on pedagogy and quality

	Analytical category	Modern Colonial word systems
Fields	Hegemonic globalization	Globalization against hegemonic
Context	Encounters, conferences, fourms	Encounters, conferences, alternative fourms
Public policies	Colombian education policy, education, epdagogy and geopedagogies	Manifestations of pedagogic movement and popular education (teachers' training)
Alternatives	How and why does it surge	How and why does it surge

	Analytical category	Marginality
Fields	Educative inclusión	Educative inclusión
Context	Integration	Segregation statements
Public policies	Approached topics such as coverage, alphabetization, inclusión, rurality, ¿when does inclusión turns into exclusion?	¿when does exclusion turns into inclusión?

	Analytical category	Subjectivities – sociabilities
Fields	Agents (the teacher)	Collective (the school)
Context	Ideals of the human being	Pressure groups –associations
Public policies	Ideals of the human being	Pressure groups –associations

Talking about pedagogy and quality in a changing and globalized world, leads us in definition and relationship of these two speeches that adversely affect education.

The first one, taken as a reflection of educative phenomenon and founding knowledge in teachers training, "Pedagogy is a discipline that studies and proposes strategies to individuals transition from the natural state to the human state" (Florez, 1994:89). Pedagogy should include at least a theoretic reference framework from which it contextualizes, rebuilds, and reinterprets segregated senses from approaches of other disciplines about conditions, actions, motives and purposes of actors direct or indirectly involved in educative process. In this sense, it is possible to consider pedagogy as the main fundamental of education, and the process should serve as the basis of school thought in every and all of its manifestations.

At first, for Olga Lucia Zuluaga (2003) pedagogic knowledge does not refer to any theory in particular, or a series of inarticulated concepts, but rather a methodological concept limited by how analysis are made in pedagogic practice in order to allow articulation of traditions and conceptions regarding the school, the teacher, training, teaching and formation of the subject. Thus, this knowledge turns into a tool box which allows gathering speeches related to education and formation, that enables identification of ideas and praxis to reivindicate the social commitment of teachers and training institutions.

It is worth to mention that, the matter of quality following critic authors having discussed and related it to education, (Ibarra, 2001; Grinberg, 2006) we could state that it has been hegemonized thanks to the type of society in which and from which it becomes strategic. For these authors, the type of society that allows this topic to surge, is the so called society of management. Defining it as:

Society or societies of management is an interpretation model of capitalist system, late and flexible capitalism, of the methods which divided the subject into production flows and consumption that do not have any center, of governability, nation states, and education proposed by Silvia Grinberg in Argentine journal of sociology. Understanding this society as new ways of government –control, in which the center is no longer regulation – auditing of a power located and concentrated in the State, but, circulation of power, which ends expressing in the autonomous capability which subjects supposedly hold, to elect and answer regarding conduction of their lives (Grinberg, 2006:70; Grinberg 2006:72).

Quality, seen from another perspective, in virtue of standardization processes and supposedly "understood as an integral attribute of education; it is then quality, in a first sense, an integral attribute of something, resulting from a synthesis of components and processes which produce and distinguish it" (PEB, 2007:67). In turn, the concept refers to universal characteristics and particular of something; and in addition, to processes through which such characteristics are configured. Quality of something is that thing which necessarily corresponds to it, and if lacking, affects its nature. The concept of quality is not absolute; properties expressing it are given in the time, and are related to the context.

In a second sense, quality of something is the measure, at which such something approaches to the ideal prototype, historically defined as optimal realization of which corresponds to it according to the kind it belongs to. (PEB, 2007). In this order of ideas, it is worth to question oneself, whether there is quality education, and whether or not it should serve pedagogy; if quality is not absolute, it should not be stated that there is a quality education, and that this arrangement feeds pedagogy but it is noto ver it.

It is talked about quality of education that is ambiguous, innocuous, which is a model to follow, but we do not know what it is, coverage is synonymous of quality, pedagogy is synonymous of quality, few concepts are used so frequently and ambiguously, as the one of quality "the Word quality, in fact, is applied both to life, individuals, or human relationships and goods and services, or processes and products" (Juste, 2005:12). The question surges, whether education is a product or a real property to be asked whether or not bears quality.

Designing here, these standards, pedagogy and education as non-separable fields, but adding quality to them, as the result of hegemonic processes culturally established, founded from economic and political interdependence, to meet the model of capitalist globalization (Mejia, 2007). It is then, when quality has entered into pedagogy and education, as to cause a kind of separation from pedagogy, by establishing patterns to be followed and forcing the education system to act under established standards – National Curriculum (Mejia, 2003), not to meet local reality – located globalizations – but for education to act within that global order – globalized locations.

This is what it is worth to analyze and/or question, whether education should either respond to globalized world economies, or whether it should be oriented to respond to local contexts but not global. The above, leads to question once again, if the education process does not respond to context needs but economic challenges of capitalist system, how education will become the privileged way to overcome poverty, and in turn, it is going to be the basis for human development, that is, standardization processes are in search of quality, but, what quality, if this is not absolute, since coherent processes are not produced, going over the pedagogic, and otherwise, increase inequality among actors.

In addition, it is worth to question, if revealing quality conceptions crossing education space and pedagogic practice, pedagogy being that question of reflection, which thinks of education and the individual, as the principle of formation and human development; it may be stated, that there are two possibilities, the one, which keeps a route in the sense of a state of the arts on quality education policies, and the other, which questions, whether in fact, the speech of quality is the one of pedagogy, and it has another relationship in pedagogic knowledge which is not quality, ¿what is it then?, 'what does pedagogy say of something close to what is stated by these speeches of quality?', ¿what does pedagogy talk about to refer to what we know as quality?

Now, is education policy which makes quality speech to surge, or is pedagogy the one that as a "discipline that contextualizes, applies and experiments skills regarding teaching related to exercise of knowledge, and integrity of any culture" (Echeverri and Zuluaga, 2003:111), and about this pedagogic relationship, relation is made regarding formation and education, the pedagogic knowledge is proposed as articulator of the pedagogic field, this is the one which talks about quality, or speech of quality is the result of a development of public policies.

However, Cano Garcia (1998) states that quality should be understood as "continuous construction process rather than as an outcome" (p.33). In this sense, quality is a philosophy that, in administrative matters, not in pedagogic, involved the educative community, implies and involves all of them in a common project on which all expectation for improvement and progress are deposited.

This is why, the concept of quality continues to be vague, notwithstanding, it acquires an operative or functional feature; this notion is presented in practice, as a kind of ideal but

diffuse vision, as a kind of slogan mobilizer of decisions and actions in education system (Cano Garcia, 1998), with no relationship to pedagogic knowledge. Although not explicitly defined, it is attributed an obvious feature, operating as a kind of umbrella under which it would seem to be allowed to implement various programs, and education actions shown on behalf of quality, that is, this name is not other thing but a smokescreen which conceals market interference in education scenery.

In other words, quality is introduced into education as a relevant objective for “educative development”, “the notion of quality is kept in a paradox, featured by superficiality and absence of accurate meaning. Consensus is not established regarding meaning, criterions or standards, which effectively allow evaluation quality of education system”² (Muñoz 2009:7). However, considering the local feature, which the notion of quality education would have, it would not be feasible establishing consensus regarding quality education meaning within Colombian and Latin American context, as Muñoz states:

[...] the topic of quality colonizes the socio –pedagogic spectrum of education, through standard apparatuses aimed at regulation of institutions, subjectivities and corporalities. Such regulation is presented as an identification of goals to be achieved, for which such institutions, subjectivities and corporalities should “freely” act or pursue achievement of such purposes. Thus, “quality education” will depend on following education purposes set by imposed standard devices (Muñoz, 2009:9).

Given this scenery, in the Colombian context, at establishing national quality standards³ of contents and performance, it should reflect what students are supposed to know by the end of each grade; these standardization methods of education system should be related to global economy needs, and democratic system (The future is at stake,1998:15), in addition to introducing nationwide standardized tests, and use these results to reallocate funds and investment per student, and participate in international tests which allow to compare – measure schools quality, as related to other countries, likewise, these standards bear the function of establishing performance assessments which allow to measure quality minimal level of students and teachers in the whole country.

Regarding evaluation, it is reduced to results of standardized tests, and in turn, these should be used to feedback policies and practice in education area so as to allow modifying and improving what occurs at the classroom, forgetting evaluation as a construction continuous process, and comparing public education to results from private education, that is, the student and his process depend on domestic and international tests, nothing related to contexts.

For this case, when Marco Raul Mejia talks about education as a merchandise, he does not get far from pretensions framed by the speech of education quality, since it refers to education community – students, parents, teachers and staff – as education consumers; it is based on privatization and decentralization of the same, tacitly oriented in the later to reestablish power on school institutions, and thus governments ignore education processes; “aspects that produce more inequality and greater problems”, (Mejia, 2003, 2003:28), which responds to neoliberal globalization and decentralization of social systems.

Finally, abandoning critic, and now talking from “quality education”, which does not have a clear definition, yet, it may be claimed that it is a consequence of transformation.

2. Report of the state of the arts, International policies influencing Education Quality. San Buenaventura University, 2009.

3. In Marco Raul Mejia's words, it is a national curriculum, not a hegemonic project on education centered on standards and competences, declaring the educative event as technical, with no ideology and with no politics.

Thinking of quality is thinking a series of implicit factors, better expressed, it is a process, it may be read from multiple phases: Education as a right and as the guarantee of economic, human and social development⁴

¿and what about the rural teacher, his training, and the quality matter?

Arriving to this point, where pedagogy, education, and quality have been contextualized, and in terms of professor Mejia, “Technocratic look taken to the school, ignores pedagogy to be turned into a technical function and complementary of the education event” (Mejia, 2003:13), referring to actions and education dispositions in speeches coming from management and economy. Parallel to this hegemonic speech, in this dynamics of globalization a new vision of social structures as surged, and specifically, it also occurs that conception of rurality, and its influence on productive processes, and therefore educative of contexts, is modified.

Regarding this matter, an outline is made on relationship between education and rurality and its approach regarding quality education and the rural teacher, notwithstanding this situation of globalization has structurally modified the look of the rural and how economic and education policies have affected rural development.

It would be necessary to state that, new ways of seeing rurality surge, what historically is known as rural has been transformed, traditional characteristics have been modified, shown by the impact of capitalist trends. Second and third level economic activities are increasingly found in fields, new tools, new information sources, new processes which weaken paradigm conceived so far on rurality.

It is worth to mention, that the “rural transcends to the agricultural in terms of their relationship to urban contexts” (Perez, 2003:4), and in this sense, making a rupture in hierarchic development schemes and conceptions surged parting from these contexts. Once this is registered, it may refer to rural education and its relationship to the speech of quality education, in the sense that, a number of reflections of various kinds educative thought join, therefore, it could be thought that a rural quality education is the one which meets contexts, so that there is coherence between quality education and specific needs.

At this state of things, questions would be made on relationship of pedagogy, quality and the topic of rurality. It is here, where to talk in key or rurality, it is necessary to raise more questions; it is the question for the rural teacher within the above described context; how the topic of quality contributes to rural education, and training of the rural teacher. In summary, if education should be stated from the conception of the world of reality, specific contexts, how to respond before these new challenges stated by quality in the rural world.

As it is known, the task of training teachers in Colombia corresponds to higher education pedagogic schools, which base their performance on specific contexts according to the area of influence, and education faculties which mission is to train a teacher for tasks and specific courses of knowledge under a teaching/pedagogic context; therefore, this is the task of teacher-training institutions, to educate professionals of education and pedagogy.

4. From a critic-reconstructive look, it may be stated that quality assumes the historical role of revisiting old slogans articulated toward world hegemony of an instrumental vision of the social and individual. It is quality, actualization of civilizing ideas which gave surge to distinction between the civilized and the barbarian, between the perfect and the degenerated, between developed ones and underdeveloped. In Muñoz' words (2009) it is an “imaginary of perfection where dynamics of production of alternative spaces, contain forces for a development for all people, but in such a manner that subject may develop on restricted basis. Thus, quality embodies today the old civilizing thesis according to which: there is no major coercion than the one coming given as self-coaction”, or as Rousseau would claim: “there is no major subjection than the one which keeps appearances of freedom, because the own interest is captured in it”, (Muñoz, 2009:8).

This matter leads us to think of formation of the rural teacher, from theoretic perspective of this research; the teacher is seen as a subject of pedagogic knowledge (Zuluaga, 1999). This is, an education actor who may build the conceptual field and applied to pedagogy as a subject of knowledge who understands that pedagogy as a knowledge, requires reflection, analysis, and feedback in teaching – learning and formation processes. Therefore:

The teacher, more than the same school institutionality, is the permanent object of policies, programs, analysis, research and proposals. In every and all cases the teacher is identified as the one holding a great responsibility to education, to pedagogy, children and young individuals whom the teacher educates, to parents, and the society in general; however, perhaps his formation is not sufficient, and therefore, the teacher lacks of a solid knowledge, which would call for training, improvement, pedagogic thought, and qualification to be able to meet such responsibility (Zuluaga, 1984:48 & Echeverri, 1989:96).

The Teacher is included in the principle in order to indicate that since there, since his constitutive history, his practices and experiences, the initial question is asked: ¿what is a teacher, of a professor? ¿in what historical, social, political and cultural dynamics that subject-object of analysis, Andy daily performance, is configured? (Pontificia Bolivariana University, School of Education and Pedagogy, 2009)

It is precisely this conception of the teacher, which, on judgment of many contemporary analysts, is in check by the instrumentalizing version of the teacher, proper of current education policies aimed at teacher formation (Mejia, 2007).

Therefore, quality before these scenarios, and its relationship to the school as a clear scope for social development, should assume adoption of management processes which do not weaken pedagogic knowledge, but otherwise, provide it with feedback; this relationship should be aimed at construction of a flexible and pertinent curriculum which ensure rural population customs, encourages and qualifies inhabitants of such areas, by providing them with education coherent with their local reality, without disregarding the global, but centered on regional needs rather than global ones⁵

Finally, reflection made is configured as a brief approach to the topic of pedagogy and education promoted from the new transformed reality, vision of the rural teacher, should be fundamentally oriented to pedagogic knowledge as the basis for construction of skills for future education professionals, and formation, taking into account today, the second place pedagogy has taken about speeches coming from commercialization.

Conclusions

Several questions surge at completing this work, firstly, if speech of quality is a metanarrative of pedagogy, and therefore, of education. In other words, a speech that totalizes and universalizes the whole education process and toward which school activities should be aimed; secondly, the question is, if, should pedagogy serve quality? Or otherwise, is quality serving pedagogy?

5. On this matter it would be pertinent to recover the following reflections made by theoretic Boaventura de Sousa Santos when states that the globalization process is unequal and asymmetric, and which shows very different consequences and often contradictory in the center and the periphery of world system. For this author, globalization is "a process through which certain condition or local entity expands its scope to tel whole globe, and, by so doing, acquires the ability of designing as local rival conditions or entities". To explain these interpretations, he distinguishes the following globalization methods: globalized localism, it is a process through which a local phenomenon is successfully globalized; generally, globalization of local practices starts in the center of world system, and are later expanded and disseminated to the periphery and semi-periphery. Localized globalism is the specific impact of practices and translational imperatives on local conditions. Cosmopolitanism is related to translational organization of subordinated nation-States, regions, classes and social groups and their allies, in defense of interests perceived as common, taking advantage of possibilities for transnational interaction created by the world system.

If the horizon is quality, where does pedagogy remain, ¿is quality an application field of pedagogy, as education is?, which is not clear yet, is show the sense of quality is filled: ¿what is it? And ¿how is it achieved?

Lastly, we could state that if pedagogy is the one that guides education phenomenon, it is the task of teacher trainers to interpret such situation and guide future teachers toward critical reflectibility, that every teacher should bear, and definition of professional identity of the teacher, as an educator, as an expert on education, since that is his action field, but not psychology, nor administration, and much less quality.

We then consider, quality as a “reality” or “utopia”, it is configured as the best way of mentioning success of education subjects (students, parents, teachers, staff) within the context of the management society; therefore, his ability to condition human existence by means of disciplining and control strategies, such as: accountability of the subject in achieving success, competitiveness as a social foundation, and rational election as accurate calculation of opportunity costs.

Finally, the concept of quality is not univocal, but, otherwise, there are differences, visions and approaches, depending on various factors, such as functions assigned to education at certain moment and context, conceptions on learning and teaching, or requirements of the society, to mention some of them. The debate is open, and questions as well.

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