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The Peasantry in Rural Education: An Emerging Debate*

O campesinato na educação rural, um debate emergente

El campesinado en la educación rural: un debate emergente

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Abstract

This article postulates a reflection focused on the revision and relevance in rurality of an educational proposal that includes the peasantry with their cultural practices, knowledge and recognition as subjects of rights. The meanings of rurality and rural education present in the National Rural Education Policy still obviate the construction of an educational model that integrates categories where it clearly recognizes this sector as the center of socio-cultural contribution reflected in curricular programs and syllabi. Furthermore, the simplified idea of agricultural production as a factor of identification of peasantry has not yet been overcome. The question then arises as to what conditions prevent such practices from this population from entering the school curricula. In this approach, different moments of reflection are undertaken, associated with research on the discourses of rural education, practices and links of peasant sectors that have fostered initiatives on the subject of rural education, where the curricular perspective for its recognition is also the discussion center for their postulation as guarantors of rights. This encompasses the synthesis of the need to build education plans, programs and projects that link the cultural practices of the peasants of the country from the first years of age to the national educational policy with a clear perspective of rural pedagogy.

Keywords

rural environment; recognition; school; sociocultural environment

Resumo

Este artigo postula uma reflexão focada na revisão e relevância na ruralidade de uma proposta educacional que inclua o campesinato com suas práticas e saberes culturais, e os reconheça como sujeitos de direitos. Os significados de ruralidade e educação rural presentes na Política Nacional de Educação Rural ainda evitam a construção de um modelo educacional que integre categorias em que reconheça claramente esse setor como centro de contribuição sociocultural refletido em programas e malhas curriculares. Além disso, a ideia simplificada da produção agrícola como fator de identificação do campesinato ainda não foi superada. Surge então a questão de quais condições impedem que essas práticas desta população entrem nos currículos escolares. Nessa abordagem, são realizados diferentes momentos de reflexão, associados à pesquisa sobre os discursos da educação rural, práticas e vínculos dos setores camponeses que fomentaram iniciativas sobre a educação rural, onde a perspectiva curricular para seu reconhecimento é também o centro de discussão para a sua postulação como sujeitos garantes de direitos. Isso abrange a síntese da necessidade de construir planos, programas e projetos educacionais que vinculem as práticas culturais dos camponeses do país desde os primeiros anos de idade à política educacional nacional com uma perspectiva clara da pedagogia rural.

Palavras-chave

ambiente rural; reconhecimento; escola; ambiente sociocultural

Resumen

Este artículo propone una reflexión sobre la pertinencia en la ruralidad de una propuesta educativa que incluya al campesinado con sus prácticas culturales y saberes, y lo reconozca como sujeto de derechos. Los significados de ruralidad y educación rural presentes en la política nacional de educación rural aún obvian la construcción de un modelo educativo que integre categorías que claramente reconozcan a este sector como centro de aporte sociocultural y que esto se refleje en programas y mallas curriculares. Además, todavía no se logra superar la idea simplificada de la producción agrícola como factor de identificación del campesinado. Surge entonces el interrogante sobre qué condiciones impiden que dichas prácticas de esta población ingresen a los currículos escolares. En este acercamiento se presentan diferentes momentos de reflexión, asociados a pesquisas sobre los discursos acerca de la educación rural, las prácticas y vinculaciones de sectores campesinos que han propiciado iniciativas sobre el tema, en los cuales la perspectiva curricular para su reconocimiento es también el centro de discusión para su postulación como sujetos garantes de derechos. Esto concreta la síntesis sobre la necesidad de construir planes, programas y proyectos de educación que vinculen las prácticas culturales de los campesinos del país desde los primeros años de edad a la política educativa nacional con una clara perspectiva de pedagogía de lo rural.

Palabras clave

ambiente rural; reconocimiento; escuela; medio sociocultural

Introduction

Colombian peasantry is often undervalued as a sector with little significance for the national economy. Reflecting on peasant knowledge embedded in learning processes in rural areas to develop texts and adjustments to the rural educational model is crucial for their recognition. It is also relevant to problematize the existence of an identity as peasants, closely tied to the role represented by belonging to a territory and its relationship with education.

Educational strategies and programs in Colombia have not offered regional or local differences that can account for the vast diversity of peasants. Perhaps this is because the notion of space conceived does not reflect what Lefebvre (1974) describes as a construction, leading instead to a reality of contemporary thought based on systematic and definitive logics that result in a singular way of understanding and interpreting reality. Therefore, pertinent education is one that can adapt to such diversity; to children, indigenous communities, rural inhabitants, and their particularities. Similarly, it is appropriate to refer to rurality, life, and rhythms of the countryside, where peasants should be more than just a picturesque appreciation.

The acceptability of education assumes guarantees of quality, minimum health standards, safety, and professional requirements for teachers; this must be stipulated, verified, and controlled by the government. The admissibility of teaching has extended considerably thanks to the development of international law but has not been in any way pertinent. It is not just about attending school to learn content, as Arias describes:

> It is also based on the assumption that it must respond to the collective life of the countryside, where it can relate to the environment, plants, agricultural work, the garden, rain, and the phases of the moon. Now, what elements of the environment are integrated into the practices of teachers, how educational programs and curricula have been constituted. A pedagogy that speaks of the ways, paths, the different shades of green in the mountains, health problems, mining, happiness, tenderness, and the feeling as inhabitants of the countryside. (2017, p. 61)

The critical question here is, how much of these ideals is reflected in school practices? While society questions the function of the school, curriculum changes often occur without actual transformations. In this context, social, rural, and grassroots organizations seek to transform, through their empowerment, strategies for nation-building, or "nationality" as presented by Herrera, Pinilla, and Sauza (2003), with suggestions and demands for "quality" education or education that is relevant to their life rhythms with a daily praxis of rurality, as national education policies do not adequately correspond to their rhythms and needs.

Understanding rurality in the dynamics of education involves valuing the lives of rural inhabitants as action and transformation for rural life. While Bourdieu (1998) and Bernstein (1972) boldly determine the elements highlighting the role of education and its strong counterflows as a sponsor of social control and power in forms of consciousness, it is worth trying to approach a provocative look at rurality — as a struggle and criterion for analysis — and, at the same time, undertake education as another way of reading, writing, and approaching that local world — instead of disintegrating it — of narrating oral images and feeling the practices of a historically excluded people who have regained traces of dignity in recent years for their vindication as subjects of rights.

Rural education and rurality demand profound changes in formal education in the rural field because it does not respond to the dynamics or pace of rural inhabitants, sustaining an education of low "quality" or having a low impact on the construction and existence of other ways of learning, doing, and teaching. Rural schools should integrate concerns for the integration of peasant knowledge as a rural educational project, and, in accordance with Lefebvre (1974), nourish the truth of space that is linked to social practice and its use. In this way, any action of educational identity would correspond not only to what is perceived in the rural environment but also to what is lived; therefore, the educational conception of the rural would also imply a representation of space. The Colombian peasantry is part of the 32% of the population residing in rural areas, according to the Human Development Report prepared in 2011 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). At the same time, there is a contradiction in not having a connection to the measurement system by the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) in 2018 to include the question about peasantry in the National Population and Housing Census, an event that would help know precisely how many people identify themselves as peasants in the country. Therefore, as we do not have differentiable representation systems, their connotations, and definitions have been divergent. The challenge of establishing a scenario to outline strategies that

identify educational processes that recognize them is a good registration strategy for their possible self-determination.

Education, with all the criticism it may receive for being structured more with the mercantile production system, is also the niche to sponsor representation systems and forge collective identity, as stipulated by Giménez (2012), in its evolution of social practices, where it constructs structures of symbolic systems. In the case of peasants, such structures can be the starting point for rural pedagogies that enunciate not only recognition of peasants as subjects of rights but also offer a perspective on rural life for a population with established cultural practices that can be enunciated as systems of peasant knowledge. In March 2020, the first political culture survey developed by dane, which included the question about peasantry, was shared. This provides evidence — still incipient — about what is known about this group in relation to specific integration dynamics, such as how many people consider themselves peasants and their educational level. While this information is valuable, it leaves questions about what academia and historical knowledge are supposed to know about a population, but which, in everyday life, remains a challenge to discover.

This article seeks to highlight the relationship between peasantry and rural education, emphasizing elements of their conceptualization as peasants within the framework of rural education strategies in the country. After that, the idea of rural pedagogy within the peasant organizational process is presented as an engine for recent initiatives for their recognition as political subjects, ending with a discussion about peasant identity as a complex axiom, not only of rural education but also of its presence within educational programs and projects that recognize it as an actor of knowledge and historical-cultural relationship in rural education.

Between the Desirable and the Sensitive

In Latin America, the difficulty of conceptually defining the peasant has been notorious. The problems, as Hernandez (1994) reiterates, stem from the lack of a single criterion unit and the various forms and trends to account for a subject with defined characteristics. According to Ortiz, the word "'peasant' is full of emotive associations. But there is no (today) another word that describes rural inhabitants who, lacking a strong tribal identity, remain marginalized from the world of cities and yet depend on it" (1979, p. 288). For the Colombian case, the invisibility of the rural sector and its inhabitants has integrated, as described by Pérez, a system of generalized crisis:

> a crisis of production, population and settlement crisis, crisis in traditional management forms, crisis in environmental resource management, crisis in traditional forms of social articulation. Thus, the entire rural society model is in crisis (2001, p. 21).

Addressing rural typology and the pedagogy of peasant knowledge puts us in a kind of "dispute of meanings," as Apple (1997, p. 12) mentions because it is not just about demonstrating the presence or absence of a contextualized curriculum in school but also embodying the struggle of inhabitants who feel marginalized, and this marginality is also in the school context.

Thus, there is a scenario of teaching that recalls that "the pedagogical and the school are cultural and formative dimensions [...] where the teaching of the curriculum is inevitably committed [...] to the production and reproduction of social divisions that go through the model of particular social identities" (Tadeu da Silva, 1997, p. 72). It can be inferred that when constructing an educational proposal that incorporates the dimensions of rural life, it is necessary to incorporate knowledge and practices of identity recognition of these populations. However, as Martinez et al. remind us, the design of the Colombian curriculum plan focused on planning as the most relevant part of the curriculum, not on skills or abilities for learning: "planning was important, now it is about fulfilling objectives, contents, activities, and later evaluation" (1994, p. 55). Although these new forms did not transform the school, they did change its teaching processes. "Now the curriculum appears alongside the discourses of development practices and planning, as is the case in developed and industrialized countries" (Martinez et al., 1994, p. 50).

Of course, this manifestation is not only modern. Quiceno (2003) reminds us how also in the education of Gran Colombia, the object of public instruction was to instruct the individual through state instruction. This education had several components:

> For communication, schools and some colleges for the people were thought, and universities and provincial colleges for power groups. Outside the law, other forms of education were created called associations of individuals, made up of personalities from economic and political power. Schools were supposed to be responsible for teaching some notions such as norms, punishments, and the transmission of some republican ideas, while colleges

> would be in charge of allowing a few to enter the university and, therefore, some of them to the capital and its culture (Quiceno, 2003, p. 39).

Thus, public instruction was only for a few, and by extension, access to power was also for a few, and "the regions provided few elements of education" (p. 40). In contrast, in associations, knowledge was secret; access to science, culture, and power circulated there. In this way,

> what was at the base at that time was the understanding of education as part of the order that took the territorial configuration of Gran Colombia, as a product of its two constitutions, that of 1821 and that of 1827, for which a representation of central power was established. From the top, theology, law, and medicine would be organized first, followed by a space for universities and the capital. Towards the sides, the provinces and regions (colleges and schools), and at the bottom, the people and the ignorant mass (Quiceno, 2003, p. 43).

These types of strategies led to discourses where the "quality" of education was called into question, not due to a lack of proposals for expansion in coverage, as Perfetti shows,

> until the 1990s, rural schools and students have shown significant progress, mainly due to the expansion and consolidation of educational models conceived for these areas, such as the case of New School, the Tutorial Learning System–SAT in Spanish... (2003, p. 167).

The socio-economic situation did not suffer the same fate. The extreme poverty of rural inhabitants made it better understood the condition and performance of education in these areas. According to the report presented by Perfetti,

> the continuous growth of rural poverty during the nineties, which was 83% by the end of the decade, with an increase of 10 percentage points compared to its urban counterpart, indicates the magnitude of poverty growth in rural areas of the country (2003, p. 172).

Rural areas presented unfavorable working conditions, unemployment, early family, illiteracy, among other aspects. This determined a pattern of little permanence of the school-age population in the education system. According to Perfetti's report,

> out of 100 students enrolled in the first grade of primary school in rural areas, only 35 complete this cycle, and just under half (16 students) move on to secondary school; of these, 8 complete the ninth grade, and only 7 complete the entire basic education cycle (2003, p. 183).

What one would wonder is: What do those young people who do not finish do? What kind of activities do they undertake? However, since 1996, the national government expanded its objectives to strengthen the Rural Education Program (per in Spanish) with the intention of increasing coverage and improving its quality; it established an institutional framework with a financial system to support and maintain it. It is possible that today the deficiencies in rural education maintain their severity.

In the same vein, education for rural areas has had, since the fifties, a series of educational programs that have improved coverage and provided opportunities to access education for overage and adult populations, as well as assistance to improve the illiteracy rate and social integration. The importance and presence of the Ministry of National Education (men in Spanish) in programs such as New School, Rural Post-Primary, Tutorial Learning System (sat in Spanish), CAFAM's Continuing Education Program, Telesecondary, Accelerated Learning, and Rural Education Service must be recognized. However, questions about the quality of these programs have not been deeply evaluated, nor can the question of the peasant population as beneficiaries of the programs or, at least, whether they have been designed for them, be made evident.

These coverage forms that, since the first half of the twentieth century, were proposed to close the existing gap in educational terms, were already permeated, as Sandoval highlights, by being the format of an "education in rural areas configured as an institution that integrates and transmits the values and concepts associated with the idea of region, nation, and scientific thought" (1996, p. 13). In this way, and

> from the point of view of both instruction and training, the rural school is only considered for its physical location [as rural]. Its contents, its method, and the training of the teacher, seen here as the socializing agent, are [purely] urban (Sandoval, 1996, p. 15)

In the context of a school that mass-produces education, where inequalities are reinforced when learning content that is not reflected in utility for life, beyond obtaining degrees with no use value or exchange value, a school questioning fair education should be concerned about the proposed training. This recalls the dimension offered by Bernstein (1972), a compensatory education that adjusts to deficits as a means to resolve them. This tension also holds its value in rural life and education with its own rhythms and contexts.

As a result, rural educational proposals should generate: 1) autonomy to adapt to the needs of each environment and the demands of schools in each municipality and their students, parents, and community; 2) an attitude that allows maintaining the principle of choice as individuals; not to take positions against various educational models, but to establish a new school proposal that can read beyond the weakened current school system. In this sense, Candela (1995) analyzes the significant distance between the proposed curriculum and the real or lived curriculum, "constructed in the practice of education"; it highlights the intervention that teachers make on transmitted knowledge and the active or passive disposition of students. The relevance comes from analyzing the social forms of knowledge reproduction, inferring that knowledge is constructed in discourse, in everyday life; at this point, strong emphasis is placed on the "context," as it encompasses all daily life, the environment, previous ideas, individuals, and hence culture. Candela (1995) agrees with Bauman (2010), Escobar (2000), Giménez (2012), and Lefebvre (1974) in emphasizing the importance of the existence of meanings, knowledge, and processes of collectivities, in this case, peasant communities, which, within the educational framework, constitute histories along with their territories to shape an inclusive education for them.

Thinking of a Pedagogy for the Rural

I want to present, in a relational manner, part of the debate on the existence of peasant organizations and the recognition of peasants as subjects with rights, given that any pedagogy designed for rural areas must, above all, be, as described by Borda (1978), a construction that can highlight the problem of how to investigate reality to transform it through praxis. One reason for this is that education for rural areas, in the case of Colombia, has followed a completely Western and traditionalist model, eliminating all practices of knowledge and customs of the peasantry, as Sandoval points out:

> The rural school is transformed under the element of modernization, as it embodies a worldview and a modernizing and industrial way of thinking [...] The new structure of society and the idea of the nation encompass the elements of a new organization of the family, technology, science, and especially, the idea of community that the peasantry has and in which they live is transformed by the idea of the nation that enters the rural school, becoming a homogenizing vehicle of rural culture, imposing the modern vision through its scientific-rational mode of thinking carried by the school institution. (1996, p. 372)

Therefore, before addressing the "should be" of rural pedagogy, it is necessary to identify the historical reality of the peasantry and rural inhabitants, overwhelmed by deep inequities, as the basis for the research-action that Borda (1978) advocated.

Another reason is the existence of a population with organizational processes, symbolic systems, and unfinished cultural practices. Additionally, as described by Zemelman (1987), from the perspectives of ecology, agriculture, and economics, the knowledge and practices of peasants have weighed the referential value in terms of loss of identity and societal projects. In this context, I believe that the type of rural pedagogy and its discourse should be approached and constructed with the flow of these two considerations.

Only in September 2018 did the United Nations (un), under the principles of dignity and the inherent value of equality rights, recognize the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. This declaration is of great value; however, the abstention of Colombia from voting in favor poses an even greater challenge to continue demanding recognition both in everyday life dynamics and in the specific scenarios of reflection and thought construction, such as academia. It is possible that the connections made by various entities such as the un or the undp with the terms of "integral human development" refer more to the sense of a process, as described by Walsh:

> The need for inclusion —of individuals from historically excluded groups— as a mechanism to advance social cohesion. This perspective is evident in the recent changes in UNESCO's policy, now aimed at managing diversity so that it is not a source of threat and insecurity. (2010, p. 84)

Walsh (2010) states that this effort promotes imaginaries that, with ethnic and integrative discourse, benefit economic policies compatible with the market. In this line of thought, the effects of globalization contribute to the disappearance of peasant organizations, seemingly one of its most prominent effects; however, the peasant sectors continue to advance actions for their recognition. The most recent case highlights the legal action for the recognition of the category of peasant as a subject of rights, a process also derived from the technical document prepared by the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History (ICANH in Spanish) in 2017 on the concept of peasantry. From there, the existence as a movement is inferred since the ICANH

> issues this concept in compliance with what was agreed upon in July 2016 during the "Follow-up meeting and status of progress on the actions undertaken by the national government, within the framework of the Peasant Mesa of Cauca, CIMA-PUPSOC/ interministerial dialogue and negotiation." In the debate on the inclusion of peasants in the questions of the next Population Census, it was considered that a technical concept about peasants was needed, which would serve as the basis for the work that will be carried out by the DANE. (2017, p. 1)

It is evident, therefore, that peasant organizations maintain constant tension due to the non-recognition of their existence in rural areas, agrarian problems, land conflicts, informal labor, and land use and development. These situations, from a perspective of the productive relationship with the countryside, are placed as one of the transcendental facts of the productivity of the country. In the words of Suescún:

> The agrarian problem and the historical conflicts of the Colombian rural space share a common core: land distribution. Various studies in different stages of Colombian history and with different theoretical approaches have referred to the persistence and inertia of land concentration. (2013, p. 655)

Such expressions and claims suggest a different stance from the traditional form of social advocacy by peasants. Following Mondragón (n.d.), the struggles of peasants that emerged in the early 20th century gave rise to "first stable organizations. Their proposals were initially purely local. For example, in Viotá in 1934, tenants presented a document proposing that they be allowed to freely plant coffee and establish mills on the estates." (p. 1). These types of requests grew in other parts of the country as a form of peasant movement, constituting boards, local assemblies, or inhabiting unclaimed territories.

In Colombia, different forms of violence have converged, exercised as a means to achieve social changes. This situation has varied in each decade; for example, social control and economic, political, and cultural imposition have been part of this process. This situation places Colombian peasants in a relationship of inequality, poverty, and backwardness, which, as Barkin mentions:

> Justify policies that later threaten the very existence of traditional social groups and their productive systems. Their inability to adapt is evidence that reinforces the idea that these groups are the cause of the social and economic backwardness of rural areas. Even in the most modern societies, 'blaming the victim' for their own situation and lack of collective progress is a quite common phenomenon. (1998, p. 3)

This perception of the rural population, especially peasants, as "poor," is mistaken, as what should be acknowledged is the negligence and weak capacity to allocate resources of rural public policies. Thus, the crisis of rurality, as mentioned by Pérez (2001), is affected by multiple causes, especially those associated with the economic growth model, which exerts various types of pressures on the daily lives of peasant families. However, organizational processes become relevant to redress, maintain, and build other forms of existence in their territories.

Therefore, a large part of the rural population has found in the idea of the "social movement" a way to resist the distancing imposed by the state; in this case, the figure of the peasant organization. This document does not address the history or moment of the configuration of the peasant movement, but, in some way, its impacts, tensions, and correlations in Colombian society, and especially rural education, have resulted from this configuration.

There are other dimensions to associate the dynamics of peasants as subjects. One of them corresponds to the construction of their identity; which is expressed in their narratives or as agricultural activity. In this regard, Vázquez, Ortiz, Zárate, and Carranza (2013) mention that "there is a lack of knowledge about how peasants identify themselves," and propose that one way to understand it is through their own narratives or discourse. According to Gergen,

> Discourse is the means by which individuals make themselves intelligible. By identifying themselves (with others and with themselves) and writing themselves in a specific time and space; they create a discourse about themselves, a product of their social exchanges. After all, life is told as stories, and relationships with others are lived in a narrative way. (1996, p. 32)

The fabric of identity, therefore, subscribes to a fundamental stance of organization, as the peasantry undergoes cultural annihilation. Here, identity, like current claims as subjects of rights and as individuals, can be considered a social product, as emphasized by Vázquez et al.:

> Defining it is not simple; however, some characteristics that allow conceptualizing this term more precisely require considering that: a) identity is composite: each culture or subculture carries values and indicators of actions, thoughts, and feelings; b) it is dynamic: behaviors, ideas, and feelings change according to transformations in the family, institutional, and social context in which one lives; and c) identity is dialectical: its construction is not a solitary and individual work, it requires the presence of other individuals. (2013, p. 3)

The center of changes in rural life has varied, so it is crucial to build a more in-depth national reading of the dynamics of peasant knowledge and their involvement in educational processes for rurality; since it is not only about exploring ways of doing, feeling, and thinking of peasants but also imperative to reinforce arguments more clearly defining what is called "rurality." More precise concepts can serve to formulate appropriate and relevant policies for life in the countryside. Rethinking this dimension from a critical perspective, in the way people who inhabit rural areas —especially peasants— have been viewed and treated throughout history, is contributing to the reading and reflection of something unfinished. There, the role of education, with all the social, economic, socializing, and cultural potentialities that integrate these populations, is of vital importance when thinking about a world that can change and transform for the common good of the peasantry.

Becoming and Identity of Peasantry

While the categories of peasant identity and rural pedagogy are risky, so is the absence of an education model that accounts for peasant practices and knowledge. This limitation can be traced in the guidelines institutionalized by the Ministry of Education in its Rural Educational Project (PER in Spanish), initiated in 2001 (bearing in mind that these strategies have been shaped since 1947). Despite being a process aimed at expanding educational coverage, not only for the country but especially for rural areas, it does not seem to differentiate, name, or recognize the peasant population. Diversity, as Hall mentions, "can adopt closed modalities of culture and community, refusing to engage with the tricky problems that attempting to live in difference causes" (1993, p. 349). In unison, Escobar reminds us that "places can be forgotten, which means their decline and deterioration; people and work are fragmented in the space of places, to the extent that places are disconnected from each other" (2000, p. 83). This is nothing more than the denial and invalidation of the existence of a population. According to Bauman,

> The idea of 'identity' was born out of the crisis of belonging and the effort it triggered to bridge the gap between 'should' and 'is,' to elevate reality to the established models that the idea set, to reshape reality in the image and likeness of the idea. (2010, p. 49)

Paraphrasing Bauman (2010), and for the case of peasantry, identity is the challenge to build, not the already finished task. Perceiving the mobilization dynamics of peasant organizations goes beyond the ethnographic; it involves understanding social life based on the logics constructed by social subjects. This brings us closer to Hall (1993) when he describes how representations of processes [in the community] go beyond meaning and are grounded in the knowledge of contexts. In the words of Borda (1978), this places us in the dilemma of combining the experiential with the rational as a true ontological problem that we cannot evade, in what he himself calls the anguishing idea of researching without intention, without a sense, for the sake of understanding reality but not being able to effect changes in it, and precisely that should be the sense horizon of rural pedagogy.

The insights of De Sousa Santos help internalize the terms of the claim, which often seems to be against scientistic postulations, for not recognizing historically excluded populations; rather, it is the counter-hegemonic use that

> consists, on the one hand, in exploring the internal plurality of science, that is, alternative scientific practices that have been made visible by feminist and postcolonial epistemologies, and, on the other hand, in promoting interaction and interdependence between scientific and non-scientific knowledge. (2010, pp. 52-53)

In that sense, rural education that recognizes the peasantry must examine the evidence of its scope, limits, and integration into the community. This implies understanding the contexts and knowledge about rural life and peasantry in relation to the education in their environment, from which Escobar deduces a

> defense of the place without naturalizing it, feminizing it, or making it essential, a defense in which the place does not become the trivial source of regressive processes or forces. If one is to displace the time and space of the central place that has occupied in the physical and social sciences —perhaps even counting on the metaphors of the new sciences that highlight networks, complexity, autopoiesis, etc., concepts that do not link space and time as much— is it possible to do that without reifying permanence, presence, bondage, corporeality, and the like? (2000, p. 69)

In this process of peasant reclaiming, both the decolonial and what De Sousa Santos (2010) assumes, as well as Lefebvre's idea (1974) stating that space exists because it is where the peasantry dwells, and there the question of its historical process is knotted. Amid the transformations they have to undergo, it is valid to ask if a proposal for rural education that

integrates these peasant knowledge, their peasant identity, and a pedagogy of the rural is possible, or if, on the contrary, the education they receive in the midst of global and market adjustments is sufficient to meet their needs and rhythms of life.

In the dynamics of per, the Ministry of Education lacks logistics, as well as economic, didactic, and pedagogical resources to propose an educational model different from the productive-economicist and business-oriented one that is constructed in the field. In 2012, the Ministry published the manual for the formulation and implementation of rural education plans, with the aim of encouraging a differential rural education; however, its guidelines do not surpass the agrarian fact of the field as the only form of pedagogical knowledge —almost a crude way of training agricultural employees—, and they suffer from a limited and almost nonexistent pedagogical elaboration that, as Núñez describes,

> Gives prominence to local subjects as guardians of a rich network of safeguarded, hybridized, substituted, and emerging knowledge (Núñez, 2003). From the subjectivity of local actors, intangible heritages must be reconstructed to obtain social practices attached to the cognitive processes of learning and teaching. (2006, p. 146)

This coincides with the idea of taking a critical stance on the way educational research has been carried out, especially in "third world" countries, where it is necessary to distance oneself and become aware of the risks that abandoning the known can cause, and understand what is taught in school as the only thing approved by modern science. In this sense, there are few works that address a tension close to the topic of peasant knowledge in the midst of rural education in Colombia, although there is a broad characterization of rural education. For example, research such as that developed by Perfetti (2003), which, from the institutionality, manages to outline the critical condition of rural residents and the situation of the school in economic, infrastructure, and educational "quality" terms, does not inquire about curricula or pedagogies, much less about peasant knowledge.

Something similar happens with the work of Sandra Milena Londoño and Javier Mauricio Mejía (2010), who highlight the Popular Cultural Action (acpo in Spanish) program as one of the most important for Colombia in terms of educational coverage. This program, run by the clergy, which was very declined in the fifties, has a strong focus on the peasant population and the interest in improving and transforming their living and educational conditions. This program broadcasted by Radio Sutatenza represents an icon in the use of media for educational purposes, but the idea of reproducing a national educational model without distinction of sector or population persists.

On the other hand, there is the experience of the "Peasant University," which arose as a proposal from the Communities of Peace in San José de Apartadó in 1997 and as an alternative to the harsh violence they faced in the Urabá department. Here, the implementation of practices of knowledge specific to the peasant community to meet the needs of food, housing, and planting, derived from the war, where schools and commerce disappeared, is inferred. This dynamic has been tried to reproduce in the Cauca department through itinerant sessions under the tutelage of a dynamic team that defines with the community the time and pace of work, but it has had little development and implementation; these facts are at the base of having recognized a capitalist process in education, as Mejía clearly shows:

> The view of the school as a reproductionist form of labor does not manage to understand how its role has been modified in globalized and neoliberal capitalism, leading many to maintain a critique from past perspectives that does not sufficiently account for ongoing transformations. Therefore, we also talk about the need to reinvent criticism, questioning the form and content of criticism from the past. (2006, p. 35)

On the other hand, the New School has served as a corollary to represent one of the most prominent models of school coverage in the country, although the version implemented since the eighties in Colombia with the same name does not represent the social, cultural, political, and religious dimensions of the school ideas with which it entered the first decade of the twentieth century. Furthermore, this Active School represented "the creation of the entire national educational system, as one of the strategies that would help consolidate the nation-state" (Herrera, 1999, p. 63).

This dissertation on rural education leaves out the existence of a project to insert peasant or rural practices into educational programs. Therefore, it is imperative to say that what has existed in Colombia is a unified national educational model, where pedagogy, curricula, and methodologies present and developed in rural education are exactly comparable to the urban education model, even if the Rural Education Program of the Ministry of Education has been maintained since 2001.

We refer to rurality and the need for an educational model in line with rural life because in rurality knowledge is collectively constructed, it is a learning

process in which the student participates actively, and teachers participate in the construction of knowledge as counselors and guides in a permanent relationship with their environment. This implies breaking to a large extent with the traditional form of the classroom and the blackboard; it is not always or every day that one learns enclosed in four walls —what is called the classroom. For rural children, contact with the environment is important; there is the knowledge of their parents, their culture, their way of seeing and understanding the world, and education must offer that possibility. However, as Zambrano states,

> The difficulties of Colombian society to protect human life and to guarantee the minimum elements of an open and democratic social order cannot be recorded by an educational policy that insists on disciplining educational institutions. Questions about the meanings and implications of the educational efforts of societies must be placed at the center of the agenda of an educational sociology in line with Colombian particularities. (2005, p. 146)

Therefore, talking about a pedagogy of rurality that recognizes the complexity of the local and the need for the national is imperative, as is a pedagogy that establishes a dialogue of knowledge with the community and in turn makes it curriculum. But, without forgetting, as Perrenoud says, that "no curriculum renewal will create by itself the conditions for equality of acquired knowledge" (2010, p. 114), and much less that certifying knowledge is a guarantee of social success.

Unequal Knowledge

Knowledge and its various fields have been organized in the West under the models of modern sciences. According to Canclini (2004), in Latin America, the practices and knowledge of the indigenous population, their traditional medicine, artisanal constructions, and organizational forms with which they use knowledge coexist with the sciences.

> Despite the uneven recognition received by scientific and traditional knowledge, evolutionary trends that tend to discredit indigenous cultures, and indigenous knowledge continue to be used by large sectors as resources for health, peasant work, and everyday education (Canclini, 2004, pp. 182-183).

Considering inequality as the sole dimension of exclusion avoids formulating the social relationship derived from the modernist approach, understanding economic integration processes as the support for much of the globalization and modernity processes. As Castro describes it, "a modernity that functions as a machine generating otherness that, in the name of reason and humanism, excludes hybridity, multiplicity, ambiguity, and contingency of concrete forms of life from its imagination" (2000, p. 145). Regarding this, Lander states that:

> The Iberian conquest of the American continent is the founding moment of the two processes that articulately shape subsequent history: modernity and the colonial organization of the world. With the beginning of colonialism in America, not only did the colonial organization of the world begin, but simultaneously the colonial constitution of knowledge, languages, memory, and the imaginary. (2011, p. 16)

Similarly, when addressing globalization in connection with education, we agree with Bonal in saying that "they are, therefore, two sides of the same coin that explain the paradox of the need and inadequacy of education" (2005, p. 86), not resolving the poverty gap and, on the contrary, deepening inequality. As Zambrano confirms for Colombia, "The educational model fails to correct the structural marginalization suffered by thousands of young people in the country" (2005, p. 147), perhaps because within educational developments persists what Bernstein (1993) called "framing," regulating educational and institutional practices to the point of commodifying knowledge within a colonial system, as Quijano proposes:

> It is, in the first place, the culmination of a process that began with the constitution of America and that of colonial/modern and Eurocentric capitalism as a new pattern of world power. One of the fundamental axes of this power pattern is the social classification of the world population based on the idea of race, a mental construction that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination, which, since then, permeates the most important dimensions of world power, including its specific rationality, Eurocentrism. In addition, he considers that this construction was the first space/time of a new pattern of world power and, thus, the first identity of modernity. (2000, pp. 201-202)

This is the reason, he says, why the formation of social relations that founded the idea that produced historically new social identities in America, such as Indians, blacks, and mestizos, and redefined others. Therefore, it is worth considering Wallerstein's suggestion (1996) to reject the ontological distinction between humans and nature since the distinctive features— as Quijano (2000) speaks of race— in their modern sense, have no known history before America. Perhaps it originated as a narrative of phenotypic differences between conquerors and conquered,

but what matters is that it was soon constructed as a reference to supposed differential biological structures between them.

However, the notion remains that "a population that has no awareness of its past has no control over its future. Evidently, every group of people, even if they are not aware, have a past; in that same sense, they have a future" (Dussel, 1973, p. 34). The idea to highlight is that humans are not only the product of the distinction between society and nature, as Appadurai (1996) considers; culture is not a noun, as if it were some kind of object or thing, but an adjective, that is, "the most valuable aspect of the concept of culture is the concept of difference, a contrastive property—rather than a substantive property" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 14); in other words, culture should not be considered an essence or something that each group carries within itself, but as the "subset of differences that were selected and mobilized with the aim of articulating the boundaries of difference" (Appadurai cited by Canclini, 2004, p. 39).

In this sense, Zemelman "proposes an expansion in the relationship of knowledge so that it is congruent with the incorporation of the subject in its circumstances, which requires conceiving knowledge as part of a more inclusive relationship" (2010, p. 6). This trend in the constant construction of knowledge opposes the way social sciences used to be in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which:

> Are sustained by a colonial imaginary of an ideological nature. Binary concepts such as barbarism and civilization, tradition and modernity, community and society, myth and science, childhood and maturity, organic solidarity and mechanical solidarity, poverty and development, among many others, have completely permeated the analytical models of the social sciences. (Castro, 2000, p. 93)

The imaginary of progress, according to which all societies evolve over time under universal laws inherent in nature or the human spirit, appears as an ideological product constructed from the modern/colonial power device. Social sciences structurally function as an "ideological apparatus" that, internally, legitimizes the exclusion and discipline of those who do not fit the subjectivity profiles that the State needed to implement its modernization policies. Externally, social sciences legitimized the international division of labor and the inequality of the terms of exchange and trade between the center and the periphery, that is, the great social and economic benefits that European powers were obtaining from their dominance over their colonies (Castro, 2000).

Exclusion dynamics help establish forms of inclusion. Now, Moreno wonders about the type of process underlying this process: "what inclusion and exclusion are we talking about? What are we included in, and what are we excluded from?" (2000, p. 164). However, what matters is being able to locate the dimensions of everyday life on which disputes over knowledge and legitimacy have been placed and faced. Regarding this, Dussel comments:

> Now it is a matter of "placing" all cultures that inevitably face each other today at all levels of everyday life, communication, education, research, policies of cultural expansion or resistance, or even military. Cultural systems, coined for millennia, can be torn apart in decades or developed by confronting other cultures. No culture has survival assured in advance. All this has increased today, being a crucial moment in the history of the cultures of the planet. (2005, p. 12)

In this way, locating the Colombian education model and its constitution process involves these inclusion/exclusion dynamics inherent in the modernizing process. Following Canclini, "nations had more or less self-contained cultures, with defined and persevering ideological axes that governed most of the economic organization and everyday customs. It was believed to know what it meant to be French, Russian, or Mexican" (2004, p. 16). Hence, the first question that must be raised as the guiding axis of thought is related to order, as it forms a constitutive mechanism of subjectivities by influencing the system of needs of social collectives. In fact, considering the existence of a subject situated in multiple relations, as Zemelman describes:

> They make up the space that determines them in the nature of their movement, which translates, in the first place, into the emergence of the need to occupy a space where the recognition of collective belongings takes place, accompanied by the formation of a particular social subjectivity. (2010, p. 2)

Valuing the considerations that Lefebvre (1974) makes about spatial practices as regulators of life is crucial, in addition to clarifying that space has no power "in itself," and the contradictions of space are not determined by it as such. They are, in themselves, contradictions of society (between this and that in society, for example, between productive forces and relations of production); "they are updated in space, at the level of space, generating the contradictions of space" (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 268). Here, the history of education in Colombia seems to positively discriminate against its rural population.

When you are 6, 9, or 12 years old, after waking up at four in the morning, getting ready to walk two or three hours along muddy paths to get to school, bordering mountains or distant plains, without a school bus route, perhaps without the internet, without libraries, with many places without electricity, or waiting for it to be three in the afternoon to take advantage of the five hours of energy from the power plant, with the sounds of war still nearby, and then returning home to help with farm work, it is conceivable that this educational model must consider the social, historical, and population context in which the school is established to formulate its curricular contents. As Edelman states, when addressing the category of peasant, there are some "complex realities of migrant, deterritorialized peoples, with various occupations and dependent on various income streams" (1998, p. 279), but it becomes dangerous when it claims greater social well-being because peasants know that the transformation of society involves the collective management of their own space as a population.

Conclusions

The initiatives of rural communities arise from the need to propose and demand the right to be treated differentially. These sectors share the same territory with indigenous peoples (indigenous population) and with populations that have other ways of connecting with the land and the world (peasants), but they need and require strategies where they can interact among the different rural populations, where no one feels threatened in the existence of their culture or worldview. On the contrary, they can complement each other; in such a way that different ways of seeing and connecting with the world can be present in the school space, where the formation of a national educational curriculum for basic, middle, and early childhood education links the idea of rural pedagogy. In this sense, the following considerations are just a few vortices that appear from a distance as a synthetic correlate:

- The territorial and cultural particularities in which peasants live, to whom the State must guarantee education related to social practices, worldviews—which historically have allowed them to survive in their social systems—must be visible in a more relevant rural education that preserves identity, rootedness in their land, environmental sustainability, and self-recognition.

- In the diverse regions of the country where peasants live, there are environmental, geographical, traditional, historical, political, and cultural particularities that offer valid reasons and contributions to think about the construction of local curricula adapted to the spaces where they live. This presupposes a pedagogy of special training and preparation for teachers so that they can differentiate between the traditional and the appropriate for the context in which their training process takes place.

- Rural education should be assigned value and academic status when it comes to local knowledge (peasants), similar to the status granted to universal knowledge, in line with the value of material and intangible heritage, and thus anchor its identity.

- A theoretical and methodological tool should be facilitated on the ways in which peasant learning occurs to bring it closer to teaching-learning processes, which can facilitate its educational implementation and can also be used to apply or improve initiatives in other contexts where educational curricula are strictly homogeneous.

- Curriculum designs must have the effective and active participation of the community so that they can take a stance and action on what their members want to learn. Some of the questions that their school programs and projects should address are: Why should they study? How should they receive their education? What are the suitable school spaces? What should the school calendar and the most relevant contents be? What profile should rural teachers and the type of student they want to form have?

It is not about venturing into a founded idealism, but about reiterating the consensual decisions between educational actors and community actors that the institutions guaranteeing educational rights so often ignore. Reclaiming the identity has to do with the lack of a concise definition of what rural means. When we talk about it, we refer to relevant habits of the rural population, but the reflection remains open to continue aiming for a more relevant concept that serves to formulate appropriate and pertinent policies for its inhabitants; the topic remains unfinished, with all the social, economic, socializing, and cultural potentialities that integrate the diversity of populations. For this, rural education and pedagogy constitute the worlds, adjustments, and vindications of the populations of the rural world.

Education is rural, not because it is studied in the countryside, but because its knowledge, worldview, culture, and experiences of daily life of its inhabitants, and the relationship with other ways of learning, doing, and teaching are integrated. Rural education and life

in the countryside are mediated by mercantile power relations, synonym of development. This generates a loss of identity and cultural tradition. The peasant population is the most affected by this process, to the point that even the inhabitants who share the same territory do not value them as an excluded sector. Faced with these deficiencies, it is imperative to build relationships to strengthen arguments for the recognition of the peasant population so that education is relevant to the rural world; for this, more than a reflection must be forged. This exercise does not at any time settle the already known history of poverty, inequality, and distance in areas of connectivity and academic programs of new technologies applied in rural education; therefore, the educational discourses that prevail and persist in this must change; it seems that the adjustment continues to be to maintain minimum levels of knowledge and access to the rural world, considering it still in backwardness and marginality.

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