

Editorial

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Educational research in Latin America: teacher training, coloniality, and innovative approaches

Investigación educativa en América Latina: formación docente, colonialidad y enfoques innovadores

Abstract

Contemporary educational research recognizes that teacher education, school leadership, and pedagogical practice are shaped by historical, curricular, institutional, and sociocultural factors, particularly in the Latin American context. This article presents a state-of-the-art review that examines structural and epistemological challenges in education, focusing on initial teacher training, educational coloniality, rural school leadership, and emerging pedagogical innovations. The reviewed studies reveal fragmented curricular organization in undergraduate programs, characterized by unequal distribution of pedagogical knowledge and the absence of a shared core curriculum, limiting equity and coherence in teacher formation.

Additionally, the persistence of colonial logics in Latin American education is evident in Eurocentric models that reproduce cultural and epistemic inequalities. In the field of school management, the role of educational leadership is highlighted, especially in rural contexts, where adverse structural conditions complicate the director's function.

However, leadership exercised from a pedagogically contextualized perspective proves essential for school

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improvement. Furthermore, teacher narratives provide a critical understanding of educational practice as a space shaped by power relations, legitimizing experiential knowledge as a source of insight.

Finally, innovative approaches, such as global competence frameworks and neuroscience-based strategies, enhance student learning, critical thinking, and civic formation. In sum, this review underscores the need for transformative educational approaches that integrate equity, contextual relevance, and pedagogical innovation in contemporary Latin American education.

Keywords: Teacher education; Curriculum; Colonialism; Educational leadership; Educational innovation.

Current educational research recognizes that teacher training, management, and pedagogical practice are conditioned by historical, curricular, institutional and sociocultural factors. In Latin America, these factors are particularly evident in teacher training, the curricular organization of higher education, school management in rural contexts, the persistence of colonial logic in educational policies, the subjectivity of teachers, and the incorporation of approaches such as neuroscience and global competence.

In this context, various studies highlight the need to review traditional educational models, revealing tensions between equity, quality, cultural relevance and global demands. This text synthesizes research that analyzes the organization of pedagogical knowledge in initial teacher training, the historical influence of colonialism, leadership in rural environments, teacher narratives as a tool for understanding educational practices, international guidelines on global competence and the contributions of neuroscience applied to learning processes. Together, these works provide an understanding of the main epistemological and structural challenges of current education and support the need for more critical, contextualized, and innovative pedagogical approaches.

A central focus of the debate is initial teacher training and the organization of pedagogical content in university curricula. Research on the distribution of the curriculum in undergraduate's degrees shows an uneven workload for didactic-pedagogical knowledge, ranging from 15.68% and 27.95%, which reflects fragmented and uneven training (Moura & Silva de Sousa, 2025). The presence of "educational psychology only" as a common subject in all programs highlights the lack of a shared pedagogical core, which limits the construction of a solid foundation for teaching and underscores the need for institutional policies aimed at educational equity.

This problem is linked to broader historical processes, such as the colonial legacy in Latin American educational policies. Analysis of the Colombian case shows that education has historically functioned as a "device of domination that consolidates racial hierarchies", legitimizing the exclusion of indigenous, Afro-descendant and rural knowledge (Vargas-Garzon, 2024). The "eurocentric and segregating" model established during the colonial period was perpetuated in the Republic and reinforced by utilitarian approaches that oriented education towards "productivity and extractivism without ecological limits". This historical continuity reveals that educational inequalities are not only pedagogical, but also political, cultural and epistemological.

In the field of school management, the role of the school boards is particularly important in rural contexts where structural conditions

are more adverse. Research conducted in Chiapas indicates that “exercising the management role is not easy task” due to the multiplicity of responsibilities that fall on principals (Morales Soto, Nangullasmú Sánchez & Arias Gómez, 2025). However, it recognizes that this role is “of great importance for school improvement”, especially when exercised from a pedagogical leadership that is sensitive to the community context. This highlights the need to strengthen the training and support of administrators in rural areas.

From a more subjective perspective, teachers’ narratives provide a deep understanding of educational practice. The study *A prueba de maestros* (Teacher Proof) highlights that those pedagogical models directly influence “relationships and power in the educational community”, affecting both teachers and students (Fajardo, 2025). The narrative approach allows “recognizing school voices and realities” highlighting the tensions, meanings and experiences that shape teaching. This approach challenges hegemonic pedagogical models and vindicates experience as a legitimate source of knowledge.

Within the global education policies framework, the OECD’s proposal on global competence introduces an approach geared towards the comprehensive student training. This approach is presented as “good guide for consolidating a school” that promotes critical thinking and responsible social participation (García Moriyón, 2025). It also emphasizes a commitment to “democratic values, equality [...] and solidarity”, reinforcing the ethical and civic dimension of formal education.

Finally, advances in neuroscience have broadened our understanding of teaching and learning processes. A review of the literature on neuroscience-based teaching strategies indicates that brain function is closely linked to “the generation of new knowledge” (Londoño González, 2025). From this perspective, neurolearning is conceived as “an element that contributes to educational innovation” by offering scientific foundations for designing more effective, student-centered teaching practices.

Overall, the state of the art shows the convergence of structural, historical and pedagogical issues that require a profound transformation of education systems. Curricular fragmentation, the persistence of colonial logic, the challenges of rural school management, the invisibility of teacher subjectivity, and the need for innovative and critical approaches are fundamental axes for understanding and addressing current challenges.

The narrative perspective, especially on research training and social responsibility, allows us to deepen this analysis. In *La importancia de la*

simbiosis entre investigación y responsabilidad social (The importance of the symbiosis between research and social responsibility) Barón Velandia argues, in dialogue with Cancino Peña, that educational research is not a neutral or merely technical exercise, but a situated practice that commits the researcher to the social realities they study. From this perspective, the issues identified —structural inequalities, colonial legacies, and curricular fragmentation— require not only academic responses but also ethical and political positions on the part of those who research and educate teachers.

Along the same lines, the text *Aportes sobre la formación en investigación: una mirada desde las prácticas investigativas* (Contributions to research training: a view from research practices) reinforces the idea that teacher research training is built on experience, reflection on practice and active participation in real research processes. This dialogues directly with the emphasis on teacher narratives, recognizing that research is not learned solely through methodological courses, but through practices that allow the subject to narrative themselves as a researcher in training.

From this perspective, the fragmentation of pedagogical knowledge in initial training not only limits curricular coherence but also reduces the possibilities of building a research identity committed to the context. Training in research implies, as Barón Velandia argues, enabling spaces where teachers in training can critically question their reality, understand their educational history, and embrace research as a tool for social transformation.

Likewise, the discussion on leadership in rural contexts takes on grater depth when articulated with the notion of social responsibility in research. Leading, researching or intervening in these contexts requires recognizing the historical and social asymmetries that permeate them, which demands research that is committed to communities and does not extract their knowledge.

Finally, approaches such as global competence or neuroscience are challenged from this perspective when confronted with the central question that runs through Barón Velandia's work: for whom and for what do we research and educate? Without a clear articulation between innovation, teaching experience, and social impact, these discourses can become new forms of technification of the educational field.

To summarize, when read the state-of-the-art contributions, it not only describes trends and issues but also substantiates the need for investigative, narrative and socially responsible teacher training, where research is conceived as a formative, ethical and transformative practice.

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