

The Teachers' Training in Colombia. Beginnings, Route and Current Events

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Received: July 13, 2018

Accepted: July 19, 2018

Online Published: August 14, 2018

doi:10.5539/mas.v12n9p65

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/mas.v12n9p65>

The research is financed by Universidad Santiago de Cali.

Abstract

The history of education in Colombia has been linked to the efforts and mobilizations of organized teachers who have promoted the professionalization of teachers and the guidelines of the political class. It has been the reflection of the struggle of the teaching community, towards a progressive but slow recognition of their activities and knowledge, their contribution to the evolution, the strengthening and the constitution of the National State. The witnesses of that process have been the pedagogical institutes and universities in Colombia, where the generational mark is seen in the teachers and in the general features of the educational panorama in the current teachers' training, which is complemented with the opening of the faculties of education and the current schools for teachers' training which are called in Colombia Normal Schools. In this regard, they can be cited as the most relevant periods in the training of the Colombian teacher, with traces that transcended the political, social, educational and economic areas, as the following; teacher training in the century of Independence, from the beginning of the 20th century until the 1991 Constitution and teachers' training from Law 115 up to now.

Keywords: teachers' training, history of education, vocational training, normal schools, research in education

1. Introduction

The historical process of education in Colombia is linked to the efforts and mobilizations of organized teachers who have promoted the professionalization of teachers; and the guidelines of the current political class, which, as Calvo mentions, have reaffirmed traditional values and the maintenance of social order through the teacher (Calvo, 2004).

Deepening in the previous statement, the historical happening is the reflection of a constant fight of the educational group, towards a progressive but slow recognition of its activities and knowledge, its contribution to the evolution, the strengthening and the constitution of the National State; marching along with a chronology of ideological and political disagreements, expressed in programs, guidelines and resolutions, often antagonistic to one another, that caused setbacks in the development of the country's teaching profession (Calvo, 2004).

In reviewing the history of pedagogical institutes and universities in Colombia, the process of training teachers who have left a generational mark on teachers in the country is unavoidably valued; it is necessary to mention the development and role played by the Normal Schools, as the cornerstone of the pedagogical universities of the country, which in turn have traced the general features of the educational landscape in the current teacher training, which is complemented with the appearance of the faculties of education and the current Normal Schools.

In this regard, they can be cited as the most relevant periods in the training of the Colombian teacher, with traces that transcended the political, social, educational and economic areas, as the following:

- Teacher training in the century of Independence.
- From the beginning of the 20th century until the 1991 Constitution.
- Teacher training from Law 115 to the present.

2. Teacher Training in the Century of Independence

A look back at the past, in the history of Colombia, allows us to identify the starting point in teacher training in Colombia, which, according to (Noguera and Castro, 2002), has its roots in the interest in public instruction, which he declared education as "an object of public utility", and reduced the hegemony to the Church and the family in this function, so that it would be assumed by the school, over which the State had control and vigilance.

In this new context, the figure of the teacher emerged as the guiding subject of the training and instruction of those who could go to school. Although the State assumed oversight over education, it was also taught by private and religious entities; and the need arose to create training institutions for teachers in these schools.

In 1812, two years after independence, Simón Bolívar and Francisco de Paula Santander founded the first Normal School in Bogotá, with the purpose of training young teachers, and unifying and standardizing teaching practices, based on mutual, monitorial or Lancasterian, inspired by the model practiced by Andrew Bell, in Madras, India, and later by the Quaker Joseph Lancaster, in Borough Road, in London, England (Martínez, 1989).

This model, which sought mass training, was brought to the country with the purpose of creating "a perfect school machine" (Saldarriaga and Sáenz, 1997), which would enable a single teacher to teach a thousand students, at the same time, the basic elements of morality, writing and calculation.

The vice president of the Gran Colombia, Francisco de Paula Santander, continued to be interested in the training of teachers, and created, in 1827, the University of Boyacá, which years later became the Pedagogical and Technological University of Colombia. In the 1940's, Normal Schools were institutionalized as centers for exclusive training for teachers, coinciding with the arrival of German pedagogues who "combined Pestalozzian pedagogy with the principles of traditional Catholic pedagogy" (Herrera, 2000: 4).

The strengthening of the Normal Schools and the state support that they received declined in the 1950's, with the arrival of liberalism in power in 1851, whose reforms, promoted at the beginning of the second half of the century, diminished their influence, argument that titles generated social inequality and were not required for any job.

This and other policies were reformed with the return of federalism, in 1863, which declared education free and compulsory, and eliminated the control and vigilance of the Catholic Church in it, which constituted the teacher as one of the central figures in the construction of the nation.

These guidelines were regulated in the Organic Decree of Primary Public Instruction (DOIP), of 1870, which unified the teaching methods taught throughout the national territory. In this period the Normal Schools flourished, with the creation of more than twenty, for each of the states, and the consequent return of the German missions, which reinforced their Pestalozzian orientation (Rausch, 1993).

The formative project of the Normal Schools relied on creating societies of instructors, to which, according to article 140 of the DOIP, corresponded: "(...) continue the instruction (of the teacher) by regular meetings, isolated courses and lessons, consultations, conversations, written theses, particular studies of teaching" (Rausch, 1993: 158), that is, that regulated the continuing education of the teacher.

Another element that contributed to consolidate teacher training was the newspaper *La Escuela Normal*. It was an official publication of the Directorate General of Public Instruction, to which all the schools in the states of the country had access. It published regulations regarding education in general, as well as reflective and formative articles for teachers (Rausch, 1993).

The formative policies of the teachers in the Normal Schools soon were affected by the conservative opposition, which criticized the German missions, considering that they would banish Catholicism and introduce Protestantism to the country.

This situation was compounded by the country's political crisis, which led to the civil war of 1876, and ended the so-called radical project (for teacher training), suspended the publication of the newspaper *La Escuela Normal* and returned the German teachers to their country.

With the fall of the federalist project, in 1880, they closed 251 schools, considered unnecessary, with the argument that with fewer schools the educational needs of the people could be met (Echeverry and Zuluaga, 1989). The regime of Regeneration was established, which eliminated the compulsory nature of teaching.

The Constitution of 1886 strengthened the relationship of the Catholic Church with the State, and changed the role of the teacher to a "moralizing" figure, as a father and official in charge of laying down good morals, required to maintain social order (Echeverry and Zuluaga, 1989).

3. From the Beginning of the 20th Century to the 1991 Constitution

Teacher training was strengthened at the beginning of the 20th century, with the approval of Law 39 of 1903, also

known as the Uribe Law, in recognition of its promoter, Antonio José Uribe, Minister of Public Instruction.

This law was regulated by Decree 491 of 1904, which gave rise to the National Education System, which differentiated elementary education, high school education and higher education. During Uribe's administration, foreign professionals were hired for directing and teaching in Normal Schools, who applied modern teaching methods (Müller de Ceballos, 2002).

In 1916, Law 62 regulated the pedagogical lycées and the monthly assemblies, financed by the State, to which the teachers had to attend to update and expand their training. The National Pedagogical Congress, held in 1917, advocated improving the quality of teacher training, demanded full primary education for all candidates for teachers, demanded the State follow-up to education, called for the application of behavioral methodologies and demanded of the aspirants, to count on a moral one in agreement with the socially dominant values (Calvo, 2004).

The decade of the 1920's was characterized by the return of the German mission, which introduced the active school, which promoted teaching based on the cognitive and socio-economic reality of the student. But this incursion failed once again due to the opposition of the church and the conservative forces, which considered it an attack on the national traditions, which resulted, once again, in their departure from the country.

Later, in 1927, for two months, the Belgian pedagogue Ovide Decroly, gave lectures and worked with teachers in practice and in training from the approach he promoted, the active pedagogy, which would come into force when the Liberal Party resumed power, changing the look that was on children who were considered "adults in miniature".

During the first thirty years of the twentieth century the conservative party governed, which gave continuity to the educational policies of the Regeneration period, opened Normal Schools for students of both sexes, and regulated the obligatory nature of the teacher's diploma for the exercise of teaching. In some cases, special permits were extended to non-qualified teachers, arguing the need to expand the educational offer, which shows that the Normal Schools did not have absolute control over teacher training and accreditation.

The liberal government, which lasted until the end of the 1940's, created the first education faculties, which were founded on the renovation of three Normal Schools:

The Normal School for Men in Tunja, the National Pedagogical Institute and the Faculty of Education Sciences of the National University of Colombia, which later merged into the Normal Superior School (1936 - 1951), initially attached to the National University and then to the Ministry of National Education (Calvo, 2004: 8).

One of the Normal Schools that remained was the Normal Superior, which became the icon and ideal model of teacher training, inspired by liberal and modernizing ideas, giving way to training in disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and philology.

The pedagogical model that inspired the Normal School was that of the Normal School of Paris and that of the German tradition in the Faculties of Education, trying to train teachers who had both a mastery of the disciplines they taught and a pedagogical and didactic preparation, At the same time they knew how to contextualize teaching according to sociocultural characteristics. The internal life of the institution was marked by the ideological tolerance that allowed the freedom of thought and the circulation of updated theories in the areas taught, creating an environment conducive to the generation of new social theories and elements of interpretation of the national reality (Herrera, 2000: 24).

The training model sought the development of a more intellectual teacher. In the fifties the conservative power returned to the government, which dismantled the Normal School and divided it into two universities, with headquarters in Tunja and Bogotá, giving way to the pedagogical universities. The closure, to which political motives were attributed, had resistance. This meant the institutionalization of teacher training at the university level, which gave professional character to pedagogical knowledge and made possible the rise of the teaching profession. It was the beginning of the creation of education faculties, both in public and private universities (Calvo, 2004).

In short, in this historical journey of the first half of the twentieth century, the training of teachers in Colombia was basically set in three milestones: the creation of Normal Schools, with the predominance of the presence of German missions; the foundation of the Normal Superior School, which originated the pedagogical universities; and the subsequent establishment of education faculties.

In the second half of the twentieth century, education in Colombia was also subject to political fluctuations, which produced radical changes in approaches to teacher training, according to the cosmovision and socio-economic and ideological conceptions of the political party in power.

In this period the behavioral pedagogical model was introduced, which conceived learning as an observable

behavior, and which gave way to educational technology (Ibarra, 2003). This model added a new condition to the purposes in the training of teachers, who not only had to master scientific and pedagogical knowledge, but also technicians capable of implementing the curriculum, defined according to behavioral objectives and performance measurement systems. (Ibarra, 2003).

The public university system, which would continue to be configured heterogeneously and erratically, opened the way for the private sector of education, constituted by religious institutions and business sectors, to take advantage of the rise of the middle class and the demand that the gradual industrialization of the country generated. This fact is not accidental or conjunctural, it expresses rather the absence of the State as a modernizing agent of Colombian society.

In the 1960's and 1970's, elementary and high school education was nationalized. Law 43, of 1975, granted diverse attributions to the central government, which generated the increase of teachers linked to the state sector, in such a way that: "the educational sector would become one of the main sources of employment for Colombians" (Jiménez and Figueroa, 2006: 3).

The focus of educational technology (in the school environment and in teacher training); the administrative disorder of the government and the lack of governability, manifested in the mistrust of the people on the management of the State in this area, generated -from the decade of the 80's- strong criticisms by the academic community to the positions and policies of the State in educational matters, which gave rise to the National Pedagogical Movement.

This movement encouraged teachers and research and pedagogical mobilization groups to reflect on the role of the teacher in society, and to demand the recognition of pedagogical knowledge as the founding knowledge of the teaching profession.

As part of this task, research was carried out to recover the history of the teacher, the school and the training institutions, as well as ethnographic studies and pedagogical innovations that allowed contextualizing the relations of the teacher and the school with society, taking referring to the professionalization of the teacher and the requirement of higher levels of training.

Simultaneously, this political current became a precedent for the support of conceptions of education, which were reflected in the Constitution of 1991 and the General Law of Education of 1994; which founded and defined the current educational system and the processes of teacher training in force.

In the exposed historical journey, it can be seen that in the development of teacher training in Colombia, a true system of teacher training and the normative continuity of educational policies that transcend the mandate of each government in turn have been absent.

4. Teacher Training from Law 115 Up to Now

Law 115 of 1994, or General Education Law, emanating from the 1991 Constitution, gave coherence and stability to the regulations on education. Although the Constitution does not specifically address teacher training, it did encourage the creation of the regulatory framework, since Article 68 refers to the educational conditions and their professional activity (Political Constitution of Colombia, 1991).

This constitutional guideline is reflected in law 115, article 109, which sets out the aims of teacher training, including:

- a) To train an educator of the highest scientific and ethical quality.
- b) To develop the theory and pedagogical practice as a fundamental part of the educator's knowledge.
- c) To strengthen research in the pedagogical field and in specific knowledge.
- d) To prepare educators at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels for the different levels and ways of providing the educational service. (Law 115 of 1994).

This normative framework activated the national interest to promote educational policies, which, covered by the law, provide answers to the educational needs of the country. As González (2015) stated, teachers must keep up with the trends in teaching.

In relation to teacher training, the following problems were identified, among others: the disproportionate increase in curricula for the same area of education, different qualities among the educational institutions offering vocational training, the absence of rigorous and disciplined pedagogical research, and the lack of a true professional and intellectual conception of education.

The promulgation of the General Law of Education generated interest in teacher training, which led the Ministry

of National Education (MEN) to seek institutions of higher education with ingenious training proposals and creative teaching. Once found, in different universities of the country, the MEN gathered documentation of the pedagogical developments reached and placed it at the service of the teachers; which was a prominent factor in the promotion of research and pedagogical experimentation (Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, 2001).

Product of the social pressures of the different estates linked to education, and consistent with the purposes of the Decennial Plan 1996-2005, Decree 709, of 1996, of the MEN, entrusted to the institutions of higher education the training of teachers in all its degrees (initial, postgraduate and permanent), and defined as fields of training, pedagogical, disciplinary, scientific-research, deontological and human values.

This legal foundation redefined the competences of educators; coherent with the aims of an educational system that bets and is committed to train an entrepreneurial society, with environmental and civic conscience, morally and ethically responsible, in accordance with the development of the subjects' autonomy, their critical sense, their competencies as actors social, their ability to build and defend a point of view from rationality and peace.

The desirable profile of Colombian teachers began to be defined as that of an education professional with the capacity to stimulate the acquisition of knowledge; framed in pedagogical innovation, understood as the strengthening of critical thinking and creativity; able to overcome traditional teaching methods; ensuring that learners appropriate, in the best educational conditions, social knowledge, democratic environments, self-esteem and solidarity. An educator with skills to systematize experiences and pedagogical knowledge that serve to build a pedagogical academic community (MEN, 2000).

Teacher training in the current Colombia is in charge of the National Program of Training of Educators, which should ensure the quality of pre-school, basic, secondary education and higher education, according to one of the strategic objectives contained in the Plan Sectoral 2010-2014 "Quality Education, the Path to Prosperity", which is, in turn, one of the foundations of the proposed public education policy.

According to the logic of advancing towards the quality of education, it is recognized, among other aspects, the need to:

(...) coordinate actions in the training of educators, to develop or strengthen their professional skills, update and deepen their knowledge, grow personally and improve their performance and institutional climate. A training that allows them to qualify their pedagogical practices, while developing as a person and as a professional, responding to the expectations, needs and demands of society and contributing from their work to the educational project of the Nation (MEN, 2013: 3).

In order for developing this quality policy, the MEN established as one of the strategic projects the Colombian Educator Training System and the Policy Guidelines that regulate it.

Among the main changes introduced by this system are: the mandatory high-quality accreditation for undergraduate programs, the strengthening of research training in curricular proposals, the articulation and academic visibility of programs at national and international levels, and the strengthening of field practices during the educational process of teachers (Decree 2054, 2015). Valencia, Enriquez and Acosta 2018 said, it is an imminent necessity to improve the pedagogical training of the teachers, in order to offer a better preparation to the students.

5. Conclusions

It has been recognized in the history of the teaching profession in Colombia, that it has been linked to the social, economic and political dynamics of the country, from the moment of the independence of the Spanish Empire to the present. It has been the teaching collective that has worked to achieve better conditions for the education of Colombian children and youth and for the development of the profession of the educator.

This struggle has had to face an eclecticism, which has been characterized by the permanent change of paradigms and theoretical assumptions in relation to the education of the country, which have been oriented by the changes of government and sociopolitical approach of the leaders of turn, this has not allowed for a sustainable project in teacher training which has generated a disparity of efforts in the qualification of this group.

Hence, the professional practice of teachers in Colombia, present particular circumstances in relation to the academic, labor, salary conditions of other neighboring countries with similar social characteristics and that may also be reflected in the quality of education in general, where the teacher has an important role.

The hope is that the political leaders recognize the need to have teachers with a solid background, in order to contribute to the improvement of education in the country and to propose a sustainable public policy that encourages the strengthening of teacher training in Colombia.

It is a reality that education is the main way for a country to achieve all kinds of improvements, and that education can be obtained only through a great and very dedicated teachers' training. It has to be an effort among all the participants of the educational processes.

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