

PEDAGOGICAL BIAS AND THE VALIDITY OF PEDAGOGY

El sesgo pedagógico y la vigencia de la pedagogía

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Abstract

The article analyzes a series of statements commonly used in contemporary educational discourse, but whose underlying assumptions do not constitute fundamental elements of education. To explain these expressions, the concept of pedagogical bias is proposed, understood as a distorted interpretation of educational reality that, relying on statements of apparent rationality or widespread social acceptance, leads to erroneous judgments about the educational process and reinforces practices perceived as necessary or appropriate, even though they lack a solid foundation. The analysis categorizes five biases: Those related to the teacher and their work, The school and the nature of schooling, Pedagogy and its object, Teaching and its implementation, and Education and its purpose. The main findings identify that these pedagogical biases stem from good intentions, however, they generate undesirable consequences in the educational field, altering the conditions of schooling and distorting teaching, prioritizing learning for its own sake and elevating the student to a subject to be satisfied. The conclusion emphasizes the role of pedagogy as a field that reflects on, investigates, and conceptualizes education, and therefore cannot be simplified to a set of techniques focused on criteria of efficiency and effectiveness.

Keywords

Bias, Education, Teaching, Teacher, Pedagogy, Schools.

Resumen

El artículo analiza una serie de enunciados de uso común en el discurso educativo contemporáneo, pero cuyos supuestos no constituyen elementos estructurantes de la educación. Para explicar tales expresiones, se propone el concepto de "sesgo pedagógico", entendido como una interpretación distorsionada de la realidad educativa que, apoyándose en enunciados de aparente racionalidad o de aceptación social generalizada, conduce a juicios erróneos sobre el hecho educativo y consolida prácticas que se perciben como necesarias o adecuadas, aunque carezcan de un fundamento sólido. En el análisis se categorizaron cinco sesgos: los que tienen que ver con el maestro y su trabajo; la escuela y la condición de lo escolar; la pedagogía y su objeto; la enseñanza y su realización; y la educación y su propósito. Como principales resultados se identifica que estos sesgos parten de buenos propósitos, pero generan consecuencias indeseadas en el campo educativo, alterando las condiciones de lo escolar y distorsionando la enseñanza, privilegiando el aprendizaje por el aprendizaje y enalteciendo al estudiante como sujeto a satisfacer. La conclusión resalta el papel de la pedagogía como campo que reflexiona, investiga y conceptualiza la educación, por lo que no puede ser simplificada a un conjunto de técnicas centradas en criterios de eficiencia y eficacia.

Palabras clave

Sesgo, educación, enseñanza, maestro, pedagogía, escuela.

Introduction

Education as a social practice is not immune to beliefs and prejudices. Even today, when there is talk of evidence-based pedagogy, educational practice is carried out based on assumptions that are taken for granted and that, despite having good intentions, end up producing unintended consequences. Specifically, the objective of this article is to analyze a series of statements commonly used in contemporary educational discourse whose assumptions do not constitute foundational elements of educa-

tion. For this analysis, we propose the concept of pedagogical bias, which allows us to question whether educational discourses, while having good intentions, can simultaneously generate unintended consequences in the field of education, altering school conditions and distorting teaching.

Along these lines, Durwin and Reese-Weber (2019), for example, reveal ten myths or beliefs about education, such as the widely touted notion that students learn best through discovery rather than as a result of an explanation. In response to this myth, the authors argue that, while projects and activities that encourage discovery do benefit students, they do not necessarily negate the importance of a teacher's explanation—especially since independent inquiry does not lead to the same kind of understanding as listening to someone who is knowledgeable on the subject. Nevertheless, discovery-based learning is currently promoted, and a teacher's lecture on a topic is often dismissed as “anachronistic.”

Ruiz (2023) proposes the term “edumyths” to refer to certain ideas that circulate as unquestionable truths in contemporary education. Many of these are misrepresentations cloaked in supposed scientific support that tend to be readily accepted. For example, there is confusion surrounding the concept of “active learning”: it is often thought to imply learning by physically doing things, but the word “active” actually refers to “intellectual activation”—such as that which might be sparked by a question, a teacher's lecture, or a reading—activities that are, in contrast, commonly characterized as passive.

Duriez (2023) points out that these myths or beliefs about education take the form of simple, appealing statements that—driven by the intention to improve classroom practice and supported by the notion of self-evidence—are easily accepted by the public. However, we agree with him that the task of pedagogy, rather than proposing ready-made solutions, is to question those slogans that circulate as supposedly proven truths.

In light of the above, this article seeks to broaden the pedagogical discussion by analyzing some of these beliefs, whose self-evident nature rarely invites critical scrutiny. Unlike the previously cited works, we do not speak of myths but of biases, since these are not merely narratives that explain something, but rather false ideas that—once accepted as self-evident truths—have the power to guide important decisions, even though their results may run counter to the intended objectives.

In short, the problem is that statements about education circulate that appear rational but, at their core, lack substantial pedagogical grounding. The hypothesis posits that these statements constitute biases that shape decisions and practices which, contrary to expectations, un-



dermine pedagogy. Thus, the purpose of this article is to introduce the concept of “pedagogical bias,” understood as a distorted interpretation of educational reality that—based on statements of apparent rationality or widespread social acceptance—leads to erroneous judgments about the educational process and reinforces practices that are perceived as necessary or appropriate, even though they lack a solid foundation.

This topic is important because the beliefs or ideas we hold about reality influence the way we investigate educational phenomena, but above all, they shape the efforts we make and the decisions we take regarding education. Indeed, a bias could lead to policies or initiatives that, despite supposedly rational foundations and good intentions, ultimately fail to change the reality of education or, at times, produce undesirable results. As Bach-elard (1993) states, this work invites us to think against our own minds.

This is essential for reclaiming pedagogy as a field of disciplinary knowledge production, since its object of study would be ongoing critical reflection and research on education. However, the beliefs, stereotypes, and biases present in discourses on education stifle critical reflection. Furthermore, they tend to reduce pedagogy to a technique for applying strategies, taking for granted an understanding of education (what it means to educate) and its purpose (why we educate). Pedagogy has scientific potential if it does not become merely instrumental action and, above all, if it does not become a mere operational framework for what other educational sciences say.

First, the paper presents the research methodology. Next, it develops the concept of pedagogical bias, using “cognitive bias” as a reference point. Third, it systematizes the biases identified in the research into five categories, based on their focus: the teacher, the school, teaching, education and its formative purpose, and pedagogy. Fourth, it proposes that these biases have gained significant ground due to the erosion pedagogy has experienced, stemming from its displacement as a field of knowledge. Finally, the conclusions indicate that the way to avoid falling into these biases is to reclaim pedagogy as a field that reflects on and investigates education.

Methodology

A descriptive study was conducted (Tamayo, 2001) based on a conceptual framework that reaffirms the epistemological dimension of pedagogy—i.e., asserting that pedagogy produces knowledge about education as an object of study without being subject to the claims of other educational sciences.



Thus, the methodology was based on the theoretical premise that pedagogy is not merely a field of recontextualization (Bernstein, 1998), but rather a disciplinary body of knowledge that produces concepts, theories, and methodologies specific to its own object of study, facing the challenge of ensuring that these constructs are unique to educational theory and not terms adapted from other fields (Siegel and Biesta, 2022). Consequently, the research relied on the premise that concepts such as training, education, teaching, teacher, and school are specific to the pedagogical tradition; therefore, they were adopted as the central terms of the study.

In line with the conceptual framework outlined above, to highlight the concept of pedagogical bias, the researchers first compiled common statements in the field of education by collecting dialogic narratives through interviews (Delgado and Gutiérrez, 1999).

To this end, a two-way matrix was designed, in which the researchers compiled statements that circulate in everyday discussions about education (Miles and Huberman, 1994). For data reduction and coding, open coding was used (Creswell, 2013), identifying the following five categories: biases related to the teacher and their work; the school and the nature of schooling; pedagogy and its object; teaching and its implementation; and education and its formative purpose.



Pedagogical Biases

Tversky and Kahneman (1981) proposed the concept of “cognitive bias,” referring to any distortion in the mental process that leads to an inaccurate judgment yet appears to be entirely rational. The authors point out that this phenomenon occurs because the mind, while serving to “pragmatically guide our actions in the world” (García Campos et al., 2022, p. 103), operates by taking shortcuts to conserve cognitive effort. Thus, biases manifest in various ways: hasty calculations, logical errors, misinterpretations, and cognitive illusions—all of which are systematic errors that reveal the operation of imprecise mental processes (García Campos et al., 2022).

However, biases would be nothing more than an anecdote if they were not involved in our choices, decisions, and practices. Even in the scientific field—which is based on a method designed to avoid them—biases affect critical abilities such as making estimates, forming objective value judgments, attributing causal relationships, or establishing hypotheses (Redondo, 2020).

Santizo (2022) conceptualizes cognitive bias in education as a “partial perception of educational reality” (p. 39). It occurs when the attention and decisions of students and teachers focus disproportionately on certain elements while ignoring others that are equally relevant. Although biases operate individually, they are reinforced by social factors such as beliefs and stereotypes. In educational settings, this dynamic is amplified, as the very organization of the system and educational policies can contribute to the establishment and reinforcement of biases by determining default actions and decisions (Santizo, 2022). An example of this is the reductionist interpretations of the use of new technologies for skills development (García, 2018), which can limit their pedagogical potential by confining it to merely preventing student boredom.

The difficulty in identifying and subverting cognitive biases lies in the fact that they often bring benefits to “one’s own individual and social image” (Concha et al., 2016, p. 118). For example, if a teacher faithfully adheres to the educational stereotypes promoted by the media and social networks (Observatorio Pedagógico de Medios, 2017), they are likely to be perceived as an excellent teacher, both by themselves and by their peers and superiors. However, such validation, based on prejudice, does not guarantee that their teaching is truly effective; in fact, it is even possible that these practices ultimately hinder their students’ learning process.

In fact, a teacher who follows the guideline of attending to their students’ emotions so that they do not get bored is complying with socially accepted norms. However, at the same time, they are preventing their students from being challenged by the world, which is not always wrapped in fun but, on the contrary, demands sacrifice or dealing with the discomfort of not satisfying the demands of the self to attend to something that transcends it: the subject of study (Larrosa, 2019).

Pedagogical bias is thus defined as a distorted interpretation of educational reality that, relying on statements of apparent rationality or widespread social acceptance, leads to erroneous judgments about the educational process and reinforces practices that are perceived as necessary or appropriate, even though they lack a solid foundation.

Below is a classification of biases organized into five categories: those related to the teacher and their work; the school and the nature of schooling; pedagogy and its object; teaching and its implementation; and education and its purpose (Table 1).



Table 1
Categorization of Pedagogical Biases

Category	Biases that have gradually weakened and eroded the meaning
Teacher	The teacher is a facilitator of learning. The teacher should be a mediator of knowledge. The teacher should be a friend to the students. Teachers must learn from their students. Teachers should be innovative. Teachers should be motivators and resilient.
School	Education takes place outside of school, and therefore, school is unnecessary. School should prepare students for a life of service to society. School must respond to its context.
Teaching	Teaching is to make the difficult easy. Teaching is facilitating learning. Teaching should be fun. Teaching involves motivating students. Good teaching is about giving students freedom.
Education	The best education uses the latest technologies. The student is the center of education. Education must be of high quality. Education should not be traditional. Education prepares us to be happy.
Pedagogy	Pedagogy must be measured by learning outcomes. Pedagogy must be evidence-based. Pedagogy establishes techniques for classroom development. Pedagogy consists of educational models. Good pedagogy begins with recognizing students' interests.



Teacher-centered biases

We begin this analysis with a bias that stands out because it prescribes how a teacher should be. This bias states that “the teacher is a facilitator of learning” and that “the teacher’s role is to create the conditions for learning to occur.”

At first glance, this idea sounds obvious; however, things are not necessarily that simple. Learning is a quality of living beings that allows them to adapt based on the information they receive from their environment. Seen in this light, it is no surprise that a student achieves learning,

since simply being alive is enough. Therefore, the teacher is not there to facilitate learning as such; rather, beyond achieving learning that is visible in behavior, the teacher's work seeks the socialization, enculturation, qualification, and subjectivation of the other (Biesta, 2017).

Socialization is understood as the incorporation of the dispositions that a society considers necessary for its reproduction; enculturation consists of fostering the assimilation of cultural frameworks for being and existing in the world; qualification refers to the acquisition of qualities that are socially valued within a specific historical context—such as soft skills and emotional intelligence in contemporary capitalism; and, finally, subjectivation is a paradoxical outcome in which each individual develops their uniqueness through exposure to common norms.

Now, the teacher seeks to achieve the above through an educational practice centered on explaining knowledge: teaching. In short, the teacher does not merely facilitate learning; rather, they shape individuals, and such formation has an ontological impact that transcends learning. In fact, teaching cannot be observed or measured in the same way as learning; instead, its results become apparent in retrospect long afterward and operate even unconsciously—what Jackson (1999) calls “implicit teachings.” Therefore, a teacher's work cannot be evaluated solely based on the immediate results achieved by the students.

Furthermore, teaching is a practice in which one person (the teacher) offers something (the subject matter or field of study) to another (the student). The student has no control over either the nature of that content or the way it is presented. Hence, it is to be expected that the student will experience a certain degree of discomfort and may even want to avoid the process, since it requires them to be open to being taught and to pay attention to that other person, setting aside their own desires and postponing immediate gratification. Thus, rather than a facilitator, the teacher is more of a “complicator” (Cuesta, 2021), since they unsettle the student by pulling them out of their self-referentiality to make them attend to something they do not master, that does not interest them, that they see no meaning in, and that, in their judgment, may be of no use at all.

The idea of the teacher as a facilitator is one of the consequences of adopting constructivism uncritically (Biesta, 2016) and has led to a clear shift in the teacher's role from that of an expert in a discipline to a docile companion to the learner's interests (Enkvist, 2009)—one whom the learner may well do without. However, it has been demonstrated that the most efficient learning occurs through an explanation provided by



another person (Ruiz, 2023), as it involves less cognitive load and reduces the time required for the learning process.

Similarly, it is often said that “the teacher must be a mediator of knowledge,” with “mediator” understood as one who stands between the student and knowledge. At first glance, it also seems obvious that the teacher is a link between their students and knowledge; however, when the teacher teaches, they are not mediating but rather embodying knowledge, since they know the subject they are teaching and can therefore explain it.

If the teacher were a mediator, knowledge would only be summoned when the teacher is with their students; but even when the students are not present, the teacher still possesses knowledge. In fact, they view and experience the world through that knowledge. This knowledge gives them a social identity and becomes a driving force, a good teacher wants to know more—which is why they continue to study. Put another way, the teacher’s work does not end during school breaks when there are no students; rather, it continues as a way of life: its meaning is knowledge. Indeed, in many cases, teachers first fell in love with knowledge, and this love led them to become teachers; thus, their work is first a desire for knowledge and then a desire to share that knowledge. The teacher is not a mediator. Their knowledge is an existential horizon.

On the other hand, conceiving of the teacher as a mediator implies instrumentalizing them, reducing them to a tool at the service of the student. In this framework, the student seeking knowledge would use the teacher as a mere means to attain it. This dynamic not only produces relational adjustments that undermine the teaching profession but, more importantly, ignores its authentic formative function. Formation, as Biesta (2016 and 2022) points out, necessarily involves an “interruption of the self,” an act that the teacher carries out while teaching. This act is incompatible with instrumental logic, whose purpose is to facilitate the individual’s enjoyment, thereby perpetuating an unquestioned extension of their selfhood.

The idea of the teacher as a mediator fits very well with discourses on learning, since these discourses center their assumptions on the student: what interests the student, what the student needs, and what the student likes. In other words, they validate a stance that elevates the self and thereby creates the possibility of instrumentalizing others. Among other things, this discourse on learning aligns closely with marketing and the capitalism of immediacy, since it seeks to gratify the individual quickly. That is why it is so common in the advertising of educational services and products. Let us remember that acquiring knowledge is not a matter



of immediate gratification, but of effort; it involves setting aside other desires and working through discomfort.

On the other hand, when a teacher instructs, they often strip the student of their prior knowledge (representations) regarding the subject matter. For example, when a teacher explains why a board floats in water by describing Archimedes' principle, they gradually strip students of the intuitive explanations they brought with them ("it floats because it is made of wood" or "it floats because it is light"). Thus, rather than a mediator, the teacher often acts as a productive obstacle: they challenge common sense and strip us of what we thought we knew, thereby stimulating curiosity, doubt, and, ultimately, the desire to know.

Another pedagogical mandate or bias that is often heard is that "the teacher should be a friend to their students." At first glance, this seems desirable, since it places both parties in an emotional bond characterized by loyalty, trust, support, and reciprocity. However, this seemingly appealing idea overlooks the fact that the relationship between the two is not organized by an emotional or affective connection, but rather by the subject matter.

In fact, teacher and student come together because of a course, content to be taught, or, in a word, knowledge. Without this knowledge, their encounter would be shaped by other social dynamics or intersubjective arrangements, and thus would have a different meaning. Teacher and student interact because one knows what the other does not; that is why one is paid and the other—in the private system—must pay. Stripped of the realm of knowledge, both lose their status as student and teacher; in that case, we have two people between whom friendship might blossom, though this would be the result of human contingencies rather than a pedagogical precept.

Now, it is possible for friendship between teacher and student to arise as a result of the encounter facilitated by the subject matter. In fact, it is common for teachers and students to become friends after the student develops a passion for the subject the teacher instructs—i.e., when they become peers because both desire the same thing. But to require friendship as a prerequisite for positive classroom development is to overlook the fact that the nature of emotional bonds is not shaped by mandate or mere desire—especially when the teacher is instructing a class of 20 or 40 students. Perhaps one or two of them will eventually become passionate about the subject. Maybe with one of them there is the possibility of a future friendship, but that is not the goal. Furthermore, being friends with

everyone would imply programming emotional responses, which is more characteristic of robotics than of the human condition.

On the other hand, it is important to note that there is no relationship of equality, equivalence, or horizontality between teacher and students. On the contrary, it is a bond defined by inequality and hierarchy. It is evident that teachers and students are equal on the legal-normative level (although there are variations if the students are minors), but in the pedagogical relationship they do not stand on the same footing. The teacher possesses something the student does not: knowledge, and that knowledge authorizes the teacher to teach. However, this authority is not imposed but conferred: the student, society, and the academic discipline itself authorize the teacher to teach. Hence, we can speak of a granted hierarchy between the two: the student, who sees the teacher as an authority because of their knowledge, tacitly says, “Teach me” (Cuesta, 2019).

Breaking down that hierarchy sounds politically correct and therefore seems like a good intention; however, not all good intentions lead to the desired results. We see this today: in the name of ending authoritarianism, teachers have been stripped of the conditions of authority, making it increasingly difficult to manage students. In fact, it is becoming increasingly common for teachers to be subjected to harassment and mistreatment by their students. It is no coincidence—and almost prophetic—that Arendt (1996) stated decades ago that the crisis in education was fundamentally a crisis of authority.

Hand in hand with the previous bias goes the notion that “teachers must learn from their students.” The idea that students construct their own knowledge, that they are creative, and that they bring prior knowledge to the classroom—among other slogans—has fueled this bias, which does not place teachers on equal footing with their students as the principle of friendship would, but rather reverses the hierarchy: students are there to give to the teacher (in a relationship that is, moreover, structurally unequal, since the teacher receives a salary from the student, who not only pays tuition but would also be expected to provide the teacher with learning opportunities).

While a teacher may learn from a student, they will not do so regarding the subject they teach, but rather in other fields or areas of knowledge in which the student is presumed to be an expert. Such is the case with a chemistry teacher who might learn literature from one of their students. Nevertheless, it is expected that, when it comes to chemistry, the teacher will remain the authority.



Teachers learn from reflecting on their teaching experience. Their students' comments, questions, and answers do not lead to direct learning but are instead processed and interpreted by the teacher. Thus, rather than learning from their students, teachers learn from their analysis of their own practice (Perrenoud, 2004).

The belief that teachers learn from their students stems from a homogenizing view of the pedagogical relationship, which distorts the democratic conception of the teacher-student relationship. As Kant states in his *Treatise on Pedagogy* (2009), "One generation educates another," which implies an important distinction. Equality may exist in terms of equal intelligences, as Rancière (2003) points out, but the responsibility to equip "newcomers" with the necessary tools so that the world is not destroyed (Arendt, 1996) lies with adults. On the other hand, the newcomers have the responsibility to renew the world in ways we cannot even imagine. This tension places the teacher on one side and the student on the other, both engaged with a shared world.

Furthermore, we must bear in mind that, although teachers learn from their reflection, this does not necessarily imply a transformation of their practice—nor should it. The following bias runs counter to this reality, imposing the idea that "teachers must be innovative." If innovation involves introducing new elements to achieve objectives, this demand becomes an overwhelming mandate.

In fact, there is now talk of the "innovation bias," which consists of favoring ideas, products, or services simply because they appear novel, or because they can be labeled as innovative. This affects decision-making in two critical ways: first, because such an attribution does not guarantee real improvement or added value; second, because it carries the risk of dismissing established processes and methods—whose effectiveness has been proven—simply because they are considered outdated.

In any case, the dictatorship of innovation shifts the focus to novelty rather than to an understanding of the established—in this case, the underlying principles of teaching, which do not necessarily require constant invention. To teach, one must master a body of knowledge and share a symbolic repertoire with the learner who allows one to explain that mastery. Viewed this way, the demand for innovation can remain superficial, overlooking internal mechanisms.

On the other hand, educational innovation is often reduced to the pursuit of the student's immediate gratification—avoiding boredom at all costs—while overlooking the fact that education inherently involves a structural inconvenience. This is because education consists, in essence,



of an encounter with culture that requires renouncing the purely instinctive. This process necessarily generates a structural unease (Freud, 2022). In other words, the educational process involves the temporary loss of the “natural state,” demanding discipline and instruction in return (Kant, 2009). Through education, humans encounter culture and undergo the regulation of their instincts, which inevitably produces unease.

School-Centric Biases

Discussions about the need for innovation and calls for school reform are nothing new. Since at least the late nineteenth century, there has been a persistent push for school reform, particularly regarding teaching methods. However, contrary to this view, some argue that “education takes place outside of school” and that, therefore, school is unnecessary. If educating were merely a matter of shaping the human being, school could be dispensed with, since the processes of socialization, enculturation, and subjectivation take place through social spaces such as the family, the community, or even the media. However, in schools and universities, the focus is on disciplinary knowledge. Hence the role of the teacher, who is not only an expert in their discipline but also in the art of teaching.

The education provided in schools is based on removing the child from their everyday life, freeing them from their context (family, neighborhood, work, etc.) and from themselves (Simons and Masschelein, 2014). Thus, while education in the broadest sense can occur outside of school, the formation of the individual for a specific purpose—centered on disciplinary knowledge and mediated by the teacher’s instruction—necessarily requires the school institution. For this reason, arguments advocating for the abolition of schooling are often limited to superficial criticisms that seek to eliminate anything that is not pleasurable. However, attempting to eradicate discomfort is a mistake, as it is an inherent part of the educational process. Proof of this is that boredom can manifest even in hyperstimulated environments filled with screens, holograms, and recreational activities.

Another common, accusatory bias asserts that “school must prepare students for a useful life.” Indeed, critics are often heard saying that school teaches useless things—things students will never use in the future. Joining them are the students themselves, who look down on school subjects and justify their disinterest by asking, “What’s the point of that?” To all of them, we must respond unequivocally: school teaches a subject



and brings the world into the classroom because the world is there, not because it serves a specific purpose. We teach for the love of knowledge, not for its usefulness (Simons and Masschelein, 2014; Larrosa, 2019).

The essential difference between the student and the apprentice lies in their relationship to the pragmatic goal: the apprentice appropriates knowledge for immediate purposes (to answer an exam question or perform a mechanical task that can be forgotten as soon as it is finished), while the student contemplates knowledge, admires it from a distance, and finds joy in its pursuit. Their quest is defined by the resistant nature of the object of study—its quality of resisting complete grasping—which keeps them in a state of constant inquiry. Hence, as Larrosa (2019) points out, study is an open-ended process whose outcome is uncertain, unlike learning, which begins with a predetermined list of expected outcomes.

Viewed in this light, not everyone in the classroom becomes a student. Although those attending class are bureaucratically assigned this label, their ontology does not correspond to that status, since most do not develop a passion for the subject but rather study it simply because they must, even though the subject itself possesses dignity beyond its potential utility (Bárcena et al., 2020).

Subjects exist in school to remind students that the world is greater than they are and that they owe a debt to it. Therefore, it is normal—if we view it through the lens of a productivist society—for “useless things” to be taught in school, though this does not justify their elimination. Their purpose transcends mere immediate pragmatism and finds dignity in its own fulfillment.

Along these lines, it is also common to hear that “school must respond to the context,” a phrase that at first glance sounds relevant, though it conceals another pedagogical bias. Of course, it is reasonable for a school in an indigenous territory to respond to certain sociocultural determinants, such that the context becomes an opportunity for teaching—as in the case of a teacher who teaches how to calculate speed using as an example a cart pulled by mules rather than camels, since in that territory mules are familiar while camels are not. However, it is important to bear in mind that the purpose of the lesson is to understand the concept of speed, not the student’s context.

Of course, education carries the risk that students, after attending school and broadening their horizons, will leave their home context and seek opportunities elsewhere (Luri, 2022). Thus, school education aims to “enculturate” students by revealing humanity’s legacy to them—always through a selection of content, which is a matter of debate—without



limiting itself to the immediate environment to which they belong. It is therefore contradictory to demand that schools produce free, autonomous, and even emancipated individuals while at the same time denying them the possibility of overcoming cultural insularity by requiring them to remain bound to their specific context.

To conclude this section, there is the demand to “transform the school.” Note that this demand implies, in principle, that the school is flawed—i.e., that everything done within it is wrong. It is generally argued that schools operate in authoritarian and traditional ways, which, in the language of innovation, is already an excuse to change everything. However, authoritarianism is one thing, and authority is another. The former, without a doubt, must be combated. As for the latter, it would be better to understand it and observe its role in the dynamics of education (Bustamante, 2015).

School confers authority on academic subjects—on the object of study—in short: on knowledge about the world. To this end, it authorizes certain individuals to teach and shape the education of others. This educational process involves some degree of regulation, since the student may resist being educated; that is why they get bored, skip class, interrupt the teacher, and so on (Bustamante, 2013). There are various forms of regulation, but in general, it is a process whose objective is to impose discipline on the self—on the need for immediate gratification. The fact that this is not always pleasant does not mean that school must be transformed; for if that were the case, we would have to transform all regulations, constitutions, and social regulatory frameworks, since they all aim to regulate humankind and make it human. Certainly, we must transform authoritarianism and violent forms of coercion, but that does not mean we should eliminate authority.

The function of the school is to introduce tradition to the newcomer, but the fact that one is a newcomer is not sufficient grounds for transforming the school in the name of innovation. By labeling the school as “traditional,” the aim is to delegitimize it by accusing it of being out of date. But the school as an institution is an administrative structure that enables the transmission of disciplinary knowledge, which, as such, responds to forms of expression and practices determined by a body of knowledge or heritage. The culture transmitted in school is tradition. Thus, by definition, all education is traditional.

Schools establish their areas of focus through the selection of shared interests and the exercise of a collective imagination. The history of education reveals the existence of “educational situations” that occur



outside of school; however, not even educators who engaged in education through social activism—such as Dewey (advocating for women’s suffrage) or Freinet (worker communities)—renounced the school; on the contrary, they defended it—the former arguing that it was a specific laboratory for the social, and the latter viewing it as the sum of “life skills.” For Dussel (2009), education can take place through many means, but this does not support the possible decline of the school as an institution.

It is often said that any place is suitable for education, and this may be true from the perspective of educational settings—such as the home, the street, or a museum—that facilitate the transmission of culture, beliefs, and behaviors; but the school performs a specific pedagogical function: it sets aside everyday relationships to spark interest and, in this way, transforms the child into a student. Thus, children learn their native language at home through community ties and the media, but at school, the native language becomes an object of study; it is not a matter of learning it, but of dissecting it, deconstructing it, and analyzing it (Simons and Masschelein, 2014; Larrosa, 2018 and 2019). In other words, the education that takes place in school is not mere learning, since it requires specific conditions that cannot occur sporadically anywhere, as is the case with learning as a biological response.

In any case, there will be aspects of school that need to be changed. After all, it is a relatively recent institution in human history and can be improved, but this does not justify the oft-repeated mantra that school must be transformed, since it is first necessary to determine whether what one wishes to transform is structural to the school system itself. Note that the reforms implemented in recent years have produced undesirable results; for example, that children today do not know how to read as well as previous generations did (De Lima, 2025) or that fun and immediate gratification are prioritized (Barrio, 2025), paving the way for the development of narcissistic students who struggle with social interaction and connecting with others (Fryd, 2018). These two phenomena alone pose potential risks to democracies, even though they are good business for the market of products and services under hedonistic capitalism.

Biases Centered on Teaching

Teaching, as a practice specific to the teacher, is also subject to biases that dictate its nature. For example, the saying “teaching is making the difficult easy” is common, and it seems natural for a teacher to impart knowledge



to their students. However, if we look more closely, that is not exactly what happens.

Teaching involves presenting an object of knowledge while simultaneously capturing students' attention (Biesta, 2021). To do so, the teacher, in a certain sense, does make the difficult easy. They explain a subject using various resources, beginning with oral presentation—all with the goal of making intelligible what others find confusing. However, their explanation presupposes the use of jargon that the student does not master and is probably not interested in mastering. Therefore, teaching does not consist of making things easier, but rather of getting the other person to take ownership of and discuss the subject matter, thereby challenging their comfort zone (Cuesta, 2021).

When a teacher teaches, they invite the student to observe an object that, by definition, resists being grasped (Larrosa, 2019). If knowing were simple, science would not exist and common sense would suffice. What characterizes teaching, however, is the process of challenging the learner, shaking up the stagnant knowledge inherent in common sense to create a connection with the subject through the use of the discipline's own concepts.

The teacher wants to clarify the abstract, but to achieve this, they unsettle, confuse, and challenge—i.e., they do not necessarily advocate for the easy path, since knowing involves thinking against our own minds (Bachelard, 1993), displacing ingrained beliefs and mental frameworks, and thus finding ourselves in the limbo of uncertainty. The easy path for the student would be to stay where they are, with what they already know, since accepting the invitation to examine the subject involves complicating their life and opening themselves up to the possibility of enjoying knowledge, trying to grasp that which tends to slip away.

On the other hand, we must bear in mind that teaching is an inherently communicative practice: it involves sharing a common object or body of knowledge. For this reason, it is subject to the same uncertainty as communication, especially if the teacher adopts the discipline's specific jargon to study the subject. The problem is that as long as the student does not share the discipline's common lexicon, they will have to continue making a great effort to learn.

Similar to the previous bias, it is often repeated that “teaching is facilitating learning,” taking for granted that the teacher's role is to ensure that learning occurs. However, the power of teaching does not lie in the achievement of learning outcomes, but in its formative effect (Bustamante, 2019). At the beginning of this article, it was stated that learn-



ing is possible without a teacher and, in fact, without the intervention of another person (whether a parent, friend, etc.), since learning is, biologically speaking, the change an organism undergoes as a result of the information it receives from the environment. Thus, teaching does not facilitate learning but rather seeks to foster formation (socialization, enculturation, qualification, subjectivation, or individualization). Moreover, learning is, ultimately, the act of appropriating the object, making it one's own, whereas teaching invites one to study; i.e., to marvel at and contemplate the object, beyond the self-serving pragmatism of making it one's own (Larrosa, 2019).

When a teacher teaches, they challenge the student and make them uncomfortable. The teacher becomes an “other” who interrupts the student's sense of self, confronting them with a way of seeing that belongs to another generation (Biesta, 2016, 2022). Such an encounter is not always harmonious, nor does it take place with an open mind; on the contrary, it often occurs from a defensive stance that calls into question the recognition of the other (Cuesta, 2019). Put simply, when a student decides not to listen to their teacher, they are disregarding them (Honneth, 2011).

Therefore, teaching is not the same as facilitating learning, because it is someone else who comes to challenge me, showing me something I might not want to see. Above all, because the moment of teaching is something I, as a student, do not control: I do not control the content, the form, or the purpose. All of this runs counter to learning, which takes place under my control; hence, any slogan claiming learning is easy is well-suited to educational marketing—which repeats messages such as: “Learn however you want, wherever you want, and whatever you want”—but does not correspond to reality. Learning, unlike teaching, is not necessarily formative, because human formation involves exposing oneself to contingency—to the determinants that existed before I did—in short: to the inherent discomfort of education.

Now, it is worth noting that, while in teaching it is expected that the student will learn (the math teacher expects their student to learn the subject), good teaching is not a matter of cause and effect. In fact, good teaching does not always result in learning something, because sometimes what it does is break down the naturalized, shift entrenched frameworks, generate a desire to know, or provoke more doubts than certainties. Thus, judging teaching by learning outcomes obscures the complexity of the process and, on the contrary, may overlook important formative elements. Furthermore, the outcomes of teaching are often implicit and only become apparent in hindsight—such as when, years later, we realize the

role a teacher played in our education, even though, in the heat of the moment, we misjudged them or labeled them as boring (Jackson, 1999).

Given the above, we must distance ourselves from another common misconception: that “teaching should be fun.” It would be wonderful to achieve a teaching practice that is enjoyable—one that does not bore students but keeps them engaged. However, this is a goal that is not always easy to achieve; it can overwhelm teachers as they strive to meet it and, above all, it fails to acknowledge the complexity of the educational process.

The purpose of teaching is to shape, not to entertain. As already mentioned, education is not always pleasant—so much so that the individual may resist being educated. This is why a child might respond sarcastically to a rule set by their parents, or a parishioner might pull out their cell phone and ignore the priest’s homily. Thus, the educational task is to shape, but that does not make it an appealing activity. In fact, the experience can be quite unpleasant: it involves moving from biological impulses—focused on instinctive pleasures—to the constraints of culture, which hinder the free expression of instinct. Education involving setting limits on the individual runs counter to fun.

Moreover, fun provides immediate gratification, whereas studying—which is the essence of education—involves delayed, long-term gratification. Claiming that all classes and subjects are fun is all well and good for selling a service and meeting customer demand, but it is a false advertising promise. Teaching, more than fun, demands attention, that is: curiosity, dedication, and effort, which bring joy, but only on the condition of foregoing immediate gratification (Bustamante, 2013).

For this reason, we must also be wary of the assertion that “teaching involves motivating the student,” since it places the burden on what the teacher does (generally through fun or, at the very least, by avoiding boredom) rather than on the student’s own will. Viewed this way, motivation would be an attitude sparked by the teacher, but one that can be just as fickle and fleeting, since its energy depends on something extrinsic to the student. Whether or not the teacher does this does not guarantee the student’s motivation forever (for example, motivational activities can become boring due to repetition).

On the contrary, deciding to pay attention is an act of the student’s will, which can be a decision independent of what the teacher does or does not do. While attention is directed toward the teacher, what is at stake is the subject. In other words, at its core, rather than paying attention to the teacher, the student is focused on the subject. That is why there are students who, despite their teacher’s uninspired teaching methods, re-



main engaged with the subject or content being taught—in other words, they behave as students.

So motivation is very helpful for studying, as it can serve as a catalyst for attention, but it cannot become the goal of teaching, since the student is ultimately the protagonist of their own education, and their freedom lies in the volitional act of paying attention or not—regardless of however entertaining the strategy employed by the teacher may be. Thus, it is possible to teach without motivating, as the student may find the motivation on their own—whether by engaging with the subject or through a willingness to listen to their teacher—and thereby feel the need for knowledge (Gutiérrez Pozo, 2023).

However, whether or not the student is willing to pay attention does not mean we should fall into the trap of believing that “good teaching means giving the student complete freedom,” since teaching inherently involves guiding the student’s focus in some way. It is assumed that teaching aims to subject the student to a framework that determines them, since it conditions them: for example, when a teacher teaches a child to read and write, the child is subjected to the grammar of the language.

At first glance, such conditioning seems to imply a denial of freedom, but in essence it is quite the opposite, since, by being subjected to teaching, the student has the opportunity to decide to be—i.e., to become a subject. Without this frame of reference that defines them, the decision to be—and thus to become a subject—would not be possible (Cepeda Sánchez, 2022).

Thus, education does not set people free by leaving them to their own devices, but by inviting them to be, by showing them the limits that condition them. On the contrary, leaving them free as a precondition would be to subject them to their instincts, which tend to enslave human beings to their self-referentiality (Fryd, 2018). Leaving students to their own devices—which implies not teaching—means failing to take responsibility for newcomers, something that Arendt (1996) had already identified as a crisis in education. Teaching requires guiding—even restraining—toward a regime of enunciation so that, within an educational aporia, that regime ultimately liberates the individual.

Biases Centered on Education

To begin with, it should be noted that, in addition to teaching, there are various educational practices—i.e., actions that seek to shape new members of society. To name a few, one could list exhortation, punishment, ex-



ample, imitation, and coercion (rather than simply eliminating bullying, we must ask why human societies resort to this practice to subjectivize and shape individuals).

Thus, when we speak of education, we are not necessarily speaking of teaching, even though the terms seem synonymous due to the naturalization of the discourse. In any case, statements about education are also shaped by biases, such as the one asserting that “education should not be traditional”—i.e., that education must be updated.

In a society subject to the discourse of innovation and change, it is obvious that education is expected to constantly update itself. This is because it is conceived as a process of construction rather than transmission. This conception justifies the shift away from focusing on the teacher’s voice toward student activity, as students demand the practical utility of knowledge and insist that their feelings and emotions be prioritized, along with their engagement through the most advanced technology.

However, classifying education as traditional, modern, alternative, or innovative follows an empty framework that remains at the level of superficial comparison and fails to delve into the constitutive elements of the act of educating. Education is the transmission of tradition and, as argued in this work, culture is not biologically inherited but is imprinted on the individual through systematic social action. If culture is, above all, tradition, then to educate is to pass on that tradition to others.

Using the adjective “traditional” to disparage education not only prevents an understanding of what happens during the educational process but also distorts the very act of educating. In a simplistic way, the adjective “traditional” is associated with student passivity, while “innovative” education is linked to constant student activity. Hence, the call is no longer for a teacher, but for a facilitator, a companion, or an assistant, as well as for active students who carry out projects, workshops, games, and so forth. The consequence is that, in their eagerness to avoid the traditional, teachers stop teaching and instead focus on managing activities (Enkvist, 2009)—even though physical or manual activity does not necessarily imply intellectual engagement, whereas a lecture can spark curiosity and a desire to learn.

Traditional education has been questioned because it is associated not only with useless content but also with rote memorization. Regarding the former, it has already been noted that knowledge is not limited to working life and that, when we study something, we do so out of a desire to learn (Larrosa, 2019). Whether knowledge is assessed through rote memorization, however, does not depend on whether it takes place



in a traditional school, but rather on the very nature of the subject being studied. Assessment, rather than being a matter of methods or forms, is a practice grounded in epistemology: what can we say about the subject of study, and how can we know that we know something about it? Thus, assessment is not traditional simply because it requires rote knowledge; rather, it is based on the constitutive elements of the subject. If knowledge requires memory—such as driving a car in a city—then memory is assessed; but if knowledge requires a different process, then it is assessed according to that specific process.

Since it is believed that traditional education must be overcome, the following bias fuels this alienation, asserting that “education must rely on the latest technologies” (Prensky, 2001). While technology is seen as desirable and necessary, its use does not always lead to the achievement of educational goals; in fact, it can be an obstacle to attaining them. Rather than simply incorporating technology just because it is available, the first step is to reflect on its uses, implications, effectiveness, and relevance, and only then to use it if necessary. Currently, however, when a company releases an educational app, schools and their teachers are required to use it, without considering whether it is truly relevant.

The fact is, we tend to forget that schools have historically been places where technologies are developed—not merely applied, as is the case today. Teachers have created techniques and tools tailored to their specific purposes without needing to be constrained by patents. Educational technology is not merely a tool or device, but rather a whole series of practices that have made the act of educating possible (Simons and Masschelein, 2014).

It is often claimed that technology helps capture students’ attention and keep them engaged; however, its mere use tends to produce the opposite effect (Jiménez, 2023), causing students to withdraw into themselves—into what they like and what gratifies them—and refuse to engage with others or the world. Therefore, it is not a matter of using technology just for its own sake, but rather within the framework of an educational purpose that makes it relevant to the process.

That said, a very common bias in textbooks, educational policy documents, and, above all, in research papers is the notion that “the student is the center of education.” Like the biases mentioned earlier, this one also masquerades as self-evident. No one can deny the importance of the student, since all actions are always directed toward them. Furthermore, since the late nineteenth century—and in an effort to move beyond traditional education—the student has been regarded as the center of the



educational process, and movements such as constructivism and active pedagogy have cemented the normalization of this line of thinking. However, neither the teacher nor the student is the center of the act of educating, for both are accountable to their object of study—or to the world (Larrosa, 2019; Simons and Masschelein, 2014). The teacher seeks to have the student engage with the object of study, and the student also studies to engage with that object. Education allows children to realize that they are not the world, but rather that they are part of the world—indeed, that they owe their existence to it (Biesta, 2017 and 2022).

Thus, the student is not the center of education (Biesta, 2017 and 2022); rather, it is the object of study that enables the student to decide to become. We only come into being once we encounter that external reality that challenges us. This demonstrates that education is an effect and that the subject is called upon to make a decision, motivated by the knowledge presented by the teacher (Bustamante, 2019).

Another common and difficult-to-challenge bias insists that “education must be of high quality.” While it is impossible to desire an education lacking in quality, what exactly is meant by “quality”? In general, quality refers to a framework for measuring the outcomes of service processes and the production of goods (Calamet et al., 2022). In this context, standards allow for the comparison of processes and thus the determination of levels of success, efficiency, or effectiveness. Hence, quality is expressed through indicators.

But when we speak of the quality of education, we are not referring to excellence in production or service delivery, but rather to student development—which, by extension, turns students into individuals who can be classified and measured according to a standard. This would be acceptable if the human condition and ontology were measurable in all their forms and dimensions, but human development cannot always be assessed in terms of obvious and measurable aspects. Education is not viewed as a process leading to the dignification of the human being, but rather to the reification of quality.

Quality as defined by standards deliberately ignores the fact that one of the consequences of education is subjectivation or individualization—i.e., education seeks to homogenize, yet produces unique individuals (Biesta, 2017). Thus, although everyone receives the same class, the effects are unique (Charlot, 2008); for this reason, each person ends up becoming a subject: someone who is subject to a regime of common sense, even though their ontological realization is unique.



Standards normalize, whereas education produces differences; it is contingent (Biesta, 2017). One can follow the plan, but that does not guarantee the expected results. What is at stake is the encounter between human beings, and this is influenced by environmental, inter-subjective, and intra-subjective factors (Cuesta and Reyes, 2024). Quality control seeks to manage this complexity by using checklists, portfolios, tests, and all manner of evidence to ensure compliance with indicators. Meanwhile, this complexity gets lost in the bureaucratic tangle to which teachers, coordinators, and principals end up being subjected; their workload increases as they fill out forms (Graeber, 2018 and 2020) that require no pedagogical reflection whatsoever but do exhaust teachers (Cuesta, 2018).

The quality of education involves the instrumentalization and operationalization not only of technologies and knowledge but also of the individuals involved (let us not forget that teachers are a key factor in the quality of educational institutions). This gives rise to contradictions, such as demanding more creativity and innovation from teachers within the framework imposed by the standard. In other words, they are asked to produce a tamed form of creativity that, obviously, ceases to be creative (Niño and Gama, 2013).

Furthermore, since standards allow for the comparison of processes, education ends up becoming a competition for rankings, overlooking the fact that the pedagogical goal is the formation of the human person and not the establishment of prestige that can be capitalized upon. So, contrary to what is often repeated, it seems that the best approach is an education without quality—or at least one in which that concept is approached with a critical eye.

Another trend gaining momentum asserts that “education should prepare people to be happy.” This is, of course, clearly desirable—though not necessarily true. Indeed, there has recently been much talk of “positive education,” “education for happiness,” “education for self-actualization,” and so on. At their core, they all share something in common: a fusion of a certain type of psychology with education within the framework of a capitalism of emotions and immediate gratification.

Psychology can tell us a great deal about human behavior and, by extension, about education (it is no coincidence that fields such as psychoeducation and psychopedagogy exist). The danger arises when trivialized (neuroscience) or pseudoscientific (positive psychology, NLP, quantum psychology, coaching) trends in psychology attempt to impose themselves as the sole formula for the educational process, even serving to justify many of the biases analyzed.



Added to this phenomenon is another: the reduction of educational discourse to psychological terminology and methodology, also known as the “psychologization of education.” Psychology is descriptive and can explain how we learn, but that does not mean it should dictate the purposes of the act of educating (Prieto, 2018), as is currently the case. Curricular agendas tend to include psychological discourses with proposals for addressing topics such as emotional intelligence, feelings, talent, mental health, and their role in learning. However, while these reflections may be relevant to the self-awareness of students and teachers, they cannot determine what kind of person the school should shape (Prieto, 2018).

Educating for happiness sounds great, but within the framework of a simplified psychology and a psychologized education, happiness is also reduced to processes of self-esteem, emotional gratification, well-being, and self-actualization. These are very important issues, but they are not necessarily central to education. In fact, education is a process of socialization—i.e., a task of preparing oneself to live with others, which implies a certain transformation of the self. The discourse on individual well-being, for its part, justifies turning a blind eye to what one dislikes, even if this means severing emotional or empathetic bonds with others. The discourse of positive psychology and self-help celebrates the atomization of the individual, which runs counter to the purpose of education; for ultimately, to educate is to foster an ethical subjectivity—i.e., one capable of responding to the needs of others by stepping outside of one’s own self (Critchley, 2010).

In other words, happiness —as presented in certain trendy discourses— instrumentalizes others and may well dispense with them, which is the very opposite of education. Artificial intelligence and robots may well provide information, but they do not thereby educate, as they are programmed more to satisfy us than to challenge us (which is an essential part of education).

Furthermore, in contemporary capitalism, not all emotions are valid. There is a constant appeal to positive emotions, emphasizing the consumerist nature of the happy individual (Wilson, 2008). Happiness is reduced to the description of certain individual emotional states resulting from self-knowledge, mindfulness, and acceptance. Thus, if an individual fails or feels bad, it is not due to structural conditions at the social level—such as the injustice underpinning capital accumulation— but rather as a consequence of a lack of “willpower” or a failure to learn how to manage their emotions (Miño and Pozo, 2023). This conception of happiness, centered on the individual’s emotions, also obscures the fact that human



fulfillment is social and intrinsically linked to the fulfillment of others; on the contrary, it fosters a narcissism that prevents the recognition of the other (Solé and Moyano, 2017).

The pedagogical task is not to design a program teaching people to be happy, but rather to ask what the purpose of education is and what kind of happiness we are talking about, since the happiness prevalent in contemporary discourse can very well be achieved without education, given that it focuses on self-actualization and positive emotions. As we have seen, education involves a certain violation of one's sense of self (sacrificing my gratification to open myself up to the world), which may initially evoke unpleasant feelings, even though its goal is to produce a new framework of satisfaction—one that is less immediate and more connected to others.

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Perspectives Centered on Pedagogy

To begin with, it is important to note that education is not the same as pedagogy; they are not synonyms. In fact, one can educate without pedagogy (Lucio, 1989). Pedagogy arises when education is interrupted and reflection begins (Runge and Muñoz, 2012). In short, one can educate through unreflective and automated actions, but engaging in pedagogy involves questioning those actions. However, we are witnessing a time marked by a wide array of prescriptions regarding education with very little reflection on the matter, which allows for the unquestioning acceptance of educational policies imposed by the market and the hegemony of economic institutions.

It is taken for granted that “pedagogy must be measured by learning outcomes.” On the surface, it seems obvious that the purpose of education is to acquire learning, but as we have already stated, education is not necessary to achieve learning. The environment is responsible for triggering changes whose scope depends on the individual's ontogenetic development and congruence with the environment (Maturana and Varela, 2003). To learn, it is enough to be alive and in contact with the environment. Education, therefore, is not learning for learning's sake, as implied in contemporary educational discourse.

Learning outcomes, in line with the logic of indicators and standards, do not specify the what, the why, the how, or the purpose of the act of educating; they are concerned only with achieving the result without considering the intersubjectivity of the process. This is why there is talk of

autonomous and independent learning, which amounts to a renunciation of education. In plain terms, the discourse on learning renders the teacher dispensable, undermining their expertise and minimizing their practice. In education, forms do matter (Biesta, 2021), for a facilitator who fulfills a merely instrumental role does not have the same capacity to create the conditions for learning as a wise teacher would (Bustamante, 2013).

These aspects mean that the term “learning” is not the most appropriate one for analyzing education and teaching. It fails to capture the complexity of the act; rather, it abruptly reduces it, making it accessible to common sense. We are witnessing a process of “learningification” (Biesta, 2016) in which education is reduced to learning, thereby diluting the roles of the teacher and the school, and producing an educational policy that is subservient to individualization and training, to the detriment of the formation of the individual and their capacity for resistance. Pedagogy is formation through culture—i.e., a distancing from the biological—but how is it possible to measure culture and formation? We can say that pedagogical practice unravels biographical threads, but how can we measure a biography?

In line with this focus on measurement, it is asserted that “pedagogy must be evidence-based.” This would be the result of experimentation and measurement, which is perfectly fine in the sciences that allow for such operations. However, education is contingent, and pedagogy is about the here and now. Furthermore, the educator assumes the risk of failing to achieve their goal, since—among so many factors at play—the learner may, in principle, not want to be educated.

Evidence-based education operates according to the logic of cause and effect. It therefore starts from a conclusion rather than from uncertainty, which runs counter to the nature of the educational act, which by definition is risky (Biesta, 2017). Evidence serves a totalitarian ideal: the production of docile and homogeneous subjects. But what, after all, is evident in education? To whom is it evident? These questions demand an epistemological argument, since what is evident is the data that emerges from a model of conceptualization and measurement. Yet when people call for evidence-based education, they are not speaking from an epistemological framework but rather from common sense.

Evidence, as data from experimentation, involves the management of variables. In education, however, it involves grappling with the complexity of a multicausal and multivariate phenomenon. Furthermore, controlling variables implies viewing the teacher as a mere reproducer of the same methods and discourses, just as controlling the variable de-



mands. Yet much of what outstanding teachers do lies in their ability to improvise, and this requires attentiveness and the capacity to rise to the occasion in whatever situations arise in the classroom (Säfström and Rytzler, 2023). Pedagogy allows for resistance—which, by definition, is uncontrollable. For this reason, the other can say no, can say something else, or can ask questions. Evidence imposes homogeneity on the practice, counteracting its political potential.

Likewise, it is difficult to accept the bias asserting that “pedagogy establishes techniques for classroom development,” since thinking of pedagogy in this way reduces it to a field of application that undermines its epistemological and reflective aspirations. Indeed, pedagogy can establish techniques for educating, particularly through didactics (Runge Peña, 2013), but this is not its purpose. In fact, didactics is a secondary outcome. Pedagogy reflects on and investigates education to produce concepts, theories, and methodologies regarding this object of study. The formulation of techniques would be a result subsequent to that produced regarding its object.

Reducing pedagogy to the formulation of techniques not only limits its scope but outright eliminates the possibility of thinking about education from within a robust tradition. Furthermore, it undermines the possibility for teachers to reflect on their own practice and generate knowledge from it, leaving them reduced to mere implementers of the curriculum and subject to the shifting discourses produced by those who do research on education (Cuesta and Reyes, 2024).

Associated with this reduction of pedagogy to mere techniques is the bias that “pedagogy is an educational model.” Indeed, when one opens any book on pedagogy, it is common to find an approach organized by models: traditional, constructivist, behaviorist, critical, active, etc., although they are sometimes given other names (such as heterostructuring or self-structuring). Each approach is framed according to the functions correlatively attributed to students and teachers.

A model is a practical, theoretical framework that serves as a reference—in this case, for curriculum design and classroom practice—and in that order, pedagogy may propose models as a consequence of its epistemological aim, but not as a teleological principle. However, in the literature, pedagogy is frequently reduced to a list of models.

Pedagogy, within the German tradition, has a scientific aspiration that seeks to produce concepts, theories, and methodologies regarding its object of study: education. Nevertheless, when guiding practice, it can reduce its aspiration to a dangerous pragmatism that diminishes reflection.



Pedagogy emerges when educational practice is interrupted (Lucio, 1989; Runge and Muñoz, 2012). In other words, one can educate without pedagogy —without reflection on practice— by simply doing what others do, operating more out of habit than out of rigorous reflection. When one begins to question practice —what to teach, why, how to teach, when, where, and whom to teach, how others teach, and how to monitor educational outcomes, among other questions— the discursive possibility of pedagogy takes shape.

However, pedagogy challenges itself to establish its own ontological framework (what education is and on what concepts this object of study is built), as well as its epistemology (how a conscious relationship with this object of study is established and what can be said about it) and its methodology (how education can be investigated as an object of study). Viewed this way, pedagogy is not reduced to techniques or models; rather, these are a secondary result of the conceptual, theoretical, and experimental construction it proposes. In fact, the construction of pedagogical models that inform pedagogical literature is not necessarily the result of epistemological effort, since the theory underpinning them may stem from dogmas or ideological stances. Moreover, if the human condition has been transcended—as some discourses, such as posthumanism, maintain—then education is no longer necessary (Charlot, 2024a). Cyborgs are not educated; they are programmed or have software installed.

Revitalizing pedagogy does not involve creating evidence-based models or techniques that guarantee the effectiveness of processes; rather, it is a debate about what it means to be human and about the future of humanity (Charlot, 2024b). What kind of society do we want? What kind of human beings should we shape? These are questions that the aforementioned models claim to have resolved; however, the magnitude of the debate demands a shift from the tacit to the explicit, positioning itself within a disciplinary field of enunciation. Pedagogy with scientific pretensions cannot be a matter of models, for the sciences are not fixed structures but rather change according to their own regimes of enunciation (Bustamante et al., 2017). Models schematize and do not foster scientific revolution.

Finally, there is the bias positing that “good pedagogy begins with recognizing students’ interests.” Questions about the child and the student are very important, but that does not imply—as we have already stated—that the goal is to place the child at the center. As mentioned earlier, the objective is to instill in the child the interests of humanity. Starting from the child’s interests can lead to an idealization of the child. Thus, while it is appropriate to acknowledge students’ emotions and interests, this should



not be done to create a pedagogical practice that merely processes or satisfies them. Attention must be paid to the world despite the emotion.

Moreover, education is not about letting the child acquire knowledge or develop talents according to their own preferences or interests; on the contrary, education often involves interrupting certain forms of learning or talents. If a child wants to learn to steal or has a talent for swindling, they are not allowed to proceed until they become a master thief or artist. The goal is to intervene so that they adopt a desired ethical path under the guidance of certain socially desirable axiological principles—above all, the principle that my satisfaction cannot take precedence over that of others, and indeed that we are educated to care for one another (Rincón Gallardo, 2024).

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Distortion and Dispersion in the Discourse on Education and Pedagogy

The aforementioned biases have gained significant traction, among other reasons, due to the dilution that pedagogy has undergone following its displacement as a field of knowledge. Hence, it is pertinent to highlight some ideas in this regard.

Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the debate on education in France pitted various thinkers against one another, whose viewpoints were often incomplete and contained various theoretical gaps. However, in the face of the rise of the positive sciences, it became necessary to achieve conceptual precision. Amid the many contributions, there was one that set the terminological standards for educational discourse, endowing it with structure, purposes, and content: Émile Durkheim's work *Education and Sociology* (2003).

For Durkheim, education “is the action exerted by adult generations upon those who are not yet mature for social life” (p. 49), and its purpose is to awaken and develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual, and moral states required by society in its political sense and, in general, by the environment to which the child is destined. For its part, pedagogy was regarded as a practical theory or an applied theory, consisting of systematic reflection on the methods, techniques, and aims of education.

Durkheim would be followed by educators such as Gaston Mialaret (1977 and 1984) and Maurice Debesse, who would become pillars of the French tradition in education. Mialaret would argue that education

is too complex to be approached from a single discipline, and in 1964 he proposed an integrative, multidisciplinary approach: the field of educational sciences. Thus:

- **Education** will be understood not only as a phenomenon (the social reality of socialization) but also as a subject of multidisciplinary scientific study (Mialaret, 1977).
- Pedagogy will be not only an idea (the theoretical reflection on that fact) but also a synthesizing discipline that organizes and utilizes the knowledge produced by the educational sciences to develop methods, techniques, and strategies for classroom action (Mialaret, 1977).
- The educational sciences (psychology, sociology, history, philosophy, economics, biology, and medicine) will emerge as an autonomous field of study, focused on analyzing educational situations based on the findings of these sciences (Mialaret, 1977).

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However, in countries such as Colombia, colleges of education did not emerge in an environment similar to the one described; on the contrary, they were the product of ideological debates aimed at controlling the country. Regarding the educational system, these debates focused more on pitting tradition against the nation's modernization project, secularization against religious affiliation, and the choice between humanistic and technical approaches. Added to this was the drive to modernize education, which led to the implementation of curriculum designs with an industrial and managerial focus, obsessed with quality metrics (Ríos, 2006). Thus, faculties of education —overwhelmed by instructional design and behavioral psychology— ended up diluting teacher training, the social role of the school, and, in particular, the disciplinary status of pedagogy.

This is why authors such as Díaz (1993) argued that pedagogy had become a fragmented body of knowledge or an amorphous field lacking accumulated knowledge. Mockus (1995) noted that universities made only an instrumental use of contemporary pedagogy. For Zuluaga (1999), teacher education was characterized by “dispersion” and “dilution.”

These phenomena of dispersion and dilution in pedagogy have prevented a sufficient connection between the knowledge constructed by the educational sciences and pedagogy itself, leading to a disjointed conceptualization, the fragmentation of concepts, and the subordination and instrumentalization of pedagogy. This, in turn, has affected teacher education, as there is a recurring absence of a common purpose, a reliance on purely

procedural pedagogical practices, an inability for teachers to reflect on their own practice, and a tendency toward professionalization in teacher education without a historical understanding of the teaching profession.

This fragmentation has allowed discussions about education to be laden with what this article refers to as pedagogical biases: a set of seemingly reasonable statements that teachers often resort to in their discourse and practices, which—despite their good intentions—are likely to produce unintended consequences.

Conclusions

Although there is talk of evidence-based pedagogy, educational practice is carried out based on beliefs that are taken for granted. These beliefs, due to the way they are operationalized, can be termed pedagogical biases. Pedagogical biases are readily accepted because they align with the expectations that a commercialized society has of education; they are presented as self-evident and easily understandable, and they are framed as aimed at improving education—which makes them politically correct (Pozo, 2003)—but they can serve as conceptual frameworks that hinder our thinking (Shapiro Donato, 2022).

Nevertheless, the task of pedagogy is to question these slogans that tend to become established as proven truths. Teacher Olga Lucía Zuluaga reminds us that pedagogical knowledge tends to solidify into frameworks that subsequently determine practice. It is therefore not enough simply to possess this knowledge; the task is to constantly question it to prevent it from becoming stagnant.

Defending pedagogy involves challenging these biases, which, ultimately, are a misinterpretation of educational reality that distorts it, turning supposedly appropriate practices into necessary ones. Today, more than ever, there is a risk of burying pedagogy, as reflective capacity is minimized in the name of efficiency, and good intentions are prioritized over an understanding of phenomena. Reflecting on these biases implies recognizing pedagogy as a legitimate field of knowledge. As the manifesto in support of educators states: “Pedagogy is key to a specific approach to humanity and its journey through existence” (Houssaye et al., 2004).

It is acknowledged that these pedagogical biases stem from good intentions; however, they generate unintended consequences in the field of education, altering school conditions and distorting teaching by pri-



oritizing learning for its own sake and elevating the student as a subject to be satisfied.

How can we overcome these biases in pedagogy? How can we address this conceptual fragmentation? Can we counteract and halt the erosion of pedagogy? This requires a careful study of the history of our discipline. Just as doctors take their oaths in memory of Hippocrates, we teachers commit ourselves to tradition and bring the past into the present; we build new technologies using old techniques, address contemporary questions through classical themes, reinvent questions, and reconstruct problems.

Thus, overcoming these biases requires constant reflection on the ideas and discourses circulating in education—on how they become naturalized or reified into certain beliefs, and how the results of certain research studies are misinterpreted (Ruiz, 2023). In short, the best way to overcome pedagogical biases is through epistemic thinking, which does not begin by hastily making predicative statements about educational reality, but rather by prioritizing questions and doubt over certainty (Zemelman, 2005).

Finally, in the face of the confusion of discourses that have condemned education faculties to a “hundred years of solitude,” we must revisit old themes as if for the first time. We must invoke the oracle: call upon Comenius, Pestalozzi, Rousseau, Herbart, Simón Rodríguez, Freire, and others to address new disputes by standing on their shoulders. As Meirieu and Develay (2003) would say: “Emilio, come back they’ve gone mad.”



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Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

The authors Óscar Julián Cuesta Moreno and Rafael Reyes Galindo of the article titled “Pedagogical Bias and the Relevance of Pedagogy” declare that the preparation of this document did not involve the use of artificial intelligence (AI).

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