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Editorial

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES ABOUT A NECESSARY AND COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to reflect on the levels of network construction (knowledge, recognition, collaboration, cooperation and association) in monitoring relationships between school and community of three educational experiences sustained by the researcher. For this, the autobiographical narrative was implemented using photo elicitation, analysis of the personal document (notebook) and accounts of experiences that allowed to address the characterization of the communities, promote respect and valuation of religious beliefs in the school environment. Also, to find opportunities in community events, parents' school and productive projects to strengthen school-community interaction. It is concluded that this relationship is necessary and complex, and that it must be built and maintained in order to offer quality educational processes that contribute to the development of society, respond to the realities of youngsters and the needs of communities.

Keywords: School, community, youngsters, society.

INTRODUCTION

The school-community relationship is of special interest for the education field due to the implications of both over a country's development. In this perspective, the school "has been considered a unit of change, with its values, roles, relationships, attitudes and traditions. Innovation can hardly be successful in its educational sense if it fails to set off from what it is known, what exists and what needs to be improved" (Mingorance & Estebanz, 2009, p.189). Therefore, educational institutions may encourage actions focused at understanding the contexts of its communities so that its inhabitants' progress, limitations and needs can be identified from the social, economic, political, cultural and educational perspectives, given that: "talking about education implies having a careful look at the traits political, social and cultural perspectives walked by humans" (Saldaña, Rubio, Quintero, & Rocha, 2020, p.1). This requires "opening up spaces for other rationales aimed at knowledge construction and understanding, without disregarding social and economic issues that interfere in that culture" (Rodrigues & Almeida, 2020, p.223.)

Consequently, achieving an integration with "all of the socialization agents in the new generations' community school environment is one

of the aspirations that society proposes to the school as the leader of the community's educational work" (Mendoza & Enebral, 2018, p.1). However, the link between community and school "is a complex one, since it accounts for the social sense of the educational institution's offer and for the different forms of responding to educational exclusion and the issue of school failure" (Krichesky, 2006, p.48). Thus, this document is based on the experiences, learnings and findings of the researcher's executive and teaching role in the span of fifteen years (2005-2020), in which he has been a teacher and principal in public and private centers pertaining to the school-family-community relationship.

The accounts of experiences analyzed in the study herein are the result of the researcher's experiences in the municipalities of Guaduas, La Palma and Villagomez, located in the department of Cundinamarca, Colombia. It "constitutes a social action that unveils knowledge and ideas of the human collective they are part of, not just of people, but through them" (Barron, 2020, p.201). In terms of the municipality of Guaduas, it is characterized by the historical value of its monuments and architecture, as well as by its leading characters in the independence of Colombia. This place has a large extension in the department of Cundinamarca. Its main economic activity is driven by its existing relationship with the oil and natural gas extraction industry, and by other services activities that lead to a redefinition of the municipal approach to tap into and diversify its regional conditions based on an economic vocation (Development Plan of the municipality of Guaduas, 2016-2019.)

The municipality of La Palma is part of the province of Rionegro, in Cundinamarca. Its economy is based on agricultural production, mostly of coffee, cocoa beans, corn, sugarcane, plantain and cassava. The livestock sector is progressing towards an extensive cattle industry, with fish farming to a lesser extent. Aviculture is destined for self-consumption (Development Plan of the municipality of La Palma, 2016-2019.)

Villagomez, Cundinamarca, is located in the department's northwest, in the province of Rionegro. It has thirteen townships, a settlement and the main urban center. Its agricultural production is low, transitory crops are planted for self-consumption and internal consumption. Surplus is commercialized in the market of the municipality of Pacho. The main crops reported in agricultural assessments include peas, beans and corn (Development Plan of the municipality of Villagomez, 2016-2019.)

Moreover, for Simon, Gine and Echeita (2016, p.26) there is a "need to break the inertia that has settled in the way relationships are understood inside and outside of educational institutions to establish new ways of connecting with families and other community members"; the purpose is to transform the educational establishment into a collaborative project for the service of all. Therefore, the school-community relationship entails building the social fabric to sustain it, nurture it and reassess it constantly. Croce and Wanger (2003) may contribute to understanding the dynamics that take part in the school-community relationship, they suggest identifying knowledge, recognition, collaboration and

cooperation in the development of community work, as illustrated in the results section herein.

METHOD

An autobiographical narrative was used to undertake the systematization and analysis process. According to Bolivar (2014), the narration includes a public dimension and a social context of the subject and of the people who surround it. "Accounts have a story, jointly, individual and institutional, within a context in which learning takes place" (Bolivar, 2014, p.713.) That way, "it collects the deliberateness surrounding the construction of identities in space and time that are specifically linked to the subjects' history" (Argüello, Rojas, & Cruz, 2020, p.128). In this perspective, lives' stories have different modalities of biographical sources, including "personal documents (autobiographies, journals, correspondence, images, objects...)" (Gonzalez-Giraldo, 2019, p.76), which make room for self-reflection of educational practices (Ancil, 2019.) Consequently, this study employed the following sources:

- Photo-elicitation: Procedure based on the projection of photographs to elicit the point of view of the authors or of those who selected the images (Bautista, Rayon & Cuenca, 2018). In that sense, "the image is contemplated as a document to describe something that was experienced or that happened in the past" (De las Heras, Rayon & Bautista, 2020, p.122). The study uses three of the researcher's albums with photograph of the community experiences in educational institutions at Guaduas, La Palma and Villagomez, Cundinamarca-Colombia. For each photograph, the researcher wrote a descriptive text, extracts were taken to justify the categories that emerged from the study
 - Accounts of experiences: This technique "allows recreating meaningful experiences and producing knowledge from the day-to-day of teaching, from the particular circumstances to the challenges, inquiries, decisions and emotions that protagonists went through" (Argnani, 2020, p.314). In the research, three self-accounts of community work were analyzed from the teachers and principals' role in one private educational institution and in four in the public sector. Self-accounts were nurtured from experiences of other actors with whom the investigator interacted, proving what has been suggested by Rodriguez (2020, p.186), stating that "we produce stories, and that process makes us appropriate the account of others with which we share; moreover, we appropriate the theoretical account that is the epistemological foundation of social reality".
 - Notebooks: Information was taken from five planners used recently by the researcher (2015-2020) in his term as principal in a municipality in Cundinamarca.

- Document of the teachers' workshop: Work conducted by the teachers about techniques to characterize communities were considered.

RESULTS

The findings are introduced following the proposal of Croce and Wanger (2003) in terms of the construction of social fabric resulting from the school-community relationship, based on knowledge, recognition, collaboration and cooperation. According to Croce and Wanger (2003), knowledge generated in schools and community organizations refers to the existence of a heap of information that circulates between the network's members. Recognition makes information swell as a result of interactions, acknowledging members' purposes, value systems and experience. Collaboration involves managing a specific task in common with the contribution of human talent, direct materials and financial resources. In terms of cooperation, actions are deployed with the goal of providing precise answers in line with the population's hardships. And association develops robust relationships based on alliances and responsibilities in the execution of community work. These aspects are detailed as follows and per the study's emerging categories:

Characterization as Possibility of Knowledge of Communities

A school that is open to a community "redefines the concept of educational community without restricting it to the school, its teachers, students and parents, but opening it to the local public space" (Krichesky, 2006, p.16), which encompasses "families, churches, clubs, neighbors associations, libraries, productive organizations, with the aim of building an educational and cultural project that is based on the needs and possibilities of the community" (Krichesky, 2006, p.16.)

This perspective of going out to the territories requires the implementation of actions that help getting acquainted with the communities. According to the ICFES (2014), communities near schools (from where its students come from) are diverse and have different issues related to scarcity of resources and social conflict. Therefore, "contextualized curriculums are necessary, they must be built understanding the territories, their sociocultural context and differentiated treatment between populations, depending on each person's vulnerability conditions" (Cifuentes, 2017, pp.120-121.)

A workshop about strategies to understand the context of the communities in Villagomez was conducted in the Institutional Development Week, in January 2018. The upcoming citations will have the following nomenclature: Teachers' Workshop (Tp), Photo Elicitation (Fe), Life Account (Rv), Personal Document (Dp), the participant's pseudonym and the date in which it was recorded. The main proposals of the teachers consisted in:

- House calls: Visiting the student's residence to observe the social, cultural and economic environment. The way of life and the relationships between

family members provides information to recognize their contexts. (Tp, Yolima, 26/01/2018.)

Culture Festival: Community members will get invited to participate in a public event to show each township's traditions. In a one-day festival, each group or township displays its troupes, costumes, traditional cuisine, harvested or manufactured products, important personalities, stories, dances and other important aspects. (Tp, Amanda, 26/01/2018.)

Social cartography "I Recognize my Territory": This tool helps build knowledge. It is an approach to the community in terms of its geographical, economic, historical and cultural aspects. In the exercise, students sketch a map of the municipality and highlight representative spaces; then, students must build the space in which they spend most of their time, and mark other spaces that are important in their lives. This exercise evinces the significance of the municipalities' scenery, economy and cultural activities (Tp, Sara, 26/01/2018.)

Recognizing the cultural identity: A survey on the preferences and tastes of the community. An in-depth study of group characteristics, affinity with musical genres, access to fashion, political trends, access to technologies and its languages. Moreover, inquiring about philosophical topics, such as: perceptions of nature, the universe, men, death, God and eternity. (Tp, Marcos, 26/01/2018.)

Dissertation of my Township: Students get together depending on the township or sector where they live and make a poster with images to represent the most important aspects of their territories, such as traditions, agriculture and other relevant aspects. Groups will present the information of each township in the municipality. Finally, all of the information will be compiled in a written document. (Tp, Adriana, 26/01/2018.)

Knowing the Story of my Town: Being informed about their municipality regarding the area of social and natural sciences. Students will investigate the historical context of the natural, social, economic, cultural and religious scenery, as well as about the most pressing needs of the families who live in the townships. This activity involves parents, students may interview them to contrast the results. (Tp, Miguel, 26/01/2018.)

According to Leon, Tamayo and Aguilar (2019), the community can be understood as a phenomenon with multiple dimensions, in which territorial, population, political, economic and sociocultural factors mediate; these must be identified and celebrated to integrate them to community development (materially, spiritually and in terms of labor). This study's perspective of getting acquainted with the communities used the following as input: enrollment cards, information of students' observers, dissertations of the townships and municipalities, data reported on municipal entities, direct observations of community events and dialogues with community members as input.

Respect and Valuation of Religious Beliefs: Recognition to the Community

According to Silva, Manzi, Gonzalez, Cerda and Vasquez (2017, p.13), spiritual and religious dimensions "are fundamental to the human experience. In most countries of the world, it is evident that a large percentage of people mention religion as an important part of their lives." Therefore, to have a harmonious relationship between school-community, it is critical to respect and value its members' religious beliefs.

In that respect, the following are some records taken from the author's photo elicitation exercise:

In the rural school of La Palma, Cundinamarca (2005-2010), several religious events took place, for instance: masses, catechism, sacraments of the catholic initiation (baptism and first communion). The people of the township embraced these events respectfully (Fe, La Palma, 2008.)

In rural schools of the municipality of Villagomez (2015-2019), the parish priest visited the townships several times a year to celebrate mass in specific moments of the catholic calendar: Easter, the Virgin's rosary in May and the day of Isidore the Farmer (worshiped by farmers to protect their crops). These celebrations took place in the schools. The members of the community that were religious came together to profess their faith (Fe, Villagomez, 2019.)

In the municipality of Villagomez (2015-2019), it became tradition to pray the rosary in the last calendar day of May. Teachers, students and parents organized floats to transport the Virgin Mary. Students walked by with lamps and the marching band joined while they prayed in the streets of the town. (Fe, Villagomez, 2018.)

As complement of the aforementioned, the analysis of the life accounts highlights the following:

I remember that a very important religious event for the community in La Palma happened in 2012. Traditionally, each seven years the locals bring down the image that represents the invocation of the Assumption of Mary from its niche. The school was decorated to honor the Virgin (Patrona, as they call her). Students, parents and the community made a street of honor with flower arches and banners for the procession (Rv, La Palma, 2012.)

Another significant aspect was the celebration of catholic events in the school. The people of the township came together to participate in the masses and the sacraments of baptism and first communion. For them, the priest's visit was an honor (Rv, La Palma, 2013.)

Likewise, religious acts were of great interest for the people of Guaduas. The school offered the service of catechism for the first communion and confirmation of young people in the municipality. The liturgical celebrations were solemn, and they were held in the municipality's cathedral (Rv, Guaduas, 2006.)

Spiritual guidance: The priest of the parish of Villagomez gives mass at the beginning of the school term, prior to the Pruebas Saber 11° test and in the graduation ceremony. He attends meetings with parents to offer prayers and conduct reflection processes. The diocese prepared vocational meetings with the young people. On the other hand, the parish allows the theater to be used for meetings, cultural and academic events of the institution (Rv, Villagomez, 2019.)

For Acosta (2018), paying attention to individual's actions helps observe behaviors that are determined by beliefs acquired at young age in the family, cultural and social setting. For that reason, the school can encourage good judgement and respect for the beliefs processed by students, parents, guardians and different members of the community. With this perspective, the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church motivates practicing respect and valuing your neighbor, a fellow human and citizen, to the extent that every person "requires a dignified treatment of his/her peers and the state, as an approach to peaceful coexistence and social wellbeing of the peoples." (Villareal & Cifuentes, 2017, p.147.)

Community Events: Collaboration to Strengthen the School-Community Relationship

Community activities led by educational institutions consolidate the school-community relationship. Following this perspective, Herrera (2016) suggests that the school becomes a key establishment in steering and accompanying its communities, mobilizing community leaders to create actions to benefit the education of the underprivileged. Thus, it is unavoidable to “draw attention to the importance of social participation as an instrument of social transformation, seen from a comprehensive dimension that privileges the sociocultural element as the starting point to identify ways of community participation” (Garbizo, Ordaz & Lezcano, 2020, p.10). In that regard, the following accounts are noteworthy:

In the different educational institutions of Guaduas (2004-2005), La Palma (2006-2015) and Villagomez (2015-2020), community members have been linked to democratic exercises in the educational institutions, such as the election of the school representatives and student government. They are engaged as receptors of educational campaigns and juries of electoral processes (Rv, La Palma, 2009.)

In a rural school in La Palma, Cundinamarca (2006-2010), the achievement day was implemented, this activity is part of the Escuela Nueva educational model. Students present parents their most important work to show learning that has been developed in the different areas of knowledge (Fe, La Palma, 2010.)

In the educational institution of Villagomez, Cundinamarca (2015-2020), relationships with different municipal authorities have been established to support strategies in terms of transportation, school cafeteria and donations of supplies. Also, diverse programs have been developed to service psycho-social aspects of the school population (Dp, Villagomez, 2016.)

Both teachers and students were part of the different activities led by the municipal administration. Most prominently, the birth (January 26th) and death (November 14th) of Policarpa Salavarrieta, “La Pola”, a meaningful character of the liberation campaign who spied for the independent local forces in the period of the Spanish Reconquista. She was executed in 1817 in Bogota’s main square (Rv, Guaduas, 2005.)

Another important community event was the Science Fair, an activity that gathered students from different institutions to present experiments and artistic projects. These spaces had a positive review by the community, since they were uncommon in the rural sector. In terms of community projection, they organized the Cultural Week, with a parade, beauty pageant and cultural nights. Similarly, the Mandatory Social Service was conducted by seniors in connection with literacy, catechism, community gardens, sports events organization, and others (Rv, La Palma, 2010.)

Consequently, education accomplishes a social function that involves citizens’ socialization to guarantee civil coexistence, community work, common good and the transmission of their own culture (Marti, Montero & Sanchez, 2018). As strategy of socialization development, the Mandatory Social Service project is created to eradicate the skewed perspective of the school-community alliance. This way, the Mandatory Social Service is a demand of the State for seniors in

public or private education systems, who fulfill the mutual relationship that is required among school institutions, families and community organizations (Ortega, Vahos & Sanchez, 2020.)

Parents' School: Opportunity of Cooperation Between School-Family-Community

A robust partnership between school-community is currently required to deliver appropriate training processes to students. In that regard, Cano and Casado (2015) explain the need to reflect about the obstacles that prevent having an assertive relationship between parents and school and vice versa. In that perspective, the parents' school can contribute to the synergy that should be present in both scenarios. In that reflexive process, the following came up:

In the different educational institutions in Guaduas (2004-2005), La Palma (2006-2015) and Villagomez (2015-2020), the parents' school has been a potent process to bond the families to their children's education, it has addressed topics such as alcoholism and drug addiction prevention, use of free time and support in academic homework (Fe, Villagomez, 2016.)

I gratefully remember the way in which parents and the rest of the community kept the school clean, helped keep the gardens and in the educational projects to produce organic fertilizer broilers, the vegetable patch, and coffee, plantain, cassava and corn plantations. These products were used in the school cafeteria and were sold to the community (Rv, La Palma, 2009.)

According to Belmonte, Bernardez and Conzi (2020, p.10), parents' cooperation in the educational institutions is an "acknowledged right that is often blurry" (p.10) due to the lack of interest and ignorance of it. In that sense, for Gigli, Demozzi and Pina (2019) the call for an alliance between the school and families is a prevailing need for many educational institutions since separation and incomprehension are commonplace. Therefore, actions such as the following must be implemented:

Having a meeting at the beginning of the year with all the parents and students with the purpose of discussing their families, their jobs, their children and plans for the future. That would guarantee more connection and would foster tolerance among parents and students. It would be organized with the parents' authorization (Tp, Andres, 2019.)

Since it is the base of training, the student's family must be considered in education. Teachers have to be aware of the sociocultural, economic and political context of their students. Consequently, it is important to reflect about the way in which they access information pertaining to the local and national reality. With the spotlight on the family, it is fit to ask: What place does communication have in the family's experiences? What type of families are interested in being part of the institution? Moreover, to get to know students better, the beliefs, values or stereotypes that parents used to raise their children should be identified. Similarly, students could record their family context and place where they live, this would help others understand their experiences in terms of the family and community (Tp, Maria, 2019.)

Having one day per month to develop workshops that have been previously prepared by teachers, playing different games together with families or integrating of families, with the support of the municipal administration (Tp, Argiro, 2019.)

These ideas could encourage a culture of effective school-community bonding, which is largely needed in these times in which efforts need to come together to raise children and teenagers fittingly and with good example.

Productive Pedagogical Projects (PPP) as Means of Association between School-Family-Community

According to Candela and Salazar (2020, p.104), “it is essential to encourage context-based teaching, which offers students the possibility to get involved with the construction of the most appropriate solution for a particular problem.” Hence, productive projects are a possibility to fulfill this, as proven ahead:

In the rural school of La Palma, Cundinamarca (2006-2010), productive projects were implemented to breed boiler chickens, vegetable patch, and coffee, plantain, yucca and corn plantations, vegetable patches. These projects strengthened the learning in terms of language, mathematics and natural sciences. Likewise, parents and the community contributed with agricultural wisdom (Rv, La Palma, 2009.)

Entrepreneurial fairs have been implemented in the educational institution of Villagomez, Cundinamarca (2015-2019). The activity takes place once a year. Students showcase the products they make (handicrafts, food and others) alongside their families, in the framework of the business ideas that were developed in the technical education areas of business management. The community gets involved by selling the products (Rv, Villagomez, 2016.)

For Cifuentes and Rico (2016), the PPP were an option to alleviate the sequels that the armed conflict left in the communities, who returned to their townships years after being displaced. They covered their needs by planting products of the region while they settled in their territories. Additionally, the resilience of parents and young people to face complex situations that took place before and after the violence that they were subject to is noteworthy. Thus, rural institutions that offer secondary education need to inquire about the effectiveness of the working, personal and academic dimension of the training being offered, with the aim of seeking alternatives to solidify the relationship of young people with life in rural contexts.

In terms of productive projects (i.e., the vegetable patches) learning about agriculture and application of knowledge in different areas becomes easier. Also, they lead to the participation of parents. In that respect Tobar, Carabali and Bonilla (2020, p.103) assert that “the school’s vegetable patch contributes to the improvement of the quality of life of students and their families alike, generating agricultural knowledge that could be useful for their future participation in the job market.” These could also become local business options for self-support and consumption. However, according to Mingorance and Estebarez (2009), productive projects have better reception in elementary schools, while in secondary education schools, parents are less committed with agricultural activities proposed by the institutions. Hence, it is up to the directors and teachers to motivate parents and guardians’ participation throughout different levels to implement the projects, with the excuse to strengthen communication with their children and the school.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

For several reasons, the interest to create bonds between the school and the community seems like an inevitable process when you are working as a teacher in rural contexts and as a principal in urban and rural areas. In the first place, it is important to get to know the community where the school is located. When sociocultural, political and economic situations are researched, the actions implemented by the institution are welcomed by the population with empathy. In second place, the social context has an impact on school learning; therefore this aspect is significant in the planning, implementation and evaluation of teaching practices. In the third place, the school and the community need each other to accomplish a comprehensive quality education aimed at boys, girls and teenagers. The school trains in values, encourages learning and prepares for life; whereas the community contributes social construction models and is the receiver of knowledge and culture that is shaped in citizens.

The autobiographical narrative helps recall situations, feelings and learning that allows rebuilding past events, describing actions and recovering possible routes to channel homework, with the aim to reinvent new events and consolidate innovative answers to existing needs. In the particular case of the study of the school-community relationship with the use of photo elicitation, life accounts and analysis of academic production, it became clear that the school has managed to connect the pedagogical with the communities' needs, while producing development in young people. Likewise, it was verified that the principal of a public institution was able to successfully generate school-community interactions. However, this necessary and complex relationship requires constant feedback and looking for other possibilities to help strengthen the edges of the school-young people-family-community-society pentagon.

Despite this, when the school-community is studied, methodological difficulties arise in the research: the abundance of instantaneous oral text obstructs the detailed record of the information, people in the communities are trained to act and work and are seldom given to thoughtful processes. On the other hand, the topography of rural sectors hinders the access to the entire population. Additionally, when simultaneous interactions occur with people of rural and urban areas, certain control is perceived from people of towns compared with the interventions of people from the countryside.

The systematisation of the narratives that have been logged evince the levels of knowledge, acknowledgement, collaboration, cooperation and association. The communities' knowledge was identified through a characterization of the social, economic and cultural context of each. Acknowledgement came with valuation and acceptance of religious beliefs. Collaboration became evident in the cleaning days and in sports and cultural events. Cooperation surfaced in the development of the parents' school. And association took place with the implementation of

productive projects with the agreements sustained with SENA (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje) and municipal entities.

Lastly, the contribution of young people who participated in the planning and execution of the community activities, i.e., productive projects, must be highlighted. They learned to identify their communities' hardships and to come up with alternatives to overcome the identified limitations. Through the implementation of the projects, students become empowered, improve their self-concept, contribute to their families' finance and render the service of supplying products to the communities. Also, young people transfer the knowledge they have acquired in technical secondary education (administration, accounting, entrepreneurship and human talent). Similarly, they apply knowledge of other areas (mathematics, social studies, language, ethics and values).

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