

Currere in educational research and migration: Reflections of a novice researcher

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ABSTRACTS

The aim of this paper is to reflect metacognitively on the research process in the field of education and migration from the perspective of a novice researcher. The reconstruction of the research experience is developed from the concept of "currere" proposed by William Pinar, taking up the regressive and progressive stages. In conclusion, the influence of the social context as a backdrop to the research is highlighted and how this constitutes an opportunity to understand the phenomena, based on the evidence, which coincides in pointing out the predominant role of Initial Teacher Education to address multicultural educational contexts.

Keywords: Education; Migration; Researcher; Teacher education.

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Introduction

Pinar (2017), from a contemporary curriculum theory, proposes four stages referred to the subjective reconstruction of the subject: regressive, progressive, analytical and synthetic; a reflective exercise that was quite significant in the last stages of my PhD

research in Education, referred to school curriculum and teachers' discourses in contexts of migrant cultural diversity (Mora-Olate, 2020).

Therefore, the objective of this paper is to reflect metacognitively on the research process in the field of education and migration from the voice of a novice researcher. To share my limited experience as a researcher, I will take from the hand of the concept "currere", the Latin infinitive of curriculum, proposed by William Pinar, who emphasizes the experience of curriculum as that "lived experience, embodied, insofar as, structured by the passage to time that focuses on the future" (Pinar, 2017).

Reflections that I hope will contribute something, especially to teachers who are surely already in their educational centers with students who are children of migrants and at the same time, perhaps they will see some light in this journey, to be enthusiastic about research in this field of study. Although it is not my purpose in this reflective work to follow Pinar's four phases to the letter, the regressive and progressive phases will be my axes in this development.

Development

Regressive Stage

It was January 2015 and the subject of my research interest was found in a headline in the press in Chillán, a city in the center-south of Chile, capital of the Ñuble region: "Boom of foreigners in Ñuble: 370 requested residency in 2014" (Valenzuela, 2015). March arrived and I looked for enrollment data in the Municipal Department of Education of Chillán, where they looked with strangeness, interest to know how many foreign students were enrolled in the municipalized system, and in which establishments they were concentrated. The system was imprecise and the only way to have more reliable and updated data would be to consult school by school. My incipient field notebook records that. At the time, I was uncertain whether I would begin my doctoral training, but that grandiloquent headline resonated with me along with a curiosity about what was happening with immigration in the educational field.

In the last quarter of 2015 I began my doctoral studies in Education at the University of Bío-Bío (Chillán, Chile), having my research topic clear, but the object of study still seemed diffuse to me. Undoubtedly, my experience of a decade in initial teacher

training, where much of the time I developed it in parallel with teaching in the school classroom, added to the doctoral courses, readings, dialogue with researchers in the line of intercultural education, conversations with colleagues in schools, helped me to grasp both my object of study, the understanding of migrant cultural diversity in the curriculum and in teachers' discourses, and the comprehensive paradigmatic option with its corresponding qualitative methodology. Being a Spanish teacher has also helped me with the work of documentary analysis and interviews, which following the advice of Gibbs (2012), were first subjected to a handmade analysis and then, the analytical process supported with software, which will never replace the interpretive capacity of the researcher, and in my case, my courses of Literary Theory, Linguistics, Communication and Semiotics experienced during my undergraduate studies.

In 2016, due to its acceleration, a new migratory cycle in Chile (Bellolio and Valdés, 2020), generating me as a researcher the following questions: What does the national educational policy say about the schooling of migrant students? Does the teacher training policy consider the cultural diversities present in the school classroom? How is the teaching staff evaluating their learning? Does the school curriculum take into account the culture carried by foreign students?

Too many edges to be addressed investigatively at once, but the search for answers derived in some publications (Mora-Olate, 2018), a documentary type study where I critically analyze the educational policies that currently regulate education in Chile, with the aim of discovering in various curricular instruments who have been the accomplices of that "silence", such as the General Education Law (Congress of Chile, 2009), School Inclusion Law (Congress of Chile, 2015), the curricular framework and the Initial Teacher Training. Regarding the latter, the inquiries conclude that both at the initial and continuous level, it is in debt with the treatment of Intercultural and Inclusive Education of migrant students. This lack of training has caused teachers to develop schooling "without having had prior training related to intercultural issues, in a context where the absence of an institutional legal framework and public policies aimed at living together is striking" (Palma, 2015, p.5).

In Latin America, the idea of intercultural education in initial teacher training began in the 1980s with Intercultural Bilingual Education (EIB), due to the struggles of indigenous peoples. Gradually, criticisms are formulated considering that this is exclusive of the rest of society (Walsh, 2010; Zapata, 2014) and proposals emerge from

an expanded concept of cultural diversity and also highlight the need for teacher training along these lines (Zapata, 2014).

The absence of the consideration of cultural diversity in teacher training is added to the colonialist matrix of Chilean society, which according to Tijoux (2013), are factors that partly explain the discrimination exercised by teachers for ethnic or cultural reasons. In addition, Sanhueza, et al. (2016) explain that teachers do not modify their practices, despite recognizing the cultural differences present in their classrooms.

Research in initial teacher education shows that planning for students from diverse cultural backgrounds is at the heart of the issue:

The conception of cultural diversity that student teachers have determines the way they approach more or less inclusive practices. Likewise, it determines the educational response they are supposed to implement in the classroom, which will lead them to diversify or not the teaching and learning strategies according to the sociocultural contexts. (Sanhueza, et.al. 2016, p.191).

In Chile, the 2017 presidential campaigns had migration as a leitmotif, the last Census reports statistical information on this group, which is valuable for research. Television newscasts, newspapers and magazines abounded with notes and reports about migrants. And as life is a magic wheel, writing in the press as a monthly columnist in the newspaper "The Discussion" also constituted a space for reflection and dissemination of the migration issue, while increasingly people from Haiti began to arrive in Chillán, with the color of the skin being a mark of immigration, as stated by Tijoux (2016). Haitian people who arrived to work in a fruit farm, soon in the change of season, we began to see them at every traffic light offering us candy. The language barrier is not yet a problem in regional classrooms. Gradually, however, these new Chileans are arriving in the kindergartens; although they were born in Chile, they will predominantly be called immigrants, unless the monocultural and assimilationist approach to education at all levels is changed.

Progressive Stage

In it, according to Pinar (2017), where the future is imagined emerges, for example, the proposal of an intercultural evaluation model (Mora-Olate, 2019a). The model is described in its initial design phase; however, it can be glimpsed that "migrant cultural diversity in the Chilean school system not only stresses the curriculum in terms of the relevance of the contents that the school transmits, but also conflicts the current forms of evaluation that validate hegemonic knowledge from a technical paradigm" (Mora-

Olate 2019a, p.94). Foreign students are confronted with the monoculture of the curriculum and, in terms of evaluation, with a technical paradigm; in this way, the diversity of knowledge is made invisible. Faced with this, the proposed learning model is theoretically based on formative evaluation, continuous regulation of learning, integrating meta-evaluation processes and a broader idea of interculturality, which includes evaluation, constituting a way to recover its pedagogical sense, within the framework of the construction of a critical intercultural education.

The year 2018, in the midst of my fieldwork in interviews with practicing teachers, a 47 percent increase in the immigrant school population is reported, and a few months after Sebastián Piñera assumes his second presidential term, the Ministry of Education of Chile, publishes the document "Educational Policy for Foreign Students" (Ministry of Education of Chile) [MINEDUC], 2018). End of the silence of the State, I wonder. Not at all, the document does not go beyond being a kind of historical compilation that accounts for the amount of enrollment of foreign students in the school system, alluding to national standards and their corresponding international supports and of consigning the methodological definitions for the management of the Policy in question and the challenges involved. According to Beniscelli, Riedemann and Stang (2019), this "policy" is debatable as a contribution to the day-to-day pedagogical practice in schools and, in short, "it would be nothing more than a communication milestone of the center-right government months before starting its mandate, since it does not provide lines of action that specify its methodological definitions in the curricular field, which have as a backdrop the concept of intercultural education, but without clarifying a guideline (Mora-Olate, 2019b, p. 86).

This is how, in the course of doctoral studies in education, the migration issue has taken the political, social and why not say it, research agenda, where we must also be vigilant to such discourses, which can bias negatively. The Center of Public Studies (CEP) published the book *Immigration in Chile: A multidimensional view*", edited by Aninat and Vergara (2019), where in its introduction it starts by saying "the recent immigration wave in Chile", such expression is hyperbolic if our country, ascribed to the OECD, is far from the figures expected for such organization, and lead me to remember that headline of the *Chillanejo* newspaper that motivated my object of study.

So far, the Initial Teacher Education offered by higher education institutions in Chile does not include in their curricula the cultural heterogeneity of school classrooms; a situation that constitutes a training demand for Chilean teachers in their initial or

continuous stage (Gaete, et. al., p.2016; Mora-Olate, Sanhueza and Friz, 2021; Mora-Olate, 2020; MINEDUC, 2014).

In Latin America, teacher training has moved hand in hand with the idea of professionalization (Cuenca, 2007) from a competency paradigm that aims at achieving the improvement of knowledge, skills and quality standards around practice. However, this professionalizing effort is insufficient to respond to the demand for educational scenarios that require teachers to expand their field of action beyond the classroom.

Tenti (2005) shows us that in our region there is a devaluation of the teaching profession, which has other causes such as circumscribing "the role and performance of teachers exclusively in relation to the pedagogical-educational task, inside or outside the classroom, leaving them in a passive situation with respect to management and policy" (Cuenca, 2007, p.26). Therefore, migrant cultural diversity brings us face to face with the imperative challenge that teachers adopt an active role when formulating educational policies; this if made effective, "connotes as a strategy to raise the status of the profession and transit from a professionalizing approach to one whose center seeks to recover teaching professionalism" (Mora-Olate, 2018, p.245).

Conclusions

The context of data production and doctoral thesis writing in its last stage, has had as a backdrop what has been called "migration crisis": the displaced in Europe, Trump's wall, the boat of Captain Carola Rackete who saved 40 migrants off the coast of Italy, in turn, our northern border has been at the center of the news. Racist discourses, aporophobia, criminalization of certain nationalities, and gender violence emerge. Thus, it is sometimes painful to write, but at the same time exciting, that educational research has the opportunity to contribute something to the understanding of the phenomena, based on the evidence, which coincides in pointing out the preponderant role of Initial Teacher Training in developing intercultural communicative competences that allow teachers to attend to what Panikkar (2002) calls "intercultural interpellation", a characteristic feature of contemporary societies, which is now unavoidable.