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STRENGTHENING TEACHER TRAINING IN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES: A PERSPECTIVE FROM INTERNATIONAL POLICIES

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the strengthening of teacher training in Latin American countries based on the influence of international policies promoted by organizations such as UNESCO, OECD, and OEI. The study adopts a qualitative, comparative approach grounded in the interpretive-critical paradigm, aiming to understand and examine the structure of teacher training systems in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Honduras, and Mexico, as well as to assess the influence of international policies on these systems from a reflective perspective. The analysis is based on documentary review of educational policies, official reports, and academic literature. The study examines teacher training systems in the selected countries, identifying their main characteristics, similarities, and differences. The results show that international policies have promoted processes of teacher professionalization, strengthening of initial training and continuous professional development, as well as the implementation of evaluation and quality assurance systems. However, tensions are also identified related to the standardization of training models, loss of teacher autonomy, and limited contextualization of educational policies to local realities. It is concluded that, although international influence has contributed to improving the structure of teacher training systems, it is necessary to adopt more critical and contextualized approaches that respond to the social, cultural, and educational specificities of each country, recognizing teachers as key actors in educational transformation.

KEYWORDS: *teacher training, international policies, Latin America, educational quality, teacher professionalization*

1 INTRODUCTION

Teacher training, beyond being understood as a comprehensive process, has become one of the fundamental pillars for improving the quality of education globally. International organizations such as UNESCO, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) have promoted policies aimed at strengthening teaching competencies, continuous professional development, and performance evaluation. These criteria have significantly influenced educational systems in Latin America, particularly in countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Peru, and Mexico.

One of the main contributions of international policies has been the requirement of university-level training, the establishment of quality standards, and the implementation of evaluation processes, which have helped strengthen the recognition of teachers as professionals. These policies have also promoted continuous training, encouraging the ongoing updating of teachers in response to socio-educational, technological, and social changes. This has contributed to improving pedagogical practices and strengthening teaching competencies.

Another important aspect is the establishment of evaluation and monitoring systems, which help identify weaknesses and guide improvements in teacher training. In this sense, international policies have contributed to the modernization of educational systems.

However, the adoption of these international criteria has not been without tensions. While they have contributed to structuring more organized systems of teacher training, they have also generated debates regarding their relevance. In this sense, it is argued that the strengthening of teacher training systems in these countries has been shaped by international policies which, although they promote quality standards, tend to limit educational contextualization, teacher autonomy, and equity in working conditions—key factors for achieving educational quality.

International Policies and Teacher Training

Teacher training, nowadays understood as a continuous process that integrates initial education, professional induction, and ongoing professional development, as supported by Vaillant (2016), is crucial for achieving educational quality. Organizations such as the OECD have promoted international assessments like PISA, which influence educational policies by linking student performance to the quality of teacher training (OECD, 2019).

However, experts warn that these policies respond to a technocratic rationale that prioritizes measurement, efficiency, and standardization.

In this sense, international educational policies respond to a logic of global governance that seeks to establish common quality standards. Within this framework, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) emphasizes the need to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education, recognizing the central role of teachers (UNESCO, 2015).

In this regard, one of the main challenges faced by teacher training systems in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Honduras, and Mexico is the tendency toward standardization, driven by international policies. While these policies aim to ensure quality, they also limit adaptation to local contexts. In this sense, Freire (1970) argues that education should be grounded in the reality of the learner and their social environment. However, in countries such as Colombia and Peru, training models tend to be homogeneous, overlooking cultural and territorial diversity. This results in teacher training that does not always respond to the real needs of the classroom, particularly in rural or vulnerable contexts.

Another critical aspect is the emphasis on evaluation as a mechanism for controlling performance. In countries such as Mexico and Peru, teacher training systems are strongly oriented toward the measurement of teaching performance. In this regard, it is important to recognize that, although evaluation is necessary, its excessive use can limit professional autonomy. According to Giroux (2013), this approach may turn teachers into mere implementers of policies, reducing their critical capacity. Furthermore, when evaluation is not accompanied by formative processes, it loses its pedagogical purpose and becomes a punitive instrument.

Another common issue across the five countries is the disconnect between theoretical training and educational practice. In this regard, Tardif (2004) argues that teaching knowledge should be constructed through experience, implying that training must be closely linked to the real classroom context. However, in Ecuador, teacher education can be overly academic. In Mexico, teacher training institutions face challenges in updating their programs, and in Honduras, limited resources constrain pedagogical practice. This reflects a model of teacher training that does not always adequately prepare educators for the real challenges of teaching.

Another critical aspect is that the quality of teacher training does not depend solely on its

structure, but also on the conditions of the educational system. This is evident in countries such as Honduras and in rural areas of Peru and Colombia, where the lack of resources, infrastructure, and access to continuous training limits the impact of educational policies. As UNESCO (2015) points out, it is not possible to guarantee educational quality without adequate conditions.

This reveals a contradiction: high standards of teaching quality are demanded without ensuring dignified conditions for the profession.

2 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TEACHER TRAINING

Colombia: Standardization and Challenges of Contextualization

The teacher training system in Colombia is structured around three components: initial training, in-service training, and advanced training. Universities, through faculties of Education Sciences, along with higher normal schools, are the main institutions responsible for initial teacher education, as stated by the Ministry of National Education (2013).

The teacher training system in Colombia is structured around three key components: initial training, in-service training, and advanced training. Universities, particularly through their Faculties of Education, along with higher normal schools, serve as the primary institutions responsible for initial teacher education, as established by the Ministry of National Education (2013).

However, this trend has been questioned for its homogenizing nature. Tardif (2004) argues that teaching knowledge is deeply contextual, constructed through experience and social interaction. In this sense, standardization may overlook the country's cultural and territorial diversity, thereby limiting the relevance of teacher training.

Ecuador: Professionalization and Advanced Training

In Ecuador, the teacher training system has been strengthened through policies focused on state regulation, improvement of academic quality, and the requirement of postgraduate education. Initial training is primarily conducted in universities under standards defined by the State. These policies have contributed to raising the academic level of teachers; however, they have also been criticized for their centralized approach and limited adaptation to specific contexts (Vaillant, 2016).

In recent decades, Ecuador has promoted policies aimed at teacher professionalization, including postgraduate training programs and academic strengthening initiatives. These efforts respond to the need to improve educational quality through the qualification of teachers (Vaillant, 2016). However, there is a risk of reducing teacher education to the attainment of degrees without ensuring a genuine transformation of pedagogical practice. As Schön (1983) points out, teachers should be reflective practitioners, capable of analyzing their practice and adapting to complex contexts.

Honduras: Dependence on International Cooperation

The system faces significant structural limitations, such as a lack of resources and educational inequality, which hinder the implementation of sustainable policies (UNESCO, 2015).

In Honduras, teacher training has been strongly influenced by international cooperation. While this has enabled progress in training and educational policies, it has also created dependence on external models (García & Weiss, 2019). Furthermore, the structural limitations of the education system make the effective implementation of these policies difficult. According to UNESCO (2015), the quality of education cannot be achieved without adequate conditions of infrastructure, resources, and institutional stability.

Peru: Evaluation, Meritocracy, and Labor Tensions

The Peruvian teacher training system is characterized by a meritocratic approach, with evaluation mechanisms for entry, retention, and promotion within the teaching career. Initial training is carried out in pedagogical institutes and universities. In addition, the country has promoted ongoing professional development programs and teacher evaluation. However, inequalities in access to training persist, especially in rural areas (OECD, 2019).

Peru has developed a model centered on meritocracy, teacher evaluation, and continuous professional development. These policies aim to ensure quality standards and improve educational performance (OECD, 2019). However, this approach has also generated tensions. According to Day (2017), excessive evaluation demands can affect teachers' motivation and well-being, especially when they are not accompanied by improvements in working conditions. This highlights that teacher training must be supported by comprehensive policies that consider teachers as whole individuals.

Mexico: Teacher Evaluation and Tensions with the Teaching Profession

Mexico has undergone educational reforms influenced by the OECD, particularly regarding teacher evaluation and meritocracy. The 2013 education reform introduced mandatory evaluation mechanisms for entry into and retention in the teaching profession (INEE, 2015).

Although these policies aim to improve educational quality, they have generated resistance among teachers. According to Day (2017), excessive evaluation can affect teachers' motivation, especially when it is not accompanied by adequate working conditions.

In Mexico, educational reforms in recent decades have been marked by a strong influence of international organizations. In particular, the 2013 education reform introduced significant changes in

teacher training and evaluation, establishing mandatory evaluation mechanisms for entry, promotion, and retention within the professional teaching service (INEE, 2015). These policies reflect a clear alignment with OECD guidelines, which promote meritocracy and evaluation as tools to improve educational quality. However, this approach has been widely debated. According to Tardif (2004), teaching cannot be reduced to quantifiable indicators, as it involves practical knowledge, experience, and specific contexts.

The implementation of these reforms generated resistance among teachers, who perceived the evaluations as punitive rather than formative mechanisms. In this regard, Day (2017) warns that policies focused exclusively on evaluation can negatively affect teachers' motivation and professional commitment.

Comparative table of the structure of teacher training in Latin American countries

Country	Initial teacher training	Entry into the teaching profession	Continuous professional development	Main characteristic
Colombia	Universities and teacher training colleges	Examinations and evaluations	Institutional programs	Quality assurance
Ecuador	Universities (centralized)	Public competition	State programs	State control
Peru	Pedagogical institutes and universities	National competition	Continuous assessment	Meritocracy
Honduras	Pedagogical universities	Limited competition	International support	Structural weakness
Mexico	Teacher training schools and universities	Evaluation and selection	Professional development programs	Mixed system

Tensions Between Global Policies and Local Realities

The analysis of these five countries allows us to identify similarities and differences in their teacher training systems. First, all countries have adopted models influenced by international policies, focused on quality, evaluation, and teacher professionalization. This reflects a regional trend toward standardizing teacher training. Second, there are differences in the degree of centralization of the systems. While Ecuador has a more centralized model, countries like Colombia and Mexico combine state regulation with institutional autonomy. Third, the systems face common challenges, such as the gap between theoretical and practical training, inequality in access to training, and the lack of adequate working conditions.

Finally, it is observed that the quality of teacher training does not depend solely on academic programs, but also on structural factors such as educational investment, job stability, and the social recognition of teachers.

The analysis also allows us to identify common tensions related to the standardization of teacher training, which responds to a global logic that does

not always consider the diversity of educational contexts. As Freire (1970) points out, education must start from the reality of the individual, which requires contextualized policies.

Furthermore, the emphasis on evaluation and accountability can limit teacher autonomy. Giroux (2013) warns that this approach can transform teachers into policy implementers rather than critical agents. There is also a significant gap between teacher training and working conditions. Tardif (2004) argues that teaching work is conditioned by social, institutional, and personal factors, which implies that educational quality does not depend solely on training.

3 METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach and is situated within the interpretative-critical paradigm, as it seeks to understand and analyze the structure of teacher training systems in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Honduras, and Mexico, as well as to examine the influence of international policies on these systems from a reflective perspective.

The study is comparative, descriptive, and analytical, as it allows for the identification of similarities and differences among the selected countries, the characterization of their teacher training models, and a critical evaluation of the impact of international organizations such as UNESCO, the OECD, and the OEI.

Additionally, a non-experimental, documentary, and comparative design was adopted, based on the review and analysis of secondary sources such as educational policies, laws, official reports, and academic literature. The primary data collection technique was documentary analysis, using instruments such as comparative matrices and bibliographic records, organized into categories including initial teacher training, entry into the teaching profession, continuous professional development, teacher evaluation, and the influence of international policies.

Finally, the data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis, which allowed for the identification of patterns, trends, and relationships among the educational systems, ensuring the validity of the study through source triangulation and the use of reliable information.

4 CONCLUSION

The teacher training systems in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Honduras, and Mexico show significant progress in terms of organization, professionalization, and alignment with international standards. However, a critical analysis

reveals structural limitations that affect their effectiveness.

Standardization, excessive emphasis on evaluation, the gap between theory and practice, and structural inequalities are common challenges that need to be addressed. In this regard, it is essential to move toward teacher training models that are more contextualized, critical, and flexible, recognizing the diversity of educational contexts and promoting teachers' professional autonomy. Only in this way will it be possible to consolidate truly equitable and transformative educational systems.

The strengthening of teacher training in Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, and Peru has been deeply influenced by international policies promoting quality, evaluation, and professionalization. These policies have generated significant advances in structuring more organized and demanding educational systems. However, their implementation has also revealed tensions related to standardization, the loss of teacher autonomy, and a lack of contextualization. Therefore, it is crucial for Latin American countries to adopt a critical stance toward these policies, adapting them to their specific realities.

Ultimately, the strengthening of teacher training must go beyond adopting international standards, focusing instead on the development of educational models that are contextualized, equitable, and centered on the teacher as an agent of social transformation.

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