

GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION AND STUDY OF TERRITORY: POSSIBILITIES FOR INTEGRATION IN SOCIAL SCIENCES TEACHING

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Abstract

This paper is based on results of the research project: Guidelines for an Antioquia professorship¹ and it aims to demonstrate the possibilities of curriculum integration that territory, as a matter of education, provides by taking the educational process of social sciences and in particular, seeking to educate knowledgeable citizens of the living space. It is a pedagogical approach where territory as a conceptual resource, is defined as the located area, consisting of a nation, socially produced, always in process and where political, economic, cultural and natural dimensions are identified; these are all conceptual systems that explain it and demand interdependence and complementarity between them when being taught.

As a pedagogical approach is conceptual and methodologically based on classical thinkers like John Dewey and contemporary authors such as Milton Santos, Gimeno Sacristán, María Laura Silveira, Raquel Gurevich, Lawrence Stenhouse, Carlos Álvarez de Zayas among others.

Key words: citizen formation, curriculum, social sciences, territory, teaching.

Introduction

Curriculum transformation proposed by the General Education Act or Act 115 of 1994, institutionalized Colombian education by areas of knowledge. And, despite more than 15 years of this conception, there are still great difficulties in its implementation in the school curriculum, hence research exercises, as the one presented here, are carried out with the intention of overcoming difficulties encountered: poor curriculum unit, rigid curricula, irrelevant and increasingly out of context subjects.

Nine key areas that are mandatorily included in curriculum organization² bring the challenge of *modernizing the teaching process*, its implementation requires: a dialogue of knowledge, an interdisciplinary vision of curriculum and also consideration of various methods, means and forms of education that stimulate learning in the process. But it also requires organization of teaching as an academic community from which curriculum proposals are build and where territorial context is included.

The conception of teaching area, invites you to consider active methodologies that provide complex and interdependent views of the real world that it seeks to understand through education, also plans to train students for life, to develop integrated views of the real world, to educate from context knowledge on different scales: local -municipal and global. To these

1 Project developed with the support of the Research Committee - CODI - University of Antioquia, in agreement with the Secretariat of Education for Culture of Antioquia (2003 - 2004). This resulted in a publication of the same name and has been socialized to social science teachers in 120 municipalities in the department of Antioquia.

2 The 9 areas of education under Article 23 of the Act are: Science and environmental education. Social Sciences, history, geography, politic constitution and democracy. Arts education. Ethics education and human values. Physical education, recreation and sports. Religious education. Humanities, Spanish language and foreign languages. Mathematics and Computer Technology.

ideals of education, social sciences will provide concepts, including: *geographic space, time and culture*, all equipped with methods and techniques that are mediators in observation, description, interpretation, analysis and synthesis of the world.

In Basic and Secondary Education in Colombia social sciences as an area, are directed from curriculum guidelines set by the Ministry of National Education³, conceived from: *history, geography, constitution and democracy*, and in addition to the above for Media education: *economics, policy and philosophy*. These guidelines are followed by teachers in the country to find and give greater meaning to their pedagogical work offering an open approach, with flexible and integrated knowledge of the social, emanating from the various social disciplines. This approach fosters a school closer to problems that affect their immediate environment, nation and world, enabling a greater commitment to the world in which we live⁴.

The Study of Territory: the Possibility of Integrating Social Sciences that are Taught

Territory is one of the meanings with which geographical space is recognize, object of knowledge of geography is probably the most interdisciplinary concept presented today in the context of social sciences, as subject of study in most them⁵. However, it is important to note that this concept was initially attributed to political geography, geographical trend established in Germany by F. Ratzel, also developed by Mackinder in England and I. Lacoste in France. In this context, territory was considered by M. Santos (1996: 123)⁶ as:

“The bases, the foundation of Nation- State, at the same time, mold it. Today when we live in a dialectic of the concrete world, the notion of state-territorial evolves towards transnationalization postmodern notion of territory.”

In this sense, is in the territory where the state - *conceived as a political body of spatial nature* - exerts control over a geographical area, defining and differentiated it from others, for example every country has a territory which is governed by rules, laws and power structures, so territory marks the scope of politics, and constitutes the essential element of social and economic organization of the population.

According to Rachel Gurevich⁷, territory is the *appropriate geographic space, in which conditions for effective exercise of political power are learned*. From its historical and political origin has been understood as the materialization and institutionalization of society through the state. And it can be say that its material wealth or natural resources sustain by the soil, make possible the social construction because it includes *soil, subsoil, airspace, continental shelf and territorial sea*, elements on which population establish their sovereignty and get recognition from other nations.

In accordance with the dictionary, “territory” comes from the Latin *terra* and refers to any piece of land inhabited by human groups that is bounded and governed, ie geographical area that is considered possession of a person, organization, institution, animal or a state. Expression that shows influence of new discourses and interpretations from anthropology, sociology and even psychology. It is from the latter, which raises the concept of territories lived, geographical spaces endowed with feelings, emotions and an ownership or exclusive use. Plural territories,

3 Ministry of National Education, instance of the state from which education in the country is oriented. Social Studies curriculum guidelines series, 2002, May, Ministry of National Education, Bogotá, DC, p. 12

4 Ibid.

5 Without denying the relevance of including in teaching of social sciences other conceptual categories of geographic space, such as: place, region, landscape, environment or geographical environment.

6 Santos M. De la totalidad al lugar. Madrid. Oikos Tau. 1996: p 123.

7 Gurevich Raquel. (2005). Sociedades y territorios en tiempos contemporáneos: una introducción a la enseñanza de la geografía. Buenos Aires. Fondo de cultura económica S.A. p.47

understood from the social construction affected by population dynamics.

It is an approach where emphasis is on culturized and socialized space, in which behaviors are generated and cultural attitudes around him. They are spaces where the multiplicities of aspects in it given are identified. In this sense Zambrano, C. explained as: social and cultural appropriation and construction of the territory is also political, while the strategy of space which defines, internally and externally, social relations between communities⁸. Appropriation that generates in the individual and people in general, an identity that sets them apart.

Returning to the concept of identity expressed by Gilberto Giménez, [...] as the representation by agents (individuals or groups) that occupy the same position or different positions in the same space. As a representation of itself or themselves socially situated. Identity is essentially distinct, relatively durable and has to be socially recognized⁹. This recognition has a basic component and is the territorial State, an institution that establishes a principle of authority over each inhabitant of a piece of the map.

This new approach, in the reading of the territory takes place with the advent of a new political geography that, according to Ortega V¹⁰, addresses the analysis of the global economy and international relations, highlighting problems of underdevelopment, imbalance between developed world and third world countries, dependency relationships between states, theoretical approaches based on concepts of center and periphery, tensions and conflicts worldwide, which is nothing other than the emergence of new world views.

Visions that are fed by theoretical developments of disciplines such as anthropology, from which territory is defined as the space where social cultural relations of a group occur in, space used by a group of people over which ownership is generated and confronted with others, is a living space for the actors, hence the lack of a territory by itself, whenever it exists is for someone, and varies according to the types of actors and social movements that are given in it.

In the study of territory, Bozzano H (2004)¹¹ identifies three methodological instances: *Real Territories*, (which are assumed from the description), *Thought Territories* (from the explanation and theoretical argument) and *Possible Territories* (viewed from the formulation of proposals for intervention). Its intent is to visualize the plurality of languages and methods in undertaking the critical analysis of territory, which becomes an integrating concept for planning the teaching process.

A renewed geography as Milton Santos would say, a geography from a pedagogical intention would bring citizens formation and also renewed territorial citizens.

Previous statements allow to recognized study of territory as an integrative concept of the social sciences, where these come together and offer complex explanations, and various methods for understanding the local, regional, national and global environment, making possible a dialogue with other areas of knowledge such as natural sciences, humanities, technology and informatics, ethics and values, etc.

8 Zambrano, C. V. (2001). Territorios plurales, cambio socio-político y gobernabilidad cultural, en: Territorio y cultura. Memorias Seminario Internacional sobre Territorio y Cultura, Op. cit., p. 48.

9 Gilberto Giménez, (1999). Territorio, cultura e identidades. La región sociocultural. En: Estudios sobre las Culturas Contemporáneas, Colima Vol. 05, No. 09, Jun. pags. 25-57. Véase, además, Instituto de Estudios Regionales (INER), "Algunas reflexiones sobre el concepto de identidad", documento de trabajo del Subgrupo de Localidades, Universidad de Antioquia, 2002.

10 Ortega Valcárcel, José. (2000). Horizontes de la geografía. Barcelona. Ariel Editores S.A. p432.

11 Bozzano Horacio. (2004). Territorios reales, territorios pensados, territorios posibles. Aportes para una teoría territorial del ambiente. Editorial Espacio. Buenos Aires.

The Territory as a Matter of Education and Citizen Formation

To study the territory, in this case Antioquia¹² is the opportunity to make it a subject of education from the social studies curriculum, but also a proposal to stimulate among students, faculty, residents and researchers, a different reading of the locations allowing it to become citizen's scenery. In this regard, Gutiérrez, A. Pulgarín, R. (2009), assert that territory is common to, democracy, citizen and citizenship by understanding it from Milton Santos (1998) as *the set of symbolic events and places in permanent moving, rather than a simple set of objects*.

Integrally consider the territory (Sánchez, 2005) involves, besides exploring it as a "social and cultural" continent of productions, understand it as a complex network, where multiple frames are constructed, based on the simultaneous existence of internal and external elements that overlap or merge, causing changes in the population life structure, as reflected in their physical, political, economic and social organization, by the way territory is configured, possibilities for integration and sociocultural articulation or danger of breakdown of the social bond.

The link between territory and community, and social production that is derived from there, transform both the territory and those who inhabit it. This way territory is particularized by the social groups intervening in it, making it part of their historical development, is the result of the senses given to the space by various state territorialities as Echeverría and Rincón (2000) affirm.

Territory's functionality becomes meaningful (Sánchez, 2005) to the extent that it acts as a continent of cultural productions, as a framework for the construction of social identity (Echeverría and Rincón, 2000), and an object of symbolic appropriation by the community (García, 1976), citizenship territorially. This territory suggests ambivalent forces that are expressed as social and spatial practices that reveal other interactions between social actors, and the territory, meetings between object systems and systems of actions (Santos, 2000). Linkages and lay-offs occur in the territory, positive or negative exclusions that are confused in the midst of what is internal and external governed by flows and fixed, vertical and horizontal (Silveira, 2005), these apparent contradictions make up the new contents that streamline the sociocultural, which are shaped and nurtured - or weaken, according to the ongoing relations between local and global context.

Therefore, studying territory with pedagogical intention and from conscious linking Institutional Education Projects and Educational Municipal Projects, "facilitates the formation of citizens, in view of Delors, J. (1996): *make the individual gradually world citizen without losing its roots participate actively in the life of the nation and the grassroots*¹³.

It is to educate geographically and facing the territory, evidencing in social science education a viable alternative to learn from the experience itself in the lived territories, built in order to form the required public democracy: *democratic citizens, participatory, social, political, and critical assets*. Citizens with ability to transform everyday reality, dynamic and critically rooted to the territory where they live and committed to materialize their dreams.

An example of a pedagogical model that reflects the ideals of citizenship formation is the Antioquia professorship, which is presented as a teaching facilitator media of social science teaching in basic and media education. And it goes on the proposed Municipal professorship, which was established by the Ministry of National Education to comply with the National Constitution (1991) and Act 115 of General Education (1994) with regard to the protection of cultural and natural wealth of the nation, the promotion of democratic practices for learning the

¹² Antioquia is one of the 32 departments or units of territorial organization in Colombia. It has an area of 63.612 km² and according to the latest 2006 population census, has 5'682.276 inhabitants. Source Department Of Statistics -DANE-.

¹³ Jacques Delors (1996). La educación encierra un tesoro. Informe a la Unesco de la Comisión Internacional sobre la Educación en el siglo XXI, Francia, Unesco.

principles of civic participation, promoting access to culture in the process of building national identity and citizenship. Is a set of guidelines, programs, curricula, methodologies and processes that contribute to the identification, recognition and strengthening of cultural identity of the municipalities.

In these proposals is possible to see the need for research as the base of education, proposed by Stenhouse, L. (1998), when expressed as the changes in school as changes in the teacher attitude and stop being who provides information and undertakes to produce new meanings of the content they teach.

One response to this curriculum guidance is the guidelines for the Antioquia professorship and local professorships so far built in different municipalities. These, are part of the textbooks that support the development of social science curriculum in the country.

The Antioquia Professorship: Proposal Pedagogical

Is a text that reflects the pedagogical approach on the study of the territory of Antioquia, based on critical geography, conceptual pedagogy and polemics teaching. It seeks to contribute to personal knowledge and social reality in which the individual is immersed, and improving relationships in their household, neighborhood, community, neighborhood, local, subregional, and national. It is one of the possible ways to achieve integration and the development of contextualized and relevant curriculum, Gimeno Sacristan (2005). Three key elements are proposed:

A system of knowledge, proposed from the concepts of *space, time and culture*, which underlie the selection of content to teach from the social sciences, boosted by 10 generator axes that locate a basic content of the social sciences

A system which combines competencies where skills, procedures and attitudes are combined allowing in detail reading of the realities and contexts in which students are involved, access to social science methods used in the construction of knowledge, from which recreation and is made possible application in the analysis of specific situations

And a set of methodological suggestions which are invited to read from the territory from questions about those problems evidenced in it and become the object of study in the teaching process. These seek to develop inquiry skills and attitudes such as curiosity and desire to learn. These are strategies that lead to classroom research to know the territory.

All these items, they are imbued with a vast historical, cultural and socio-geographical information of the Antioquia territory, allowing to mobilize not only their knowledge but to generate processes of reflection about the local, national and global dynamics, question from the generator axis. Information that emphasizes the need to explore the territory without losing sight of the global, since stated by Gimeno Sacristán (2005): in a globalized world, local knowledge are small, they are unable to realize what happens in reality. Hence the necessity of local to global dialectic and vice versa, recognizing interdependencies, not only politically and economically but in all dimensions to be read into the concept of territory.

Summing-up

To study the territory, is an opportunity to develop creative teaching processes in the classroom and beyond, allowing formative research and contributing to the formation of cultural identity locally, regionally and nationally through its recognition. By including the study of territory in the social science education as a conscious and deliberate process of civic education, facilitates the strengthening of knowledge that provides the instruction (land information - content), develops skills and competencies (from direct recognition of the territory), and encourages attitudes (from the reasoning in solving socio-territorial issues) given in context.

This makes possible the formation of a located citizen, capable of being seen in one place, to give meaning to the territory it inhabits and to show commitment to transformation.

In the case of the Antioquia professorship, it becomes a teaching tool that promotes a global vision of the school curriculum, strengthens interdisciplinary work and the opportunity for teachers to convene a meeting between *scientific knowledge* (concepts and theories that explain the territory), with *school knowledge* (content and teaching methods), from *everyday knowledge* (students' prior knowledge.) This corresponds to facilitate understanding of the real world, the world of lived places thus developing a sense of belonging to the living space.

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