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Collaborative Networks in Education: Opening Spaces for another Training and Another School

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If we metaphorically think of the school as a social and political hologram, the educational space can be seen as a reconstruction of society through the information that each school agent embodies, knows and generates (Dewey, 1938, Garcés, 2013). This idea warns us that we cannot continue to develop educational processes that do not take into account what happens outside the educational space and in turn indicates that the classroom can be a space to promote the construction of individual and collective meanings to contribute to a critical and inclusive society (Hargreaves and O'Connor, 2020). Accordingly, the focus of this communication is on the collaborative networks that are generated between schools and universities as centres of teacher education. The project is based on an assumption legitimised by different research (Penuel, et al., 2020, Martín Barbero, 2003; Rivas, Márquez, Calvo and Martagón, 2022; Novoa, 2019) which states that the creation and development of collaborative work networks between school and university are facilitators of processes in which training, research and transfer are articulated, while at the same time allowing for the development of transformative educational actions.

In the search for connections between school, society and university, we have been developing different collaborative projects (Leite, Márquez and Rivas, 2018; Rivas Leite and Cortés, García; 2015; Márquez, Kirsch and Leite, 2020) that seek to advance in other teacher training and in the generation of links, relationships and co-productions between them. From the University we have the responsibility, as teachers and researchers, to explore and promote other training models that include dialogical and collaborative practices in which fragmentation is not the dominant line. Instead, we propose that knowledge can be generated from a collaborative process.

From these previous experiences we present the first advances of a research project called "Collaborative networks in education. Critical teaching for an inclusive society (ReDoC)" awarded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation of the Government of Spain (PID2022-138882OB-100). This project aims to recognise, analyse, strengthen and create collaborative networks between school and university. We are interested in transformative projects linked to critical teaching for the development of an inclusive society. In this sense, we analyse initiatives that articulate the dialogue of disciplinary, practical and experiential knowledge between professionals in schools (infant, primary, secondary and adult), entities and associations that collaborate with schools, research professionals, teachers in training and all those experiences that configure spaces, collaborative networks around training and school.

It also analyses the experiences of different groups that contribute to education in urban and rural contexts. The project is deployed in different universities in Spain (Granada, Cantabria, Extremadura, Valladolid and Malaga). The idea is to contribute, through analysis and reflection, to teacher training and the promotion of inclusive projects in educational centres with the support of the community. Service learning programmes, learning communities, pedagogical laboratories, observatories, etc., are some of the proposals that are being worked on and which will be further developed (Gao, 2015; Korthagen, 2017; Rivas, Márquez and Leite, 2021) We understand that these projects offer trainee teachers a real experience in inclusive education by interacting with teachers, students, families and the community in general (Yurén, 2013; Rivas, Leite and Cortés, 2017).

Methodology, Methods, Research Instruments or Sources Used

The project is based on an interpretative, situated, contextualised and collaborative approach in relation to a plurality of experiences-cases that occur in different educational contexts (formal education, early childhood education, primary, secondary, adult education and non-formal education). Therefore, the research design is planned as a multi-case study (Stake, 2005). Each case is understood as a community of practice (Wenger, 2002) in which a series of interactions take place, learning and knowledge are exchanged, and relationships and links are established through collaborative work. Likewise, the cases are approached from a biographical-narrative perspective (Rivas Flores, 2007; Cortés, et al., 2020) based on the stories, accounts, cartographies, conversations and debates between participants. Emphasis is therefore placed on the investigation of experiences in their educational, socio-cultural and political environments.

The research team brings together 26 researchers from various Spanish universities who have already taken part in joint research projects in the past. This confluence of experiences and knowledge from different sites, scenarios and disciplinary fields (music, physical education, education) constitutes a collaborative dimension within the project itself that we want to highlight.

The project is configured in three phases that will be assembled according to the process followed in the different cases:

Phase I: Biographical-documentary cartographies. The aim is to identify the different experiences, both those with which we have already participated, as well as other emerging ones. It also generates spaces for research on the state of the art of collaborative networks in education.

Phase II: Analysis of the cases. Work will be carried out on the previously defined cases. It is planned to analyse 10 cases of collaborative experiences taking into account some dimensions: scope of application (educational centres, universities), geographical area (rural, urban), participating population (teachers, students, families, neighbours, entities, etc.) and types of projects in terms of their promoters (universities, educational centres, subjects, groups, associations). In all cases we will work with public schools and universities. Some structuring axes of the cases are: community collaboration, gender identities, citizenship training, inter-institutional networks, etc.

Phase III: Transfer and Dissemination. This phase runs through the entire project and refers to the public discussion of the progress made, through open forums, networks, assemblies or other participatory channels.

Finally, and within the framework of the biographical-narrative perspective, voices and shared dialogue will be the basis of all the strategies developed: interviews, focus groups and discussion groups, analysis of documentation.

Conclusions, Expected Outcomes or Findings

The project is in the first phase in which relationships and synergies are being established between the five participating research groups.

The previous experience in collaborative research processes of most of the researchers has allowed for a debate on the referential, theoretical, epistemological, methodological and ethical frameworks of the project. At the same time, the experiences-cases that will constitute the objects of study have been identified. At the moment there are three work scenarios in which progress is being made:

-A scenario centred on experiences of collaboration between the University and educational centres at all levels in order to learn about the collaboration processes underway and to systematise those dimensions and effects that intervene in the development of such practices.

-A scenario centred on experiences of collaboration with teaching collectives on problems that affect teaching work and that allow us to know the support matrices to generate collaborative proposals (teacher discomfort, coexistence).

-A scenario centred on networks of collectives that are born inside and outside educational environments and that address somewhat marginal issues (such as gender diversity issues) but that are fundamental for breaking away from linear and standardised conceptions of educational organisation, curriculum, learning and training in order to transform current school and academic contexts.

The results of the work in the aforementioned scenarios will be disseminated in different citizen forums, created for this project and debated with the entire educational community. The creation of collaborative research networks with educational centres, working groups and repositories will also be encouraged.

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