



## ARTS EDUCATION IN COLOMBIA: TRAJECTORIES AND PROJECTIONS OF AN EMERGENT FIELD

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### ABSTRACT

*The disciplinary studies of art and artistic studies in the country are based on one of the oldest references, the founding of the National School of Fine Arts of Colombia, on July 20, 1886 in Bogota, the capital of the Republic. With this institution, what has been called "the modern teaching of academic art" was established in the country, as it displaced the colonial model based on the dynamics of the Arts and Crafts Workshops, which for three centuries were the agents of artistic production in this territory. However, Art Education as such, as a fundamental and compulsory component for the formation of the subject in the cycle of Basic and Secondary Education, was only installed in the Colombian school system in 1994, when Law 115 or General Education Law was enacted.*

*This article seeks to clearly differentiate the processes of disciplinary training in the arts from the processes of Art Education, for which it is essential to situate oneself in the context of its configuration and installation.*

**KEY WORDS:** Art Education; Field; Formative Contexts; Undergraduate; Curriculum; Curricular Evolution.

### INTRODUCTION

*"There is a need for educational approaches and models that are contextualized in the region, supported by solid lines of research, that provide the vision and key axes for transforming education from the deep, and overcome the traditionalism that remains in force despite the reforms. This traditionalism is characterized by curricular processes by subjects, contents and evaluations based on tests, with emphasis on formal and academic activities in the classroom, leaving aside affective aspects, ethical life projects and social work, among others. aspects".*


(Tobón, 2015, p. 5, cited by Escribano, 2017, p. 15).

One of the axes of discussion that convokes this article proposes to reflect on **contemporary subjectivities: effects of neoliberal rationality in the educational sphere** with the objective of studying the processes of transformation of the school apparatus; for this it is necessary to recognize the neoliberal conception of education and social control: reproduction of the hierarchical diagram in the educational system; to identify the neoliberal transformations and their impact on the educational system, which will allow to approach the analysis of the current complex situation of education in Latin America.

The thematic and problematic axis that summons to reflect on contemporary subjects and the effects of neoliberal rationality in the educational field, with the objective of studying the

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processes of transformation of the educational apparatus implies observing society, the scenario where the dynamics and power relations are situated and established. Today's society has experienced not only political, economic, social and cultural changes, but also advances in communication and information technologies, now called digital ICT, due to the irruption of the Internet, which caused social and cultural transformations. Thus, during the 20th century, society has received different denominations ("Information Society", "Communication Society" and "Knowledge Society") that include perspectives that have an impact on the educational system, specifically with regard to the definition of public policies and the rights to education, art and culture.

From these perspectives, it is not possible to ignore the legacy of industrial society, the process of industrialization, urbanization, the modern project and its ideals of achieving progress to overcome the crisis of civilization that could only be achieved if society was thought of as a great industry. If we study the history of the "Information Society" (Mattelart, 2002), we can see the alliance between the industrialists and the 'positivist savants', who also exercised control over the School and the University, and established a management model, which displaced the government of people towards the administration of things. Thus, a technical elite grows, develops and installs itself, reducing the State to the function of administering business. As 'civilization' progresses, the division of labor increases in the same proportion. People depend individually on each other, even though they depend more on the mass.

**"Information Society": epistemology of neoliberal rationality in the educational field.**

In this article, the focus of interest is on the concept of the "Information Society", a denomination that originates in international organizations, which promote and impose it through the design of policies, reports, publications, calls for proposals and the formulation of projects, among other resources. The articulation of this perspective with the gestation of neoliberal policies drawn up by global financial, banking, labor and trade entities that have a direct impact on the formulation and reformulation of the conceptions and educational systems of nations is clear (Fumagalli, 2010).

If we trace its origin back to 1975, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which grouped twenty-four countries of great economic strength, inaugurated the notion of "Information Society"; therefore, this entity required the advice of Marc Porat and other North American specialists, among them, Ithiel de Sola Pool, head of research on policies of liberalization of communication systems (Mattelart, 2002).

Thus, the "Information Society" is inserted in the economic, communicative and educational models under one of its premises: to guarantee the rights to education, culture, communication and information. In addition, the preponderant interest of State leaders is centered on the management of large volumes of information, databases and security systems of governments and nations. The process of globalization and internationalization, which began after the Second World War, had already been consolidated; the advances of the informational paradigm then took shape.

In 1980, the Council of Ministers of the European Community approved a "Convention for the protection of individuals with regard to automatic processing of personal data (...)" (Mattelart, 2002, p.120). In that decade, deregulation and privatization began, and a new scale was introduced: 'supranational governance'. In the negotiations between the United States and the European Union, the liberalization of audiovisual and telecommunication systems is at the forefront. The steps of financial deregulation were taken around 1984 and 1985, which Mattelart (2002) calls a *hinge period*, because it opens the world space to capital movements without restrictions; thus the deregulation of the financial sphere shows a first image of the 'networks of the global economy'; at the same time, the risk of crisis is glimpsed in the absence of supranational regulatory mechanisms. Other entities promote and consolidate this notion, through documents such as the Bangemann report on *Europe and the global information society (Global society of information)*, published in May 1994. At the end of February 1995, the world's richest countries, meeting in Brussels in the G7, ratified the concept of the *Global Information Society*, reiterating their desire and urgency to achieve the liberalization of telecommunications markets (Mattelart, 2002).

**State, market, civil society: processes of transformation of the educational apparatus and**



### **emergence of the field of Arts Education in Colombia.**

In this context, the objective of this article is to trace the emergence of the field of Art Education as a formative bet, which is directly linked to the recent political history of Colombia, and implies vital reflections, since it explains the ways in which it was born, It also implies vital reflections, since it explains the ways in which it is born, grows and is projected, in a national context in which, until the enactment of the General Education Law (115 of 1994), the relevance of art in the formation of the subject had not been 'officially' recognized and, of course, the full (and even legal) conditions for its development in the School did not exist.

The starting point for the reconstruction of the spatial and temporal context of this phenomenon is the so-called "Seventh Ballot Paper Movement", promoted by students in 1989, during the government of Virgilio Barco Vargas, which gave way to the National Constituent Assembly in 1991, moment that shows the process of serious decomposition of public order of the eighties and the closing of the political regime that concludes with the extra-constitutional convocation also known as *Constituent Assembly of 1991* (Ortiz, 2008), whose purpose was the generation and promulgation of the new Political Constitution of Colombia, in 1991.

The new political scenario proposed by the Magna Carta of 1991 opens with the figure of the *Social State of Law*, which introduces great innovations in all areas of the nation, since it constitutes a fundamental or structural norm of the State and introduces changes in the legal system, such as considering a democratic republic and the autonomy of the territorial entities in accordance with the idea of decentralization (Villar Borda, 2007).

Another point that generated debate was that in the 1991 Political Constitution of Colombia, education is not included in the chapter on fundamental rights; rather it is prescribed in the chapter on economic, social and cultural rights, considered as a fundamental right of children (Cortes Rodas, F., 2012).

This shift shows the articulation between State, Market and Civil Society, in a post- industrial, global society that marks the transformation of politics and the relations between it and society; It also shows the implications of the transition from the classical paradigm to the new paradigm, which led to the defragmentation of the Nation-State and the emergence of conflicts generated by the establishment of neoliberalism in Latin America over the last 40 years, a historical-political moment of the constitution of the free market and which represented profound changes for social actors, social movements and the socio-cultural model.

Thus, in this panorama of the mid-nineties -when the location of the market in the vertex of the matrix is gradually becoming hierarchical, due to the imposition of the neoliberal model and thinking- Arts Education finally enters, officially, the school system as one of the nine "Compulsory and Fundamental Areas" (Article 23, Law 115 of 1994), although today, 25 years later, we have to declare that this essential character contained in the legislation must be claimed and defended in the real contexts of educational action in many of which the relevance of Arts Education is questioned or denied de facto in Colombia.

After the issuance of Law 115 of 1994, about thirty-five (35) bachelor's degrees in Arts Education were created in the country, of which twelve (12) still exist. As of 2018, only two (2) of them had High Quality Accreditation, a process managed by the Colombian Ministry of National Education, MEN, through the National Council of Education.

of Accreditation, CNA. This decrease due to the extinction of programs should be carefully analyzed in the socio-political context of the country, which does not escape the regional and global trend of imposing a new model, which displaces the academic by the mercantile to consolidate what has been conceived as a 'university company'.

In Colombia, during the 1990s, Colciencias - Administrative Department of Science, Technology and Education, today the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation - reformulated the requirements for developing research based on the demands of the productive sector, reducing state funding and promoting self-financing as conclusive facts of the effectiveness of neoliberal policies. Therefore, at this time, concern and demands for "quality assurance", efficiency, research and accreditation are growing. Faced with the demands of the 21st century and globalization,



policies for the creation of doctoral programs are increased; the CESU, National Council of Higher Education, a body of the National Government that outlines the policies of the university field, linked to the Ministry of National Education, is founded; and, the Accreditation System and the National Information System are organized (Soto Arango, 2005 cited by Nieto U.S., 2017).

In the *History of the Information Society* Mattelart (2002) states that, at the end of the nineties, specifically in July 1997, Bill Clinton, President of the United States, presented the 'Washington Doctrine' on electronic commerce, in which he proposed that governments should respect the dynamics imposed by this medium and accept that global competition and consumer choice would henceforth define the rules of the game of the digitalized market; this is evidence of the displacement of the transmission of information towards the digital metaphor.

In March 2000, during the Lisbon summit, the European Union prescribed a strategic objective: "(...) to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy" (p.128). It is evident that the definition of the mission of education systems is evasive and contradictory, even for those scenarios (if its background is carefully analyzed): to adapt "(...) both to the needs of the knowledge society and to the need to raise the level of employment and improve its quality". (p.128).

Another document that reflects this trend is the European Social Charter with minimum prescriptions, which do not show a consensus on the 'Europe of education'. Educational policies, like social policies, remain the responsibility of the Member States, separately. "Subordination to short-term economic policies (associated with the liberalization of capital markets (1990), single market (1992), single currency (1997, 1999) is structurally inscribed in the "Constitution of Europe". The only properly European political power: the Central Bank" (Mattelart, 2002, p.128).

These global facts of ideological, economic and political order commanded by the most powerful nations of the world have repercussions on the educational systems of Latin America in general and, in particular, of Colombia, which, for centuries, have responded more to external trends and requirements than to the needs of these territories; in the words of Escribano, "(...) To set education on a course according to a pertinent and authentic pedagogical model with coherent foundations in correspondence with tradition, culture, nature and the demands of the men and women of these lands, is the main need of these territories.) To set education on course according to a pertinent and authentic pedagogical model with coherent foundations in correspondence with tradition, culture, nature and the demands of the men and women of these lands, is the main need of the process of human formation in Latin America" (2017, p. 14).

The installation of Art Education as a field in the Colombian environment, in this spatio-temporal context, derives in tensions that emerge from the conceptions of the artistic and aesthetic in the country and from the places and non-places of art and aesthetics in the dimensions of educational and social action in Colombia, which, of course, is not subtracted from the aforementioned frame of reference.

It is clear that the political and artistic positionings that derive in the configuration of this field in Colombia must be thought in the scenario of the "Information Society", of the creation and production of symbolic objects (the work of art as merchandise) of the cultural industries, and the creation research as a place and a possibility to affect social realities; in this perspective the research is conceived, in the context of the formation of graduates in Art Education, centered on the problems of the School and its actors as well as in their realities of life that many times overflow the school system and touch socio-cultural territories in which it is also necessary to interact contemporary subjects and the effects of neoliberal rationality in the educational field: agents in the field of Art Education.

Reflecting on contemporary subjects and the effects of neoliberal rationality in the educational field, in the context of the proposed research project, leads to recognize the agents that have created the field of Arts Education, such as *managers* and *teachers* in the different areas of the educational system, both at the formal and informal levels (today called Education for Work and Human Development in Colombia); as well as those managers, promoters who guide collectives, organizations, independent cultural artistic groups and, of course, students who live their artistic



educational formative processes.

Managers and teachers manage, create, install, teach and administer the curricula of the academic programs, such is the case of the Bachelor's Degrees in Art Education, which are theoretically based on the conceptions that guide the formation of a professional in this field as a subject that develops by virtue of social interactions and the mastery of skills that empower him/her as a teacher committed to the integral artistic education of children and young people in a country that requires consolidating experiences and projects that contribute to the creation and consolidation of spaces for the development and sustainability of life in a context in which peace is a reality and not a discourse.

The above implies the construction of interrelationships for learning, appropriate to contexts, roles, interests, needs and expectations of the subjects that participate in each situation of interaction; which means that the development of a citizenship that implies receptivity, openness, recognition of diversity and valuation of the personal and collective must be motivated and promoted in students.

Therefore, to mediate the formative processes of new citizenship and political subjects is to recognize the transformation of what was conceived as politics and the relations between politics and society. The above leads to understand how the Art Education student is located in the contemporary social reality in political terms, when deep and accelerated changes occur in our society. At the same time, it is imperative to understand the process of social reorganization and the transformation of politics itself. That is to say, it is no longer is conceived as a set of institutions and structured procedures that penetrated society through certain mechanisms; as that instance that articulated and ordered social life. Therefore, the structural changes brought about by the phenomenon of globalization are evident, which had repercussions on the functional systems, which would appear to be relatively autonomous in terms of their specific logics (Lechner, 2003).

Another dimension to be considered in these reflections is the production of knowledge; receptivity is understood as the will to build and acquire knowledge, ethics and aesthetics from multiple perspectives, leading to the development of the capacity and interest to resolve conflicts, identify and explain differences and renegotiate them collectively in order to strengthen human bonds and enrich individual and collective existence. It is a matter of conceiving "a transactional and distributed self", a self as an interrelation between one actor-communicant and another, that is, a self that becomes dependent on dialogue, intercommunication and interaction, a self that is constructed both from the outside to the inside and from the inside to the outside, that is, both from culture to mind and from mind to culture; the self in its distributive sense would constitute a swarm of its social interactions.

Artistic-pedagogical teaching practice and research in Arts Education are fundamental components for the training of graduates of Arts Education degree programs. The perspectives of critical pedagogy and action-research are articulated at the base of the curricular bet of these teacher training programs and therefore the field opens up as an option for change from within the system itself, which is where action must be taken to really turn a bet into a real option for change:

It is not enough with solvent investments, nor with the latest technology available; it is necessary, first, to conceive what kind of people the continent needs, what kind of people each country and each specific region within each country requires. What must he/she know, how does he/she learn and what does he/she learn for? It is as important to determine the contents to be learned, as the precision of the values, qualities and feelings to be incorporated into his personality (Escribano, 2017, p. 15). Thus, each of the training areas that make up the field of Arts Education (Visual and Plastic Arts; Musical Arts; Performing Arts, Dance and Theater; Literature and Pedagogy; and Educational Sciences) must be based on current theoretical developments in which these principles acquire validity and relevance to the extent that they arise and are projected in the field of Arts Education; Literature and Pedagogy and Educational Sciences) must be based on current theoretical developments in which such principles acquire validity and relevance to the extent that they arise and are projected in the real contexts of educational action, a fact that becomes especially important in a country in which the subject had its back to artistic and aesthetic education until the



end of the 20th century, The effective installation of the field of art education in Colombia took place -effectively- in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century with the arrival of the first graduates in Art Education to the school system..

### **Education in Latin America: trajectories of critical pedagogies.**

Regarding critical pedagogy, the approaches of Kemmis (1999), Carr (1999), Elliot (1994), Freire (1994) are relevant for Art Education programs, Giroux (1997), MacLaren (1997) and Medina Rivilla (2004).

The orientation of the training activity of graduates in Art Education retakes, with respect to critical pedagogy, Kemmis' approaches with reference to the fact that educational practice is an activity that can contribute to maintain the state of things in a society or to promote its change; Carr indicates the need to investigate how practices are carried out and to ensure that they reveal the participation and collaboration of all those involved; he also highlights the necessary theory-practice interrelation and proposes educational practice as a criterion for the validity of educational theory.

Elliot (1994) points out the need for teachers to assume their educational function as a research activity, in such a way that the teaching work itself becomes a scenario for their professional development by contrasting practice and theory. Freire advocates problematizing school reality, rethinking and referring to it in its social contextual framework. In his conception, he highlights four principles of critical pedagogy, namely: 1) educational activity is a political act; therefore, learning is not a mechanical fact; 2) learning requires a critical understanding of the social reality, which requires social practice; 3) the insertion of writing in the oral social memory produces transformations that make it necessary to resort to written communication; 4) society lives in a permanent process of change.

Giroux (1997) states that pedagogical activity is a relationship between theory and practice as cultural policy; and that this activity is a discursive activity always under construction, contextualized and permanently renewed by virtue of the will of those who want, through the teaching activity, to contribute to the transformation of the world. He differentiates the 'pedagogy of theory' from the 'pedagogy of theorization' and of the latter he points out that students must learn to doubt what they 'know', to question finished truths, through discussions, joint activities and post-disciplinary research that question the authority of discourses and of those who deliver them.

MacLaren (1997) points out that the educator must engage with the socially marginalized and disadvantaged in order to contribute to the transformation of society. He understands the curriculum as a cultural political form and the school as an environment where the culture of the classroom and the street meet: In his criteria, the curriculum should serve to create awareness of the class situation and serve as a foundation for the formation of people capable of transforming society, eliminating the standardized language and changing it for a new conceptualization of relationships. The curriculum must attend to the experience and voice of the student to create a new vocabulary of resistance.

Medina Rivilla (2004) considers that the relationship between professors and students should give way to the constitution of a learning community, so that respect for the profession is strengthened; he also referred to the need to create a university culture that makes possible the acquisition of knowledge and the development of study habits and professional commitment.

Regarding the applicability of action research perspectives and the participatory action research approach in the orientation of LEA training, it is recognized that the didactic activity is carried out among subjects who exert influences and receive them mutually and from their environment. Therefore, it is pertinent to pay attention to Lewin's (1951) and Fals Borda's (2005) approaches.

Lewin (year) highlights the communitarian character of action research and the conception of teaching and research as one and the same activity, understanding that both students and teachers are involved in the process of inquiry into reality and both are transformed, since the basis is the critical reflection of the didactic fact, whose implementation implies that both students and teachers identify the problematic situation on which they consciously intervene and the joint work favors attention to formative and informative aspects.

Fals Borda (2005) emphasized the importance of returning research findings to the community for reflection; he also insisted on the anti-dogmatic nature of research and the need to use language accessible to all.

The aforementioned exponents of critical pedagogy spoke in favor of action research, pointing it out as a perspective that can contribute to the improvement of education because it involves its subjects in a reflective and transforming work of social reality.

Both possibilities of academic and human action -critical pedagogy and action research- complement each other, due to the assumptions on which they are based and the lines of activity they guide, and are support in the formulation of a formative work for the students who enter the curricula of the Bachelor's Degrees in Art Education; therefore, to assume the previous approaches entails, in the first instance, the understanding of the teaching activity as an activity that transforms reality and, in accordance with this, it demands evidencing the unity between artistic-pedagogical teaching practice and research-action, because in order to propose the transformation of reality, it is necessary to inquire about it, so that teaching practice and research act as transforming facts.

It is precisely from this dialogical and critical perspective that the conception of Arts Education is assumed as a field that can effectively counterbalance the neoliberal tendencies that today define the direction of education in Colombia and Latin America; the external requirements (located in the "quality assurance", accreditation and training by and for the "competencies") become, then, a constant opportunity for the internal look on the processes, yielding the best results.

and results in the qualification of renewed perspectives focused on the needs of the people; ways of seeing the world from the territory, whose genesis is in one's own body and not in someone else's apparatus.

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