Educational Policies to Strengthen Learning Processes in Colombia

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Abstract

This reflective article emerges from the need to carry out a theoretical-reflective study from a documentary perspective of educational policies in higher education in Colombia. Therefore, it is important to jot down that the findings obtained through this analysis were pertinent to specify how government changes have fostered the implementation, evaluation, and re-evaluation of these educational policies. Additionally, including these policies in the Colombian education system leads to the promotion of a quality education, aiming at transforming integral citizens capable of changing the world. After the analysis, it is possible to affirm that each variation in the state's public policies must follow a process of constant self-evaluation in order to improve the processes of meaningful teaching.

Keywords: *educational policies, evaluation, implementation, quality.*

Introduction

To govern a people, a city or a country, it is necessary to create constructive policies and follow national regulations, in which society can know its rights and duties to make a country more humane and developed. Policies are not only in charge of improving economic, environmental or social aspects, but also intervene in the educational field to contribute to the quality of a nation. Without a true educational quality, the goal projected by the state cannot be reached, since this is the main source of a country. In this regard, governments create different policies to build a sustainable and intelligent state. Thus, this study seeks to create awareness of the relevance related to national policies that every citizen must comply with.

For the realization of this research work, all the documentation of educational policies in higher education is brought up, taking into account that these policies take history by the Ministries of Education, which present their proposals in the national congress every year. These proposals are recorded and archived in memoirs, which provide information of various kinds and the organization of education towards centralization. Until the end of the twentieth century, each ministry was limited to briefly presenting the national activity and situation in order to report to the public guidelines and laws, the heads of the Catholic missions and the directors of the great schools, which gave life to the normal and higher schools (Helg, 2001).

On the other hand, it is important to mention that education took control by the church in the XIX century, the law depended on the administration, from there Spanish, religion and some manual skills were taught, this was the first attempt of educational reform in the New Granada.

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Consequently, these policies continue in the government of Santander, in which his philosophy was to teach and prepare students to be honest, good Catholics and skilled workers. It continues with the changes in the division by the conservative and liberal parties, which lived in an internal war of power to govern education and the reform of 1870 comes to light, in which a more interventionist policy was adopted. In this government, 20 normal schools were established to train suitable and proper teachers in the Colombian context. After this process, a period of centralization and modernization followed. In 1903-1904 a new legislation reorganized public instruction, giving way to the Ministry of Public Instruction, and the state opened three large schools: a central technical institute, the central normal school of instructors and the national school of commerce. This gave a great change to Colombian education (Helg, 2001).

Subsequently, this analysis of higher education policies is important to take into account, to the extent that it establishes three key moments or points of reference of the state's conception of higher education. As Jiménez and Figueroa (1999) affirm, the linear, evolutionary and develop mentalist vision of the Colombian State is based on assumptions, from minor to major, without taking into account moments in which the State has been the propitiator of anarchization and disorder in higher education. This corroborates that the Colombian governments, in spite of having different governmental ideologies, aim at the knowledge and being of the country's students. This will be evidenced in the subject treated through this study. To show the reader that Colombia is a country that goes beyond following international trends, focusing on the social reality to change its own context.

The Genesis of Colombian Higher Education

From the early beginnings, Colombia has shown itself as a country with very high expectations and perspectives, working on it so that its society has an adequate life. However, the main objective of this country is to improve pedagogical processes through appropriation and praxis of educational policies. For this reason, higher education in Colombia begins in the colonial period, and particularly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the founding in Bogotá of the universities Santo Tomás, San Francisco Javier, today Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, and Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario (Melo, Ramos and Hernández, 2017).

In this period of time, students came from families and religions of good social status, attributing to a very limited education, teaching theology, philosophy and medicine, which led to a very particular interest in education. After the dissolution of the Gran Colombia, an educational reform led by Mariano Ospina Rodríguez was approved, which promoted technical and scientific education, limited freedom of teaching and introduced a confessional character to education, due to the leading role assigned to the Catholic Church (Pacheco, 2002).

Additionally, higher education was governed or led by the leaders of this period, that is to say that education underwent a change due to the political parties of this stage, which was highly marked by conservatives and liberals who, although they were parties with differences, aimed at the same objective, which was to improve national education. Consequently, Rionegro (1863) established a federal regime in the country, considering that a liberal educational reform was carried out, which, among other characteristics, separated civil power from ecclesiastical power, established compulsory and free schooling and redefined the financing of education by the State (Silva, 1989).

As Silvia (1989) argues, higher education was primordial in Colombia because the educational

system was not only led by the same social groups but also by those who came from the people and wanted to fight for it, although in the period of regeneration some private institutions were given place, and everything was left in the hands of the government.

In any period of time, politics always plays an important role in society. Therefore, higher education did not make any progress during the Thousand Days War and the separation of Panama. In this period of time Colombia was defended against this crisis and education suffered a setback without facing any new changes.

Changes and Advances in Colombian Higher Education

In this country it is not possible to speak of a consequent education or following processes, since when a new government regime arrives, it does not follow the previous government's plan, but wreaks havoc in education. However, the ruler who most marked the history of education was Alfonso López Pumarejo (8 years of government), known in his government as the liberal republic, taking into account that liberalism took action in this new regime. His ideology was emphasized with a program of transformations called "La Revolución en Marcha", within which education was undoubtedly one of his main flags (López, 1980).

In this mandate, as demonstrated by Jaramillo (1989), the country's educational policy takes a 180-degree turn, it is considered that higher education must be linked to the construction of an educational thinking for students and how this is incorporated with the country's economy. In this way, the connection that is created between these two sectors leads to a freedom of teaching, which is based on autonomy and gives space to improve the quality of education in Colombia and therefore in the teaching practice. It is important to emphasize that if resources were not provided to improve the quality of education, it would not have been possible to have excellent professionals. Undoubtedly, this reform gave a change to society, since it not only sought to defend the people and their economy, but also opened the way to the industrialization process, but it should be noted that Lopez Pumarejo was that ruler who had as his first ideology that knowledge was the basis of everything. Therefore, he bet so much on education that, even in the following governments, his ongoing revolution was taken into account to lead the political processes; and that was how universities began to expand and not only public universities carried the banner of knowledge, but also private universities, which began to demonstrate why they were necessary in society.

According to Melo, Ramos and Hernandez (2017), the country again had an educational embezzlement when the assassination of the ruler Jorge Eliecer Gaitan was committed in 1948. Therefore, the country falls again into a crisis not only in education, but also in violence; which leads to a moderately progressive education, causing a limitation in the autonomy of education, and it is when technical education takes place and therefore new institutions of this nature take a fundamental role. When Rojas Pinilla came to power (1953-1957), there were negative opinions about the low quality of education, and teachers did not have an excellent academic preparation. However, demographic and urbanization changes in the country led to the opening of new private universities and evening programs, and thus the demand for academic enrollment began to increase greatly.

With regard to higher education in Colombia, the CPC (2022), in its competitiveness report, according to several authors, the profile of higher education in Colombia is not encouraging if we take into account the following indicators in relation to coverage, quality and relevance: 55% of gross higher education coverage, 3 universities among the top 500 in the world, and

64% of employers report difficulties in filling vacancies.

Colombia has made great advances in coverage, but unfortunately these have not been accompanied by increases in quality. This is largely due to the fact that the way of evaluating and monitoring the performance of the education system has focused mainly on indicators of coverage and aggregate spending in the sector, and not necessarily on factors that directly impact learning, such as the relevance of the skills acquired in the education and training system CPC (2022). Likewise, it is essential to have a higher education system aligned with the productive sector; this will allow a rapid response to the training needs demanded by this sector, while at the same time favoring employability, minimizing mismatches between the supply and demand of skills (increasing their relevance) and improving the resilience of the employed population to changes in labor demand (Private Competitiveness Council (CPC, 2021). One approach to achieve improvement may be dual education, which is defined as that which alternates classroom learning and in-company training, and its curriculum design focuses on practical work (CPC, 2023), including, at the regulatory level, Decree 1330 of 2019 recognizes dual education as an educational modality in Colombia.

On the other hand, with the creation of the Training for Work Subsystem (Article 194 of Law 1955 of 2019 and Decree 1650 of 2021), a new offer of combined (or dual) training programs is created, linked to the sectorial catalogs of qualifications of the MNC, which seeks to link classroom training with in-company training through theoretical-practical learning schemes that contemplate proportionality in time and activities.

A notable change in the area of quality is related to the National Accreditation System, where the country adopted a recognition scheme that accredits compliance with quality standards higher than those required of HEIs and academic programs in order to obtain qualified registration. This recognition, to which HEIs submit voluntarily, is issued by Mineducación after the issuance of a concept from the National Accreditation Council (CNA) under criteria such as physical and technological resources, learning outcomes and contributions to research and innovation, which were updated through Agreement 002 of 2020 of the National Council of Higher Education (CESU) in accordance with Decree 1330 of 2019.

Educational Policies in Colombian Higher Education

It is worth highlighting the importance of Law 30 of 1992, which has as its main objectives in higher education to deepen the comprehensive training of Colombians, training them to have mastery in professional, research and social functions, also working to educate young people with high educational quality to solve problems in the country, and thus provide a quality service with a scientific, cultural, economic, political and ethical development. With the creation of this law, the country took a better direction having as a basis a new well-structured reform for all educational sectors, thus forming responsible young people and better professionals who know their duties and rights through this law, in addition the institutions have a consolidated quality process since the opening of this law.

However, Decree 1075 is the only regulatory decree for the education sector. In this 394-page document are issued all the rules and laws that all states must take into account in their government plan to govern and educate. Therefore, it is important to comply and carry out this decree in order not to deviate from the educational policies. Considering the above, it is very relevant to highlight that these laws regarding the quality system have as a goal to achieve four fundamental aspects in education which are the consolidation of the quality assurance

system at all levels of schooling, the implementation of programs for the promotion of competencies, the professional development of teachers and managers, and the promotion of research; thus seeking that Colombia increases in its quality process and increasingly have qualified professionals.

The accreditation of HEIs and their academic programs can be understood as an educational policy that allows them to maintain the offer of their programs in society. In Colombia, the National Accreditation System records that as of 2021, only 27.2% of HEIs have quality accreditation. In the case of undergraduate and graduate programs, this proportion was 12.9%. Despite the modest results, quality accreditation has had positive impacts on variables related to educational quality. In this sense, Bayona et al (2018) find that quality accreditation is positively related to greater social inclusion in HEIs, higher quality of the teaching staff, better performance of new students and graduates (measured through improvements in the Saber 11 and Saber Pro tests) and, in terms of results, improvements in graduation rates.

The updating of the High Quality Accreditation Model is based on the tradition and processes of high quality evaluation in the country, in order to address international trends, the diversity of institutions, the different modalities and levels of academic programs, and their harmonization with the Higher Education Quality Assurance System (Mineducación, CESU and CNA, 2020). The purpose of Agreement 02 of 2020 is to update the high quality accreditation model for academic programs and institutions and to promote high quality as a necessary attribute of higher education, in order to ensure that students, professors, graduates, employers and society as a whole recognize in the accreditation of academic programs and institutions an autonomous, national and international distinctive condition, which attends to the improvement of the quality of higher education, in harmony with the social, cultural, scientific, technological and innovation dynamics.

Accreditation is the recognition of high quality granted by the Ministry of National Education to academic programs and institutions that meet the highest quality criteria and achieve their purposes and objectives, taking into account the legal nature, identity, mission, typology, training levels and modalities (Mineducación, CESU and CNA, 2020).

Accreditation has also made it possible to measure the impact of higher education in the external sector by evaluating its social impact. The above has found an alignment of education with the 2030 agenda and the sustainable development goals, where HEIs align their actions with these international guidelines of the UN, and welcomed by other organizations such as UNESCO and ECLAC, which have allowed linking the university dynamics to the context in which they are immersed, so that HEIs are linked to the realities of the societies of which they are part, focusing joint efforts to solve real problems in social, economic and environmental aspects. The high quality of an academic program implies considering the capacity to impact society and, in particular, the public and private business sectors, and all those other sectors that need to be considered in order to weave significant long-term relationships with the environment, through research and social projection or extension actions that show evaluable results.

Una institución de alta calidad deberá tener una evidente capacidad de ser prospectiva en lo que hace, promover y apoyar el desarrollo económico, ambiental, tecnológico, social y cultural, y atender a los problemas de los lugares donde lidera la creación de nuevo conocimiento, de acuerdo con su identidad, misión y tipología. Asimismo, la institución demuestra compromiso con los entornos de todos sus lugares de desarrollo o donde haga presencia por medio de

programas académicos y de ejecución de sus labores formativas, académicas, docentes, científicas, culturales y de extensión, a través de políticas y programas específicos de proyección e interacción con el sector externo. Este factor presenta dos características: Institución y entorno e Impacto cultural y artístico (Mineducación, CESU y CNA, 2020).

Teaching Vocation in Colombia

The first point of reference is to train teachers with real knowledge competencies and pedagogical bases (Tobón, 2011) when talking about teacher training is not only teaching for the sake of teaching, when starting this immense and fundamental world of teaching, the ideal is to create a curriculum based on the needs of the Colombian context, it should be taught to be, to know how to be and to know how to do. (Martinez, 2019) In this way, future teaching professionals would be well trained in the knowledge of their specific discipline, but also in literacy, mathematics and communicative competencies in a native and foreign language. Although, in many educational and university establishments, the academic programs to train future teachers have declined rapidly, since, in private universities, these are led by the careers of trends, while the degrees in some cases do not give them the importance they require. Also, many students choose to become teachers simply because they do not obtain excellent results in state tests.

It is relevant to mention that, in order to have excellent teachers, the first task would be for young people to have certainty about the profession they wish to develop at the end of their school year. In this sense, young people who study in teacher training colleges, who have been in the teaching and learning process, are those who at the beginning of their teaching career have the certainty of the decision they have made, while other students from institutions that do not emphasize teaching, take this path to try in the field of teaching. Some of them discover the vocation of being a teacher in the course of their careers, while others do it as an obligation to get ahead and have a decent life. The level of commitment of some young people is not entirely their own, since their parents often interfere in their decisions, therefore Ruiz and Rodas (2011) state that it is relevant to understand the reasons that motivate young people to choose a career, since their decision affects not only themselves, but also the chosen career and the educational system itself, and also requires discussing their interests, expectations and motivations to make relevant decisions regarding content, presentation and development, purposes, sense and meaning of their training in the program.

Additionally, training teachers is a task that has become a challenge for those who are already in the formative task, first because of the desire of those who wish to change the educational system, for others who study for a family obligation, followed by the curriculum established in the institutions in the teaching processes and finally because some professionals after finishing their process, make the decision to become a teacher and only take a pedagogical course, believing that with only this formative course they have all the humanistic and pedagogical training (Mejía, 2014).

Being a Teacher in Colombia

The teaching practice is not a simple task as many professionals in other areas appreciate it, since they claim that being a teacher is only to impart what they have learned and the only difficulty is to have mastery and control of classes. It is worth demonstrating that the practice of this profession goes beyond the above, the teacher must have the disciplinary component

of the subject to teach, must also know his students, solve learning problems, help students, among others. To achieve a satisfactory teaching practice, teachers must reflect on their daily work (Méndez and Bonilla, 2014). At the time of planning, he should know with which learning style his students achieve better learning of the subject, then in class verify if what was exposed in his planning was well designed, to finish with the reflective exercise he should ask himself if he achieved the proposed objective or what should be improved. The teacher is not only carrying out an excellent teaching process, but on the contrary is helping in the pedagogical formation of other beings with the desire to change the country. (Calvo et al, 2004).

When speaking of praxis, the philosopher Aristotle determines this term as an action, acting is equivalent to the expression practice. It can be inferred that all praxis is a doing, although not always when something is done is the respective praxis being done, it is therefore relevant to highlight what Runge and Muños (2012) sustain, stating that education, as praxis, results then from the fact that the human being, as an imperfect being, is the only creature in need of and capable of education. Neither animals nor plants need education to be or become such, but, moreover, they do not educate themselves. In contrast, the human being is or becomes human from what he does (praxis) of himself (Lamos, 2019). However, with this doing, imperfection is not overcome, so the human is always presented as a task, as a project, as history, as the subject of his own praxis. That is to say that, in carrying out the pedagogical praxis, this plays a fundamental role in the life of the learners.

Therefore, teachers must be selected who are adequately qualified but who, in turn, transform lives, demonstrate through their example that teaching is the most important process that a human being can have in the field of academia, being a teacher is not only to be trained academically, the true meaning of this expression, is to demonstrate it in a classroom, to investigate and carry out their reflective exercise to impact the lives of students.

Research in the Teaching Process in Colombia

The history of the Colombian education begins since the president López Pumarejo in 1980 attributed all his power in search of creating conscience in the education in the Colombian system, which exposes in his liberal government to form different groups that not only sought to lead and govern the people with everything and its traced route, but to create necessary alternatives for an improvement in the educational reforms. Precisely, from this entity of power, the country traces goals among them to go beyond teaching from a pedagogical and methodical principle to a more analytical and forceful one. The challenge that Colombia faces since the quality processes transform the educational tasks is to follow research lines, which will be observed in the reading and as a result of this, the good use of the implementation of methodological tools, which will lead to the production of academic products that will point to the development of the learner.

In this order of ideas, Carvajal (2010), indicates that society demands from science, technology and innovation, research oriented to the solution of problems and verifiable contributions in response to its needs. For Colombia, a country with great social, economic and environmental challenges such as hunger, malnutrition, extreme poverty, unemployment, violence and environmental deterioration, among others, this constitutes a challenge for the scientific and technological community. The new approaches in higher education facing humanity impose the need to orient scientific knowledge in order to train better students in the future. In this sense, interdisciplinarity should be used as a pedagogical strategy that involves documenting

the information provided for credibility in the processes. (Carvajal, 2010).

Research cannot go in a different branch from teaching, these two components must work hand in hand and thus show new horizons to students, enriching their educational life. Carvajal (2010) proposes that interdisciplinary research should start from the individualization of the problem and the aspects of it that require the approach of well individualized disciplines, clearly establishing the different disciplinary criteria to approach the data, explaining the theoretical framework of the disciplines, without questioning their assumptions, defining the concepts used by the different disciplines involved, relating them to their conceptual framework and their research methodology.

With this information, the necessary data to take into account in teaching and learning in research are based on. When a teacher takes into account in his classroom plan and class planning that the student is not only the one who receives basic knowledge, but the one who produces from a research problem, he demonstrates interesting information and results in his teaching work. Although these methodological lines are used, other relevant and significant elements must be addressed in this indisciplinary work, such as the use of scientific language in each discipline; this varies according to their terms, concepts and area focused on research, intellectual egocentrism and hermeticism is a key piece to embellish this type of production seeking to protect the thinking and reliability of those who write their ideals (Carvajal, 2010).

Educational Policies to Improve Research Processes in the University Context

Giraldo, Abad and Díaz (2001), take into account the law of openness in higher education; therefore, they argue that with the approval of Law 30 of 1992, which organized the public service of higher education in the country, most institutions have defined themselves as centers of knowledge and learning. They consider their main mission to be that of educating within a disciplinary conception and have assigned growing importance to creative activities that promote the search for greater knowledge, artistic creation, and the study of social, technological and environmental problems, among others. In relation to this law, it can be argued that Colombia leaves aside the dubious educational quality of some academic processes, aimed at building better programmatic content, taking into account the inclusion of quality exams, including research as a fundamental part in the search for theories, in the basis of work and in the development of educational and programmatic practice. Law 30 of 1992 demonstrates the word quality as prestige, it is used in terms of its resources, results, change, adequacy of purposes, perfection, to achieve accreditation in the programs and as a value to this is attributed the bibliographic references that are assumed to strengthen the degree projects and doctoral theses.

In the same vein, quality must be linked to continuous improvement with continuous innovation in both educational and management processes. Quality is achieved when undergraduate programs follow diagnostic, constant and repetitive evaluations. When this is achieved, negative and positive results are promoted, all these results are achieved from the methodological use, with analysis of results and with solid bases that is only indicated from the investigative management. This is consolidated through the conceptual solidity of the authors Giraldo, Abad and Díaz (2001), who relate a policy that allows making research practice of all kinds, a factor of institutional identity; and an organization that contributes to research management that transcends the simple local framework. Working to consolidate a scientific community is perhaps the purpose that schools should assume with more effort, if they really want to consolidate research work.

Mineducación, CESU and CNA (2020), established research as factor 8 for HEIs and their

academic programs to be accredited, in this way an academic program must, based on its tradition and evident culture of continuous improvement, define some philosophical, pedagogical and organizational references, which give identity to its academic community, and shall demonstrate that it contributes to the formation of an investigative, artistic, creative and innovative spirit that favors in the student a critical and permanent approach to the state of the art in the area of knowledge of the academic program and that promotes autonomous, critical and ethical thinking that allows the student to identify and formulate problems with alternative solutions. Likewise, the academic program must evidence the impact on society of its scientific, technological, cultural, innovative and creative contributions. This factor has two characteristics: Training for research, technological development, innovation and creation and commitment to research, technological development, innovation and creation.

Undergraduate Students and Research as a Solid Base

The undergraduate student is in the conductive line of recognizing the importance of research in the classroom, mainly the example of teaching should be demonstrated through the work of the person who executes this profession. That is, any accredited program or in the process of seeking this, should add in its assignment teachers with professional profiles with master's or doctoral degrees to impart knowledge and develop research work. While students are motivated to believe that research is the key to change in today's world, teachers in charge of student training should teach the use of this in the consultation of their work, in the delivery of them and in the proposals or examinations of student qualification.

Many students are afraid to present a degree project because of the commitment that this entails, but instead of being seen as a challenge for graduation, this should be encouraged from secondary education, to consider documentary reading as a part of their daily lives. This is evidenced as Guerrero (2007) states in a global and local context, in which the strategic role of higher education is recognized, both in the generation of knowledge and technological innovations, and in the training of professionals capable of studying and contributing to the understanding and solution of environmental problems, it is necessary from the undergraduate level to design and implement programs that favor the training of skills for the productive development of research and innovation activities.

Therefore, every university should create a development plan that leads to the search for effective research, even if students do not have the habit of this, should be taught to investigate from the first semester and all teachers of specific courses, pedagogical and practical create innovative material and contribution to strengthen the field of research. Good teachers should reflect on their pedagogical practice and students should systematize what they have learned, to create strategies and skills to have the need to research on a daily basis and with a perspective of changing the world.

Conclusions

It is relevant to synthesize that when you want to change a society or a country, or even dare to dream that the future will continue to change thanks to the youth of today, you must land and be clear that the main point where changes must be made is mainly at home, when the child is born, you must instill values and different models of self-study, so that children become diamonds of the future. However, the fundamental role of schools should not be left aside. That is why it must be taught well from preschool, the fundamental basis is elementary school, they are the first steps of learning, it is there where the child must begin to love what he does,

it is where he begins to write or better yet where he begins to read. Therefore, the school must have excellent teaching models and teachers who are always in the innovative scheme, of change, of creating to go beyond simple rules embodied in books and do everything in a systemic way.

The role of change and impacting lives not only corresponds to the teacher to create and innovate, to lead and govern, but to take into account the educational policies, the applicability of this to gradually evaluate each process and thus, people, places or communities will be transformed, that is why we must go to the extensions of parents, it should be clear that the student population are of different socioeconomic levels, these factors must be taken into account to create new practices, it should also be clear that teachers should be motivated to make use of these changes. Specifically, in Colombia, progress was made in controlling the supply of continuing education through the determination of teachers' professional profiles and minimum competencies at the national level. This list includes desirable teacher attitudes to be fostered in the courses and makes it possible to verify that teachers maintain levels of suitability, quality and efficiency in the performance of their duties that justify their permanence in the position, promotions in the career ladder and salary relocations within the same grade.

It is no secret that any change in educational policy has consequences and these may be that some teachers feel discouraged to change their personal and professional approaches, feel more demanding and do not wish to continue or feel that the school adheres to institutional policies that only benefit these centers. That is why every innovative teacher, manager, and/or educational politician should consider everything raised in short-term projects. In this sense, demonstrate to teachers that the art of teaching begins when you learn to love and change everything for the student population, and keep in mind that to change the world it is necessary to start with oneself.

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