

ΣΟΦΙΑ—SOPHIA

Objectives of research in education and pedagogy in Colombia

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Abstract

We present the investigative tendencies (regions) that emerge in Colombia from the purposes or objectives of the theses carried out in graduate programs (Master degree and doctorate) in education and pedagogy in the last decade (2000-2010). The study was carried out from a complementarity approach proposed by Murcia and Jaramillo, articulating the logics of Michael Serres, in terms of mapping social phenomena and interpretive hermeneutic views to access these reliefs in a landscape perspective, which allowed to unravel the visible and scarcely visible protrusions, ridges and great plains of research in education and pedagogy in a great extent of the investigative national geography; in the case of this article, referred to its pretensions. The sympathetic region stands as one of the most prominent protrusions of this landscape, succeeding in displacing, and almost entirely hiding regions highly relevant in the past, such as those whose purposes were explanatory, diagnostic, correlational or comparative.

Key words: research, qualitative research, research method, research goals.

Introduction

In a study carried out in agreement with several universities of the country, "Investigative Regions in Education and Pedagogy in Colombia: Construction of a map of research activity for the period 2000-2010," we sought to explore the landscape of the research in education and pedagogy that is being done in the country, and what better scenario to carry out this expedition than the fertile geography of the graduate programs (Master degree and doctorate) in this field. The scenario for such purposes was located in a line of research created within the framework of the Doctorate in Social Science, Childhood and Youth. The line-group: "Pedagogy, imaginary and inter-subjectivities".

In the framework of the line, there were burning debates about the nature of research in education and pedagogy; or perhaps, educational and pedagogical? Issues that were differentiated and articulated in order to find a practical and theoretical possibility that was synthesized in (the fact) that the most obvious information in this field would be found in research in education and pedagogy, since this implied the studies carried out on these aspects, and not the processes of training from them.

Another issue to be resolved was related to the nature of the field, viewed from the social (point of view) and its scientific -epistemological validity (Meyer, 2001). Some questions that guided the debates were: Is research structurally defined by hegemonic methods in the framework of their ontological and epistemological perspectives? Or on the contrary, is it defined by the researcher in recognition of the complex nature of objects and research problems?

At the heart of this discussion was the question of the possibility of constructing the object or of assuming the objects as definite and definitive. The agreements were finally built in terms of recognizing the research in the cosmos of intentional-human and social options, and the need to construct objects and recognize, within these constructed objects, research problems.

If so, the possibility of recognizing research in Colombia was not a mere description, since it implied, in fact, assuming paradigms or models from which to make the descriptions, what would happen then with the studies that would not be located in any of the supposed research models? It was necessary in some cases to interpret the research in order to define its particularities. Two things were emerging in the discussions; one of them referred to the method to follow; the other one, the support theories that would guide the study.

Several studies frankly showed the tendencies of research in education and pedagogy, but they implied analysis only of some components of them (basically their themes and methods). It was not a matter of doing another study on research in Colombia, but of proposing a way to do it, that would leave emerge emergencies regarding the ways in which this process is addressed in Colombia. One of whose emergencies is the subject of this report (its purposes).

The theoretical possibility of such an event was provided by the theory of Michel Serres, (1995, 2001, 2003), who from his proposals of mapping social and human realities made it possible not only to recognize the surfaces of the landscape, but to also locate the particularities of the relief for deepening in its hollows, steep slopes and plains, both in what it is, as what is to be in the geography of research in education and pedagogy.

The approach of complementarity proposed by Murcia and Jaramillo offered the option of recognizing the problems to the extent of the complexity of the constructed objects, and with it, the possibility of articulating methods of collection, processing and interpretation, focusing the force on the designs before than in the particular methods.

With these clarities, there emerged questions that would help guide the investigation:

What are the research regions in education and pedagogy that are identified in the production of knowledge in a master's degree program? What are the characteristics of their geography? What are the regions contributing to the configuration of the national territory in terms of research in education and pedagogy?

Materials and methods

As it has been expressed, the objects' nature to be investigated in the present study articulates an evident comprehensive intentionality to build from this approach, the regions that emerge as observables¹, on which the processes of collection and deep analysis will be carried out. In these processes, the information that emerged as a construction of meaning and grouped in the defined observables was very useful, and (it was) later interpreted as schemes of intelligibility² of the community of researchers in pedagogy and education.

The complementarity approach allowed to focus and analyze in depth the diversity of this information, given precisely the possibility of assuming social realities in the magnitude of their complexity, and therefore the need to generate proposals, also complex, for theoretical and methodological analyses that allow to understand the fragment of reality studied in its multiple interactions. In this perspective, in the first place, the method is of secondary importance since it is part of the design that is constructed from the very nature of the problem; here, what is important is not the method used but the constructed design, in which different methods can be defined, provided that they help the process of understanding the analyzed realities. Secondly, and in consideration of the above, the problem and the design are the first construction of meaning; therefore, they are elaborated from reality itself, converging in management fields, which as observables are deepened in the field work (Murcia & Jaramillo, 2008).

Design

The design for the study was consolidated from three moments:

1. Construction of the file

At this time, a first approach to the reality of educational research in Colombia was made, based on the tracking of research in the master's degree programs, from this initial search, build a file (Riep 1) that would allow a general view of the magnitude of the sources and their location.

Procedure

It consisted in selecting and grouping systematically the theses generated in the different master's degree and doctorate programs in Colombia. This first look allowed us to define the amount of theses existing between 2000 and 2010, the location of these and the source of consultation; either as an article, text or report. The gathering of this information was done in an instrument constructed as a database and named *RIEP 1* (see next page) for the present investigation, which is shown below.

2. Initial processing

This moment of the study sought, in the first place, to define the theses that would be considered for the analysis; and second, to carry out an initial processing of the selected theses.

Procedure

In the national project, and based on the data included in the RIEP1, it was defined the sample of the master's degree and doctorate programs that would be considered for the analysis in Colombia.

On the total of master's degree and doctorate program theses completed up to 2010, the initial processing of the information contained in them was carried out. This process allowed for the elaboration of some initial categories that became foci of understanding, from which, it was carried out the gathering of each thesis in a matrix that contained the focus categories: location, author, year, population, purpose, topics addressed and theories of support, methodological procedure and results. The objective of this process was initially to locate the focus categories; and subsequently, to consolidate a database of the selected theses, with the main components that constitute it. The process was carried out in an instrument built for that purpose (RIEP 2).

3. Definition of emerging categories

It consisted in the processing and analysis of the theses to define the emerging regions from the categories defined as foci of understanding in the RIEP 2.

RIEP1. Table to gather the general information of master's degree and doctorate programs on education and pedagogy in Colombia

Phonologic structures (stress, peaks, volume, intonation)
 Graphic structures (headlines, bold type)
 The ordinance and general size (first and then, higher/lower, bigger or smaller, preponderance and inferiority)
 Syntactic structures (word order, topicalization, clause relations: main and subordinate, frontal or embedded; divided structures)
 Semantic structures (explicit vs. implicit, detail and description level, semantic macrostructures vs. details).
 Lexical style (positive opinion words vs. negative)
 Rhetorical (overestimation, underestimation, euphemism, repetition).
 Schemes or superstructures (expressed in conventional visible categories, for example, headings or conclusion, relate and argumentation).
 Pragmatic (assertion against negation, self-complacency vs. accusation).
 Interactive (self-selection and predominance; maintenance and topic exchanges; non-verbal communication: face, gestures).

Source: Research Group on Regions in Education and Pedagogy in Colombia

Table 1. RIEP 2. Instrument to gather the information of selected master's degree programs

RIEP 2										
Record of research production of master's degree and doctorate programs registration by type of product and description of contents										
Region: _____										
City: _____										
Institution: _____										
Dependence: _____										
Investigative Unit: _____										
Identification			Identification of contents and methodology							
NO	Title	Author's name	Year of approval	Place of research	Sources of information	Themes approached	Methodological options	Objectives/Goals	Theoretical perspective	Grade

Using the *ATLAS ti* as a tool, there were created as free categories the ones defined in the previous moment, contained in the RIEP 2. Around them, the components of the different investigations were grouped in order to configure the regions in each of the defined focuses.

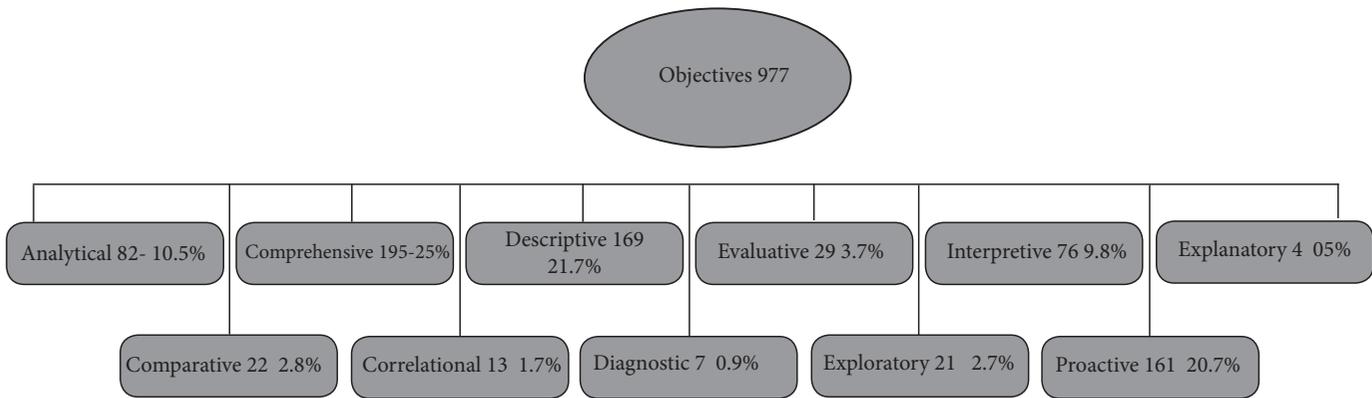
Results

In this article, we present the findings of the research process regarding the “Objectives” focus of understanding. In this, there were grouped the regions according to the purposes of the different studies in education and pedagogy developed in the master’s degree and doctorate programs in Colombia, taking as sample 779 theses that were analyzed in their entirety, within the framework of the defined focus categories (in this case, objectives). In some investigations, they referred to objectives; in others, to pretensions; in some, to purposes; and in others, they were not explicit, being necessary to deduce them from the general reports. The groupings were made taking into account the teleology of the works, in terms of the final pretension of the study. In the above sense, the following research regions can be glimpsed:

Studies whose pretensions are analytical, comprehensive, comparative, correlational, descriptive, diagnostic, evaluative, exploratory, interpretive, explanatory or proactive.

A region that stands out with great relevance within the framework of its pretensions is the *Comprehensive region*, with a relevance of 25% represented in 195 references of the 779 taken into consideration. Reference is made to that, whose objectives seek to walk the relief, search its steep slopes and walk its plains and slopes recognizing the total contexts from within, without caring too much the extensions traveled. Because of this, they go deep into the hollows of the landscape, taking it as their own reference. Its interest is practical, and therefore it is based on the historical-social relations of education and pedagogy in its profound recognition from the very scenarios of everyday life.

The importance of this type of studies is assumed by compressive currents driven by hermeneutics, with authors such as Dilthey, Droysen, Simmel, Max Weber; and the subsequent developments of the critical theory of language, in particular the contributions of Wittgenstein and the theorists of the Frankfurt school, among whom Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Fromm and Habermas stand out with the theory of communicative action as its great synthesis (cited by Habermas, 1999). Likewise the group of hermeneutical phenomenology theorists such as Schütz (2003), Heidegger (1977) or Gadamer (1984). As a whole, *Verstehen* is a way of accessing social and human realities outside of mathematical



Source: Research Group on Regions in Education and Pedagogy in Colombia

languages, experimental methods and explanatory forms (cause and effect) and without the pressure of universal laws.

The second region that is surveyed at national level is the *Descriptive Region*, where studies that fundamentally seek to represent the realities of education and pedagogy are framed. This region is located in a high place, with a relevance of 21.7%, and 169 references. There belong to this category those studies that mark the realities (Serres, 1995); not as a deep exploration but as recognition of the landscape to color its boundaries and define its specific characteristics. They do not walk through the hollows of the relief, but they demarcate it and represent it as a general landscape. Their objective, Deobold, Van & Meyer (2011) say, is to get to know the prevailing situations, customs and attitudes through the exact description of activities, objects, processes and people. This type of studies has been considered as the first level of research, generally developed by those who are beginning in these processes; however, it is not less important than other “levels” of research, since from the maps obtained in these landscape processes, it is possible to approach new expeditions to deepen in each one of the defined reliefs.

In a third level of national relevance, it is located the *Proactive Region*, with 161 references, equivalent to 20.7% of the total. The studies characterized in this area seek to transform the realities, in an apparent emancipatory interest (Habermas, 1984). It is apparent, because many of the referred studies only perform interventions without clear initial comprehensive purposes of social structures or schemes. It is evident that the emancipatory interest seeks, above all, to empower the communities so that from these autonomous developments, they achieve their emancipation as recognition of their own problems and mobilization of their potential to solve them; for this reason, it would not be pertinent to consider that all the studies located in this region have an emancipatory interest. In any case, these processes not only remain in representations of the realities or compression of them, but seek to propose alternatives that help overcome the difficulties encountered; several of them from processes of participatory action research, and some from unilateral positions that more closely resemble the interventionist hegemonies.

In a fourth stage, two research regions with similar percentages emerged: the *Analytical region*, with 10.5%; and the *Interpretative region*, with a visibility of 9.8%. The first one refers to these quasi-explanatory

pretensions, which cross the hollows of the landscape seeking to cover their completeness, although without much interest in the depth of their travels. This teleology was very common in social research, especially from Popper’s deductive proposals, from which large theoretical frameworks are defined, focused on showing the categories and variables of the problem from formal theories, in order to operationalize them later in their respective indicators and indices, which will take the hypothesis to its empirical verifiability (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 1998). The landscape here is basically recognized from the mapping on it in the formal theories, defining from there the particularities of the relief to check them on the exploration of the ground. Hammersley and Atkinson (1994) consider, by the way, that these investigations, like those of analytical “induction,” are naturalistic; they refer to reality from “qualitative” variables, and seek to test hypotheses from quantitative data. The techniques regularly used are tests, surveys or structured interviews.

Interpretive objectives are evidenced as a region in which the central characteristic is the fact that a given content or reality, independent of the interpreter, is translated into a new form of expression. The basic condition of an interpretation is to be faithful in some way to the original content of the interpreted object. For Gadamer, language is the universal medium in which understanding itself is realized. The embodiment of understanding is interpretation. In such a way that interpretive research tries to describe the observed facts in order to understand them; and in this sense, the discovery of reality is more important than the verification of a hypothesis.

Interpretive research represents one of the most revealing contemporary trends for understanding the meaning of social, cultural, ethnographic, psychological or educational facts.

Other regions emerge in this focus of understanding at national level; although with less relevance, they are of great significance, provided that they just show the displacements of the ways of understanding research. The *Evaluative, Comparative, Exploratory, Correlational, Diagnostic and Explanatory* objectives that once were highly visible in research in education and pedagogy in Colombia, have yielded to the need to understand realities. In general, these regions, which could not be called emerging, since before emerging are suffering serious displacements, do not exceed 3.9% of the total number of references; some manage to be shown, as in the case of explanatory claims, with just 0.5%.

Discussion

The map constructed from the focus of understanding “*Objectives*”, shows at least two axes of relief that must be analyzed; the first one referred to the relations with the geographical zones; the second one, to the displacements that the investigation has suffered in Colombia during the last 10 years.

and the Valle provinces; however, with a significant difference, the *Descriptive objectives* are highlighted, becoming the second research region from the intended purposes (28.1% in Santander and 18.6% in Valle).

The *Comprehensive region* has in Antioquia and Valle a tertiary visibility level, with 17.1% and 15.3% respectively. In the Caribbean and Santander region, the

Table 2. National result focus of understanding “Objectives”.

Understanding focus	Regions
Analytical	
Comprehensive	
Descriptive	
Objectives	
Evaluative	
Interpretive	
Explanatory	
Comparative	
Correlational	
Diagnostic	
Exploratory	
Proactive	

Source: Research Group on Regions in Education and Pedagogy in Colombia

In relation to the visibility or relevance of the regions in the different geographical zones, it is evident that the region propped up on *Descriptive purposes* has the greatest relevance in Antioquia (24.4%) and the geographical area of the Caribbean (25.9%); in the meantime, the most relevant area in Santander and the coffee zone is the region comprised by *Comprehensive objectives*, with a high visibility of 48.4% in Santander and 38.6% in the Coffee Region. In the Valle province, the first level of relevance is the area with *Proactive objectives* (27.1%).

The second region of relevance in Antioquia and the Coffee Region is constituted by *Proactive objectives*, with 19% in Antioquia and 24.9% in the Coffee Region; meanwhile, in the Caribbean zone, the second region that they represent is constituted by *Analytical objectives* (24.1%), in a relationship very close to the region surveyed in the first place. In the Santander

Proactive region occupies this same place of relevance (Caribbean 19%, Santander with only 9.4% of the total of its studies). In the Coffee Region, the pretended *Descriptive region* of realities is located at the third level of visibility, with 15.8% of its total.

The pretended *Explanatory region* has no visibility in areas such as Antioquia, Caribbean, the Coffee Region and Santander; while in the Valle province it shows a visibility of 6.8%, granting a null relevance to the region whose objectives seek to explore the realities, to which neither Caribe nor Santander grant any visibility.

The second axis of relief to be analyzed is the one related to the displacements that are occurring with the investigative pretensions in Colombia. Researchers such as Henao and Castro (2000), Barrientos and Arias (sf), Hernández (2002), Peña (2007), among others, report a number of studies conducted in Colombia

in the last decade of the previous millennium, where ethnographic understandings are sought, probably driven by pioneering studies in the approaches with this type of pretensions, like the works of Parra (1992, 1996), among others. However, a study on university conducted by Elba Martínez & Martha Vargas, sponsored by ICFES (Instituto Colombiano para la evaluación de la Educación Superior) (2000), taking as references monographs, essays and research completed between 1990 and 2001, shows the prevalence of technical claims through the use of empirical analytical approaches.

In any case, important displacements are evident in the research intentions in Colombia. New plains and hollows adorn the landscape: the regions whose claims seek to explain the realities in terms of their causal relationships are displaced almost entirely from the research objectives, leaving only a redoubt at the *Universidad del Valle*, with a little visibility of 6.8%.

Similarly, regions with *Diagnostic or Exploratory* objectives have been displaced almost entirely. The geographical areas where these type of studies are still carried out are: *Exploratory*, Antioquia and Coffee region, with very low visibility levels (5.6% and 0.4% respectively); *Diagnostic*, Antioquia with 0.6%, and Valle with 8.5%.

The pretended *Correlational* region experience a third level of displacement alongside those whose teleology is in the *Comparative* region.

Both have low visibility in three geographical areas; the relevance of *Correlational* purposes is marked as follows: Antioquia with 2.2%, the Caribbean with 5.2%, and Valle with 3.4%. The relevance of the *Comparative* purposes is marked in the following way; Antioquia 4.8%, Santander, 1.6%, and Valle 6.8%.

Conclusions

Recognizing that in Colombia there have not been enough studies that gather the interests of master's degree and doctorate program theses, the information shown here locates an initial look at this variable in the state-of-the-art, which is expected to open the discussion on the interests seen from the pretensions of the researchers, embodied in the objectives.

It is evident that these interests are consolidated within the framework of the research procedures used, being the region of greatest emergency the practical interests derived from those studies that seek to understand the realities of education and pedagogy, but also those that

look for their mere description. While the first region (comprehensive region) relies on emerging designs based on a broad experiential introspective base, the second (descriptive and exploratory region) relies on deductive methods with broad theoretical bases from which the variables to be assessed or described are defined, two regions with similar social weight that despite being independent, are part of the same interest, the compressive. Similarly, studies whose interest is emancipatory, anchored in the idea of transformation of practices and discourses, is a region that stands out with an important weight in these research scenarios.

The region that is configured from technical interests or those that seek control of the phenomenon from the strength of the relationship of the variables (explanatory, correlational) definitely have very little visibility in the studies that are addressed in the master's degree and doctorate programs in education and pedagogy in Colombia.

The evident displacement of the region whose interests are merely technical, calls the community of researchers to assume some considerations: first of all, although knowledge of the educational realities begins to be important, it is necessary to continue with this investigative resource, especially in those geographical areas that still show a prevalence of technical interests. The above, if we understand that the best way to achieve sustainable transformations is by looking for the *ethos* that consolidate the configurations, to act later from these understandings.

Eminent researchers and critical and action pedagogues, such as Orlando Fals Borda and Pablo Freire, showed this in their multiple studies. Secondly, a new perspective of research in education and pedagogy in Colombia is evident, in which the social dimensions of the phenomena are leading to the recognition of their nature, which guarantees an important social participation in the subsequent processes of validation of experiences. Thirdly, although this trend implies a huge advance in the processes of social/educational research as a possibility of recognition of the other as a subject of otherness, in itself it does not guarantee the recognition of its deep dynamics, provided that many of the investigations remain on the surface of the representations of the phenomena, without effectively advancing on the understanding of the underlying *ethos*.

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Footer

1 The observable is defined by Juan Luis Pintos as the semantic groupings that are constructed from the contextualized analyses of the analyzed social reality (Pintos, 2002, 2004). Murcia (2006) assumes observables as semantic-symbolic groupings and that, as such, are only the expression of the imaginaries. Therefore, the observables are categories searches, they are (like a) north that guides the understanding of imaginary meanings.

2 The imaginaries are, in reality, schemes of social intelligibility, through which societies seek their social plausibility. Therefore, it is what people assume as reality and from which people organize their lives (Pintos, 2004, Castoriadis, 1983)