INTE 2014

The importance of teaching methodology in higher education: a critical look

Daniel Carlos Gutiérrezª, Elia Guadalupe Villegasᵇ*  
ª Universidad de Sonora, Blv. Luis Encinas, Hermosillo, Sonora 83000, México  
b Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Av. Universidad 3000, México D.F., 04510, México

Abstract

This text talks about teaching methodology in the field of higher education institutions and reflects on the loss of importance of this area, like other areas of humanities and social wins. This in a Mexican context where policy reforms are based on the requirements of the business and economic world, from logic of capitalist production. In other words, it raises questions about how education tends to decrease production, ignoring its social function: the intellectual development of a society.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/). Peer-review under responsibility of the Sakarya University

Keywords: methodology, higher education, teaching.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: 6621710990; 5534282962  
E-mail address: ddegutier@sociales.son.mx ; eliavillegasl@hotmail.com
Introduction: From where do think the loss of importance of methodology and teaching?

How to understand this shift or minimizing the importance of methodology and teaching? From where to reflect the loss of importance of methodology in the intellectual training of university? In the search for arguments to answer these and other questions, we can say that it is possible to address this issue as part of a multi-causal phenomenon is not limited to the contexts of education (where both the mean and higher education is involved) but that is part of related economic and political dimensions processes.

It seems that as a specific problem is not related to these dimensions, it is very far from having any type of relationship and might also think that this is a purely pedagogical problem, as to how to teach research techniques or, to a matter of conceiving the methodology according to particular perspective, i.e., to raise this issue as a problem of techniques and tools and not as a problem of method (commonly methodology only associated with instrumental aspects of the research process) as part of an articulated process.

However, this problem is immersed within a broader process involving displacement, minimization and even the disappearance of subjects related to philosophy (ethics, logic), History and other subjects in the field of Humanities (For example you can see the guidelines of the Comprehensive Reform of higher - RIEMSER Media Education). So that the subjects related to these fields of knowledge have been considered unnecessary because it is not directly linked to the sphere of economic production company, obtaining profits. In other words, not being associated with the market.

These ideas come from economic processes, typical of the neoliberal stage of capitalist development (standardization processes to streamline the production world, introduced system-wide) globalization. From central to peripheral economies, local governments then become guiding public policy of economic, political, educational, and so on. It is articulate social processes to the market dynamics. So that education is part of the fabric of systemic strategies. It can be seen from the perspective of the link that has the dynamics of production with the political direction of society, education and culture and, in general, all areas of society. This is the context in which to locate our problem of reflection.

In education, the problem is presented as a series of transformative politics: several education reforms, changes to plans and curricula that meet the needs of the world of production, quantitative evaluation processes (through indicator matrices), incentive programs, etc. In this sense what prevails in the academic reforms are political decisions, to realize, in terms of educational and pedagogical models and content guidelines imposed by the logic of the market (see for example the implementation of the competency model as a driver for Comprehensive Reform Superior- RIEMSER - Media Education and the adoption by many Institutions of Higher Education -HEI; recently Pact for Mexico, at the initiative of President Enrique Peña Nieto involving the constitutional reform of Article III and thus a series of, even unweighted, changes in education. Moreover, the excessive growth of private universities from the 90s of last century.

So that the context in which the methodology its teaching and its importance in the academic and intellectual training, and not just for the training of scientists is located, can be seen from a related logic with an articulated process: market dynamics - control and direction of social - training skilled workforce according to standardized criteria.

I. - Linking economic processes under the guidance of education

Since 1982 the world has changed drastically, were set aside Keynesian formulas hitherto subsisted, in which the role of the state played a central role in the organization and management of social processes. Formulas that allowed face the consequences and aftermath of the economic crisis of 1929, which in one way or another it possible to consolidate the global hegemony of the United States became a new model of accumulation, which was given to the market and not the State the lead for the organization of social life on a global scale paper.
The changes resulting from this model were in all spheres of social life, from the world of production to the sphere of public life, to health, culture and education course.

On the one hand, production processes were standardized, international standards were established whose purpose was not only to streamline and accelerate the recovery of profits, but mainly standardize and simplify the production process where skilled labour was not as important as a series of replaceable, docile and undemanding in terms of salary skills (e.g., unions themselves became the less spaces of resistance to these changes or in legitimizing instances of economic processes).

In this context, two aspects are central. First, the need to accelerate the accumulation of wealth and, secondly, modify the schemes relating to the workforce. Hence the imperative to standardize the profiles to form the new type of worker required by this economic model, a convenient ideology to accumulation scheme. It was treated by multiplying the market action and limit state intervention, because the market is not corrupt and the state itself.

The production processes require competent staff in specific stages. The core competencies required for the standardization of production are defined. Hence the structure of the core competencies model is exported to other spheres of social life, so relevant to education. You have to remember multiple assessments and recommendations the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has been formulated to Mexico as a result of joining this organization and that have guided the changes and reforms in the education sector. Of the most recent, the Cooperation Agreement Mexico - OECD Improving the Quality of Education in Mexican Schools (2010), Education at a Glance (2012), OECD Perspectives for Change (2012), among other guidance documents.

These circumstances have had at least two important implications for education. First, move the training process for institutions of higher and higher in order not to sacrifice profits secondary education. Through incorporation into the curricula of the idea of internships, entrepreneurial programs responsibility to educational institutions to train future employees according to the competency model moves.

Put another way, what has been discussed is that institutions of higher education and media absorb the cost of training for the formation of labour force according to the needs of businesses, i.e., the market. The second transformation plans, curricula and content according to this logic.

The problem is not professional practices, entrepreneurs or programs, but the bias standardization gives only benefit the market. As most of the graduates of universities (and public baccalaureate) are formed under the same powers, become interchangeable and expendable parts. Under these implications have been made various changes and reforms in the middle and higher education system.

These are some of the reasons why some subjects of Social Sciences and Humanities and teaching (methodology, philosophy, logic, history, arts and other cultural expressions) are unnecessary to the market and therefore can be expendable. Thus, the methodology only technical aspects necessary backing required to produce quantitative, descriptive knowledge. It matters only what fits the competency model. Then, the methodology is useful for opinion polls, market research, trends and consumer behaviour, political orientations, and so on. Nothing else comes into the scheme and can minimize or even eliminate shifting of academic and intellectual development of students.

Although very brief way, the above are observation points where we can reflect and explain what has been happening with teaching methodology and little importance is given to the training of students. We can summarize the above in the following aspects:

1. The processes of the neoliberal stage of capitalism have required rebuilding the workforce from logical standardization with certain powers in specific segments of the production process, from manufacturing to consumption.
2. The responsibility for job training has been fully transferred to educational institutions, which has meant shifting the costs to the financing of public education.

3. Own market interactions have built a legitimizing discourse for educational institutions, expressed in the competency model, professional practices, entrepreneurs and programs linking Business College.

4. Market needs do not require a critical training in the sense of imaginative thinking, creative but pragmatic graduates with skills, usefulness and immediate application, while the competition model has been transferred from the world of production to academia.

5. These educational processes have formed a pliable, flexible, expendable, standardized workforce.

6. The teaching methodology is the predominant regards training manuals based on and limited to teaching technical and instrumental resources, but do not seek explanations quantitative data.

According to the above, it is possible to approach to understand the logic of the transformations and changes that have generated plans and curricula, the importance of the methodology and its teaching and relationship with economic processes and the displacement, minimization of secondary and higher education.

II - Policy and teaching methodology

It seems an exaggeration to speak of a relationship between the political process and the importance of methodology and teaching. However, there is a relationship, but certainly not directly but as a result of political decisions materialized in the form of government programs.

It is reasonable to think that the year 1982 marked one of the first steps in the development stage of global capitalism in the sense that gives De Sousa (2005, p. 260) "Globalization is a set of policy decisions both identified over time and in relation to its authorship. The Washington Consensus is a political decision of the central states, such as the decisions of the states that adopted demonstrating autonomy and a more or less relative selectivity". The fact is that these events from the world begins to change depending on the decisions that were traversed by economic interests. It is understood that the globalization process is proposed to refine a model of accumulation for the benefit of the core states.

It should distinguish globalization as an ongoing process of product development incorporating science and technology to social processes, changes that have occurred in the economic progress. In both processes the changes have occurred on a global scale. The first will continue on the ruins of the neoliberal stage.

In the field of politics is where decisions have given more emphasis to introduce the changes necessary for the development of the neoliberal model. Says David Apter (1971) that no modernization efforts of economic processes can occur without the corresponding political modernization of the countries. That is, without the introduction of mechanisms to control and direction that enable the social introduction of economic innovations. This process of introduction of neoliberal strategies is given as a kind of paradox, because while the policy is necessary for the implementation of the model, while it is relegated to the background in order to limit the state's participation in the processes economic.

The result of this paradox was the subjugation of politics to private interests, or economic interests. Public life was subordinated to the action of the privatization process. In other words, these are interests that dominate the field of public life. Each time the privatization effort invades social spheres, as health and social security education and culture.

In Mexico, for two examples, public health has been changing the popular insurance, a responsibility of the state to an individual problem, not part of institutional responsibility and other, subject recruitment, those who can do, insurance medical expenses that offer private health care. Another case is that of education, through the growth of the supply of private education and the rise of public education services (as reflected in the fees and administrative
services). Both health and education have been transformed from state responsibility for raw material market.

Governments (mainly from 1988 to date) have defined strategies and public policies to realize these processes, while they have transferred their political and social forces of the market (Hertz, 2002) responsibility. This means that the policy has been subordinated to economic processes. These are the underlying circumstances of the crisis of politics: public administration under the logic of the private. So that policy decisions are oriented to bring to market all spheres of public life that can be highly profitable, as in the case of education.

To illustrate transcribe a note from the mexican newspaper La Jornada (Thursday January 3, 2013, p.4 ) states that “Suddenly, public education has become a new market, thanks to the reforms implemented over the past decade An investor conference ... stakeholders in the education sector for profit (Capital Round table for - profit education Private Equity conference) , in July last year, said that education is now the second largest market in the United States , valued at $ 1.3 trillion ... Indicates that are expanding opportunities in the education sector profit -oriented , thanks to initiatives promoted in Congress ... “

In our country, under the pressure of international organizations ( IMF, World Bank and OECD), which highlights the diagnoses, guidelines and agreements in relation to education, the OECD has proposed guidelines to "improve the quality of education " that since the nineties have been given (see for example the Cooperation Agreement Mexico - OECD, Improving the Quality of Education in Mexican Schools , OECD, 2010, which is one of the underpinnings of educational reform Raised by the President Enrique Peña Nieto and approved by the Congress ) have become guiding government policies .

Two points can be highlighted from the introduction of such strategies for education, in this case for higher education (e.g. the establishment of the Comprehensive Program for Institutional Strengthening ( IIFT ), which has involved the management resources through the implementation of indicators or Incentives Program Teaching Performance representing , through the assessment of teacher productivity, financial compensation), one of them is the political control of the institutions through allocation of resources and funding, without which public universities could not function, the other aspect is the financial control of institutions by the federal education authorities. It is clear that the problem did not have any assessments or financial control, but the political bias that have been given.

On these approaches, essentially political, have boosted academic reforms within universities and institutions of higher education, seeking to establish the competency model and management guidelines as the preferred option for the transformation of the plans and programs of study and modifying its contents. And this comes from the logic of wealth accumulation model to guide policy decisions and the nature of government programs.

So, you can locate some central features that give meaning to political -education- teaching methodology for:

1. The neoliberal policy has subordinated the interests of the market.
2. The State, understood as government becomes an instrument to guide the privatization impulses in all areas of social life.
3. Education has become a vehicle for market consolidation in a twofold way: it has turned education into a commodity and has become a space for forming docile, flexible workforce with the basic skills required by production processes.
4. Movements have arisen academic reform oriented policy decisions to stimulate and shape the processes of transformation of education.
5. Have moved all content and assignments that are not functional or can be linked with market needs.
6. Politics has become the means and scope to boost privatization currents.
Final comments

From here, it can locate at least three central aspects of the importance of the methodology:

1. The declining importance for the low value and character that has been awarded the management of a set of techniques, tools and instruments taught easy application, making it unattractive to students.
2. The contents of the materials related to the methodology have been limited to instrumental techniques and management tools cut qualitative or quantitative. This has involved recognizing only the empirical dimension of the research process. So that the method and the method is confronted.
3. The teaching methodology is to be characterized as a practice based on manual and often taught by teachers with an inadequate profile to provide content related to the epistemological dimension of the process of knowledge generation. Correspond to consider the epistemological and methodological dimension as a basic articulation in the production of scientific knowledge (knowledge object reconstruction and its empirical verification).

Finally, after the foregoing it should ask the question what will happen when the constraints imposed by the economic model change and needs to solve the new problems of the world are other societies? It is highly likely that this trend will continue to increase, future generations (in the short term according to the idea of Braudel) confronted with the problem of the loss of scientific vocations.

From this perspective the loss of importance of teaching methodology and represents a problem in the future if universities are neglecting teaching thinking and thereby build the resources to explain the emerging problems, to produce knowledge that respond to emerging problems they present to future generations.

References

Apter David 1971, Choice and politics allocations: A developmental theory, Yale University Press, USA.
De souse S. Boaventura, Information statutes of the Integral Reform of Media High Education in Mexico.
OECD: http://oecd.org/edu/mexico
General Guidelines for a model curriculum of the University of Sonora, Mexico 2003.
Guide rod, University of Sonora www.uson.mx.
Gallegos , Carlos, The process learning of Social Science Methodology: A Case Study , School of Social and Political Sciences , UNAM, Mexico, 2005.
Hertz, Noreena, 2002, the Silent Takeover, Planeta, México
Innovation strategies and methods and materials for teaching research methodology in Social Sciences Research Project, FCPyS, National Autonomy University of México, 2004
Wallerstein Immanuel 2002, After the Liberalism, Siglo XXI, México
http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2013/01/03/politica/004n1pol
http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2013/01/03/politica/002n1pol