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Ethnoculture: Educational, Pedagogical, Ethnological and Intercultural Research Perspective

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Abstract

This article explores ethnoculture as a fundamental axis in educational, pedagogical, ethnological and intercultural research perspectives, highlighting its impact on the understanding and transformation of social and educational contexts. The relevance of integrating ethnoculture into teaching and learning processes, as well as into social and cultural research, is analyzed, promoting transdisciplinary approaches that address cultural diversity from an integrative and critical perspective. Among the main findings, emerging categories are identified that offer new ways of interpreting and addressing cultural and social interaction, highlighting its importance in shaping educational policies, identities and practices. These findings highlight the need to develop research that connects theory and practice, and that promotes a deep understanding of intercultural dynamics in an increasingly globalized world.

Keywords: Ethnoculture, Educational, Ethnological, Pedagogical, Intercultural

1. Introduction

Ethnoculture is defined as the set of values, traditions, practices, beliefs and ways of life that characterize a specific community, integrating cultural and ethnic aspects in a dynamic and relational framework. Its relevance in education, pedagogy and social research lies in its ability to enrich the understanding of cultural diversity, promoting more inclusive and intercultural teaching and learning processes. In a globalized context marked by cultural tensions, addressing ethnoculture from an educational perspective is essential to promote a more equitable, reflective and rooted society.

This article is justified by the need to analyze how ethnoculture can transform pedagogical practices and research processes, generating a positive impact on the construction of cultural and educational policies that respect diversity. In this sense, the objectives of the article are: to explore the relationship between ethnoculture and educational approaches, to analyze previous ethnological and intercultural research from a hermeneutic perspective, and to propose emerging categories that serve as transdisciplinary tools for educational practice and social research.

The methodological approach is based on hermeneutics applied to the analysis of previous ethnological studies, which allows for the interpretation and reinterpretation of cultural data and concepts from a critical and contextualized perspective. This approach facilitates the identification of emerging patterns and categories that connect ethnoculture with pedagogical practices and intercultural dynamics.

The results of the analysis are expected to highlight the importance of integrating ethnoculture into educational and research frameworks as a tool to strengthen cultural identities and improve understanding of social dynamics. In conclusion, it is hoped to propose a transdisciplinary and intercultural model that articulates theory and practice, contributing to the construction of a more inclusive education that is connected to the cultural realities of communities.

The research background of this work is based on previous studies that address ethnoculture from various disciplinary perspectives, with a particular focus on its application in education, pedagogy, ethnological and intercultural research. Three main lines of research are highlighted that have influenced the development of this work:

Research by Shirley Brice Heath (1983) and Brian Street (1993) has examined how cultural contexts influence teaching and learning processes, highlighting the importance of understanding local cultural practices in order to design effective pedagogical strategies. These studies have laid the groundwork for incorporating ethnographic approaches into education, linking students' cultural identities with their educational experiences.

Ethnology has provided a deep understanding of cultural traditions and practices at the community level. Researchers such as Clifford Geertz (1973) have emphasized cultural interpretation as a key to understanding social organization and shared meanings in diverse communities. In addition, cross-cultural research has highlighted how interactions between cultures generate dynamics of adaptation, resistance, and transformation, as Lee (1988) rightly points out.

Authors such as Pierre Bourdieu (2007; 2014) and his theory of cultural capital and ideology have explored how social and cultural structures affect access to and participation in education. Similarly, Paulo Freire (1970) has emphasized the pedagogy of the oppressed, a critical approach that connects educational practices with struggles for social justice and cultural recognition.

Locally, we find the antecedent of Trillos-Pacheco (2021) who examines the contribution of researcher Jairo Soto Molina in the field of ethnoculture. Soto Molina is interested in cultural theory to the extent that it allows us to explain the way of being, living and feeling the traditions and customs of the Latin American being. His approach highlights the importance of understanding the cultural particularities of Latin America in order to develop research that authentically reflects the identity and diversity of the region.

This background demonstrates the richness and diversity of approaches to ethnoculture and its relationship to education and research. This work is positioned within this academic tradition, using a hermeneutic approach to reinterpret previous findings and provide new categories that strengthen the integration of ethnoculture into educational and research frameworks.

2. Educational and pedagogical perspective of ethnography

Ethnography, as a qualitative research methodology, plays a central role in the study of educational contexts by offering tools to explore and understand the cultural, social and pedagogical dynamics that develop in school environments. This approach allows us to analyze how the cultural practices of students, teachers and communities influence teaching and learning processes, helping to build pedagogical strategies that are culturally relevant and effective. According to Geertz (1973), ethnography is based on "describing the cultural meanings deeply inscribed in human behaviors and practices" (p. 387), a premise that is key to addressing diversity in educational contexts. Ethnography in education allows for the observation and documentation of classroom interactions, the dynamics between teachers and students, and the cultural practices that underlie these processes. Heath (1983) showed in his seminal study of African-American and white communities in South Carolina how students' linguistic and cultural practices affected their classroom performance, concluding that cultural differences were a significant factor in academic success. This approach helps to avoid generalizations and stereotypes by offering a deep understanding of cultural and contextual particularities.

Ethnographic methods such as participant observation, open-ended interviews, and narrative analysis are essential tools for investigating how local cultures influence educational environments. Participant observation allows researchers to engage directly in the school context, documenting cultural interactions and practices in their natural setting (Spradley, 1980). Likewise, open-ended interviews allow for exploring students' and teachers' perspectives and experiences around cultural diversity in the classroom.

In intercultural pedagogy, these methods help to identify cultural and linguistic barriers that may limit student participation. For example, Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, N.'s (2006) studies on "funds of knowledge" demonstrated that integrating families' cultural experiences and knowledge into the school curriculum could significantly improve the participation and achievement of students from culturally diverse communities.

Ethnography has demonstrated its ability to transform educational practices by generating a deeper understanding of students and their cultural contexts. For example, Dyson's (1997) study explored how African American children used oral storytelling and rap in their everyday interactions, leading to the design of pedagogical activities that leveraged these cultural practices to improve reading and writing skills.

Another example is the work of Paris (2012), who introduced the concept of pedagogies of cultural sustainability, emphasizing the importance of maintaining and valorizing students' cultural practices rather than assimilating them to a homogeneous standard. This perspective, based on ethnographic methods, has been particularly influential in educational settings with high cultural diversity.

Following the approach recently proposed in the article "Building a bilingual intercultural citizenship in a decolonial key" by Soto-Molina, Jairo E. (2023), the ethnographic perspective allows for the design of more inclusive and effective pedagogical strategies that transcend traditional models and promote teaching and learning that value and respect the multiple identities and knowledge present in educational communities. This approach, in line with a decolonial vision, is oriented towards the construction of a bilingual intercultural citizenship that not only recognizes linguistic and cultural diversity, but also encourages critical dialogue between cultures, fostering educational spaces that question hegemonic structures and contribute to the empowerment of communities in their own contexts.

Ethnography offers a powerful educational and pedagogical perspective to address the complexities of cultural diversity in school environments. By focusing on cultural practices and meanings, it allows for the design of more inclusive and effective pedagogical strategies, promoting teaching and learning that value and respect the multiple identities and knowledge present in educational communities.

2.1. Ethnological and intercultural research

Ethnological and intercultural research have established themselves as fundamental tools for the study of cultural and social dynamics in educational and community contexts. While ethnology focuses on the comparative analysis of cultures, identifying patterns, similarities and differences between them (Tylor, 1871), intercultural research prioritizes the study of interactions between cultures, exploring how they influence each other and generate new dynamics in contexts of cultural contact (Holliday, Hyde & Kullman, 2004). This distinction allows complex problems to be addressed from different perspectives, enriching the analysis of social and educational phenomena.

2.2. Definition and differences between ethnology and intercultural research

Ethnology, as a branch of anthropology, analyzes cultures in their entirety, seeking to understand social structures, belief systems, and cultural practices in a comparative way. Its focus is oriented towards the description of universal patterns or significant divergences between cultural groups, based on qualitative methodologies such as documentary analysis, participant observation, and in-depth interviews (Geertz, 1973). On the other hand, intercultural research focuses on the relationships and processes that arise when different cultures interact. This line of research examines issues such as culture shock, adaptation, intercultural learning, and the formation of hybrid identities (Byram, & Golubeva, 2020).

A key difference is that ethnology focuses on the retrospective analysis of cultures in their own contextual framework, while intercultural research addresses contemporary dynamics and projects scenarios for coexistence and mutual understanding between cultures.

A prominent example in the educational field is the work of Gonzalez and Moll (2002) on "funds of knowledge." This cross-cultural study examined how the cultural experiences and family practices of students from Latino communities in the United States could be integrated into the school curriculum, improving academic performance and promoting inclusion.

In the social field, research such as that of Hofstede (2011) has provided a theoretical framework for understanding cultural differences in work and education, defining dimensions such as power distance, individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance. These studies have had a significant impact on the management of multicultural policies and the design of intercultural educational programs.

Another relevant example is the work of Kymlicka (1995), who explored cultural rights in multicultural contexts, highlighting the need for public policies that protect the cultural identities of minority groups, while promoting intercultural dialogue.

Ethnological and intercultural research has transformed the way in which cultural identity is understood and its relationship to public and educational policies. In the educational field, they have highlighted the importance of designing curricula that integrate cultural diversity, promoting respect for local identities and knowledge. This aligns with the concept of cultural sustainability pedagogy proposed by Paris (2012), who advocates for pedagogical practices that not only respect but also strengthen students' cultures.

In terms of cultural policies, intercultural studies have influenced the implementation of strategies that seek to balance the preservation of traditional cultures with the demands for integration in globalized societies. For example, the recognition of the linguistic and cultural rights of indigenous peoples in countries such as Bolivia and Ecuador reflects how this research can be translated into legislative and social advances.

In short, ethnological and intercultural research offers essential perspectives for addressing the complexities of cultural diversity in educational and social contexts. By providing tools for analyzing and understanding cultural identities and interactions, these investigations promote a more inclusive and enriching dialogue between cultures, contributing to the design of more equitable and diversity-respecting policies and practices.

2.3. Social and cultural research

Social and cultural research is a multidimensional field that allows exploring the dynamics of societies from interrelated perspectives, with a special focus on ethnoculture as a central axis for understanding the interaction between identity, culture and society. This type of research employs diverse methods and approaches, adapted to the complexities of social and cultural phenomena, and highlights the importance of transdisciplinarity to generate a holistic understanding (Soto-Molina, 2023).

The methods used in social research related to ethnoculture combine qualitative and quantitative techniques that allow us to capture both the structures and the subjectivities of the phenomena studied. Among the most common approaches are:

Ethnography:
This method, derived from anthropology, focuses on participant observation and in-depth interviews to capture cultural practices, beliefs and meanings within a community. According to Geertz (1973), ethnography seeks to interpret cultures from the point of view of social actors, providing a "thick description" that reveals the systems of meanings that guide their behaviors.
Narrative analysis:

Personal stories and collective narratives are powerful tools for understanding how communities construct and express their cultural identity. Duque, R. Lyle (2009) underlines that Riessman (2008) considers that narratives not only reflect experiences, but also shape them, offering insights into how people and groups face social and cultural challenges.

Documentary analysis:
In social research, the analysis of historical, legal, and literary documents allows for contextualizing and comparing cultural manifestations over time. This approach is especially useful in ethnocultural studies that seek to understand changes and continuities in cultural traditions and practices.

Participatory methods:
In line with Freire's (1970) approach to participatory action research, these methods involve communities in the design, development and evaluation of the research, ensuring that the results are relevant and applicable to their reality. This approach is fundamental in ethnocultural studies, as it respects and values local knowledge as a legitimate source of knowledge.

2.4. Importance of transdisciplinarity in cultural analysis

Transdisciplinarity has become a necessity in cultural analysis due to the inherent complexity of social phenomena. According to Nicolescu (2002), this approach seeks to integrate knowledge from various disciplines, transcending their boundaries to address common problems from multiple perspectives. In research on ethnoculture, transdisciplinarity allows combining approaches from anthropology, sociology, history, linguistics, and education, among other fields.

For example, a transdisciplinary study on the preservation of indigenous languages can integrate linguistic methods to document languages, anthropological approaches to understand associated cultural practices, and educational perspectives to design teaching strategies that promote their sustainability. This integration not only enriches the understanding of the phenomenon, but also generates practical and inclusive solutions.

Transdisciplinarity also facilitates the analysis of global and local phenomena in their interrelation. García Canclini (2000) highlights that the processes of cultural globalization require transdisciplinary approaches to understand how local cultures interact and adapt to global dynamics, generating new forms of expression and cultural resistance.

Social and cultural research, with its emphasis on qualitative methods and transdisciplinarity, is presented as an indispensable tool for the study of ethnoculture. By integrating diverse disciplines and methodologies, it allows us to address the complexities of cultural and social dynamics from a broad and deep perspective, fostering respect for cultural diversity and promoting solutions that are culturally relevant and sustainable.

2.5. Relationship between the philosophy of science and ethnocultural studies

Philosophy of science and ethnocultural studies converge in their interest in analyzing and reflecting on the epistemological and methodological foundations that guide the production of knowledge. While philosophy of science examines the principles and paradigms that underpin scientific practices (Popper, 1959; Kuhn, 1962), ethnocultural studies focus on understanding cultural and social dynamics from critical and contextual perspectives. This interrelation is crucial to problematize how traditional scientific approaches have addressed (or marginalized) cultural identities and local practices.

Philosophy of science also invites us to reflect on the biases inherent in scientific approaches. Do Sousa Santos (2010), in his proposal for an "epistemology of the south," points out that traditional scientific knowledge has often delegitimized local and popular knowledge, classifying it as "non-scientific" or irrelevant. This critique highlights the need to reconfigure scientific paradigms to include perspectives that value the contributions of indigenous cultures, Afro-descendants, and other marginalized communities.

Furthermore, ethnocultural studies have questioned the universality of scientific knowledge by showing that many of the epistemological assumptions come from Eurocentric contexts. Dussel (1994) and Quijano (2000) have argued that modern science has been intrinsically linked to colonial processes that imposed a single vision of reality, marginalizing other forms of knowledge and cultural understanding.

In recent years, new paradigms have emerged that seek to overcome the limitations of traditional approaches. The transdisciplinarity paradigm (Nicolescu , 2002) advocates the integration of diverse disciplines and knowledge to address complex problems such as cultural phenomena. This approach allows combining scientific, humanistic and practical perspectives, promoting a dialogue between formal and informal knowledge.

On the other hand, the decolonial paradigm, promoted by authors such as Mignolo (2011) and Escobar (2017), poses a radical critique of Eurocentrism in the production of knowledge. This approach seeks to decenter hegemonic epistemologies and value local and community knowledge as legitimate sources of knowledge.

The relationship between the philosophy of science and ethnocultural studies is fundamental to rethinking how knowledge is produced and validated in diverse cultural contexts. Reflecting on scientific paradigms allows us to question the limitations of traditional approaches and open up space for more inclusive and critical methodologies. In this sense, ethnocultural studies, supported by alternative paradigms such as interpretivism, transdisciplinarity and decolonialism, contribute to a richer and more nuanced understanding of cultural and social dynamics in an increasingly globalized world.

2.6. Cultural and identity policies and their influence on research

Cultural and identity politics play a crucial role in guiding and impacting research related to ethnoculture, identity, and educational processes. These politics not only reflect the priorities of governments and institutions, but also directly influence how cultural identities are conceptualized and addressed in academic and educational settings. This analysis provides an understanding of how politics and identity dynamics interact with research and educational processes, shaping practices and outcomes in both fields.

Cultural policies establish the institutional and normative frameworks that regulate the production, preservation, and promotion of cultural expressions in a society. These policies affect the direction of research by prioritizing certain topics, communities, and approaches. For example, in Latin America, the cultural policies of progressive governments, such as in Bolivia and Ecuador, have promoted research on indigenous cultures and linguistic revitalization, as part of a broader effort to build plurinational states (Walsh, 2009).

However, these policies can also limit the diversity of approaches by favouring specific agendas. Do Sousa Santos (2010) criticises that many cultural policies, although well-intentioned, perpetuate power structures by relegating local knowledge to a secondary role compared to Western scientific knowledge. This imbalance can bias research and under-represent the experiences of certain cultural groups.

On the other hand, identity politics, which focuses on the affirmation and recognition of cultural, ethnic and gender identities, also shape research. These politics encourage the study of identity dynamics, from intersectionality proposed by Crenshaw (1989) to decolonial approaches that value the voices and perspectives of historically marginalized communities (Mignolo, 2011).

Cultural identity plays a fundamental role in educational processes, as it influences how students perceive and engage with their learning. Freire (1970) argued that education must recognize students' cultural and social realities to be truly transformative. This critical approach is reflected in the need to design curricula that integrate the cultural histories, practices, and values of communities.

A relevant example is the concept of "funds of knowledge" developed by González and Moll (2002), which highlights how students' cultural and family experiences can serve as valuable resources in the classroom. This

approach not only strengthens learning, but also contributes to the affirmation of cultural identities in educational contexts.

Furthermore, the relationship between cultural identity and education is bidirectional. While identity influences learning, educational processes also shape cultural identities by exposing students to new perspectives and validating or invalidating their cultural experiences. In this regard, Paris (2012) introduces the idea of cultural sustainability pedagogies, which seek to preserve and strengthen cultural identities rather than assimilating them into a homogeneous model.

Cultural and identity politics have a significant impact on the way research is conducted and how cultural identities are addressed in educational contexts. These policies can be powerful tools to promote inclusion and recognition of cultural diversity, but they must also be carefully managed to avoid reproducing unequal power dynamics. The relationship between cultural identity and education, meanwhile, highlights the importance of a pedagogical approach that values and respects students' identities, promoting an education that is not only inclusive but also transformative. Research in this field is essential to building more just and equitable societies, where cultural diversity is recognized as a strength and not a barrier.

Social and cultural theory has evolved significantly in its relationship with ethnocultural studies, broadening theoretical and methodological frameworks to analyse the dynamics of cultures in diverse social contexts. This development has been driven by interdisciplinary debates integrating sociology, anthropology, philosophy and cultural studies, generating new perspectives on how identities, cultural practices and social structures interact and are transformed.

From its beginnings, social theory has been interested in the relationships between individuals and social structures, but its focus on specific cultures and their internal dynamics was limited for much of the 19th century. Early approaches, such as those of Auguste Comte and Émile Durkheim, privileged the analysis of general social structures, relegating cultural aspects to a secondary level (Durkheim, 1912). However, with the advance of anthropology and ethnology, social theory began to integrate the cultural dimension into its analyses.

From the 20th century onwards, the focus on specific cultures gained prominence thanks to authors such as Clifford Geertz (1973), who proposed the idea of "thick description" to interpret cultural meanings in their specific contexts. This approach marked a shift towards understanding cultures as symbolic systems that mediate social interactions. In the following decades, social theory incorporated critical perspectives that questioned power structures and cultural homogenization. Decolonial studies, led by authors such as Aníbal Quijano (2000) and Walter Mignolo (2011), highlighted how Eurocentric narratives had shaped traditional social theories, ignoring or marginalizing the experiences and epistemologies of non-Western cultures. This approach fostered a broader dialogue on the intersections between culture, power, and identity.

One of the most influential contributions to the relationship between social theory and ethnocultural studies comes from Bourdieu (1986), who introduced the concept of cultural capital to analyze how cultural practices and values influence the reproduction of social inequalities. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital manifests itself in the form of knowledge, skills and dispositions that are linked to social position and often favor dominant groups. This theoretical framework has been fundamental in analyzing how local cultures interact with power structures and how social hierarchies are perpetuated in educational and cultural contexts.

Hall (1997), a key figure in cultural studies, explored how cultural identities are constructed and negotiated in contexts of social change and globalization. His work on representation and culture highlighted the importance of media in constructing identities and perpetuating cultural stereotypes. In addition, Hall introduced the notion of "identity as a process" rather than a fixed state, underlining its fluid and relational nature.

Giddens's (1984) structuration theory addressed the relationship between social structures and individual agency, proposing that cultural practices are not only conditioned by existing structures but also transform them. This

approach has been valuable for ethnocultural studies, as it allows for analysis of how local communities negotiate their identities and cultural practices within broader social contexts.

Butler (1990) introduced the idea that cultural and gender identities are not inherent, but rather constructed through performative practices. This concept has enriched ethnocultural studies by highlighting how cultural expressions are dynamic acts that challenge social norms and generate new possibilities for identification.

Social and cultural theory has evolved to integrate critical and contextual perspectives that enrich the analysis of ethnocultural studies. From Bourdieu's structural contributions to Butler's notions of performativity, these developments have broadened our understanding of how cultures operate in complex social contexts. In an increasingly globalized world, these theories offer essential tools for analyzing and valuing cultural diversity, questioning power dynamics and promoting greater social and cultural equity.

Social research finds in social theory a fundamental framework for understanding and analyzing cultural, social, and educational dynamics in diverse and intercultural contexts. The links between both disciplines allow not only the interpretation of complex phenomena, but also the proposal of more inclusive and critical research practices that respond to the realities of multicultural communities. This approach, when integrated with educational studies, offers theoretical and methodological tools to promote a more equitable, reflective, and transformative education. Social theory provides a conceptual framework that guides research in cross-cultural contexts by highlighting the interactions between social structures, cultural dynamics, and individual and collective identities. For example, Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) concept of the "social field" allows for analysis of how educational institutions, as part of a broader field, reproduce or transform social inequalities through the transmission of cultural capital. This approach is particularly valuable in research that addresses the experiences of cultural minority students in educational systems dominated by hegemonic values.

Similarly, Anthony Giddens' (1984) structuration theory provides a dynamic view that emphasizes the bidirectional relationship between social structures and individual agency. In intercultural contexts, this theoretical framework allows us to explore how local communities negotiate their identity and cultural practices in the face of global influences, and how these negotiations impact educational processes. For example, research on migration and cultural identity has used this approach to analyze how migrant students reconfigure their cultural identities within the classroom (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

In globalizing contexts, critical perspectives, such as those of Stuart Hall's (1997) cultural studies, enrich research practices by addressing how cultural discourses and representations shape intercultural interactions. These theories allow researchers to question dominant narratives that perpetuate inequalities and propose analytical frameworks that value cultural diversity as a resource rather than a challenge.

3. Methodological design of ethnocultural research

The methodological design of ethnocultural research involves the application of interdisciplinary approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative methods to explore cultural, social, and educational dynamics in diverse contexts. This type of research seeks to understand how cultural practices influence social structures and how these interact with educational, political, and community processes. The richness of ethnocultural research lies in its ability to capture the complexities of cultures through theoretical and methodological frameworks that prioritize the context, experiences, and voices of the communities studied (soto-Molina, 2023).

3.1. Approaches and paradigms in ethnocultural research

Methodological design in this field is often based on interpretive and critical paradigms that emphasize the importance of understanding cultures from their own frameworks of meaning. Clifford Geertz (1973), with his concept of "thick description," emphasized that cultural research must interpret the symbolic meanings that communities attribute to their practices and beliefs. This approach is complemented by critical paradigms, such as

that proposed by Paulo Freire (1970), which links research with social transformation, advocating a methodology that empowers communities and questions power structures.

In contemporary ethnocultural research, decolonial approaches (Mignolo, 2011) have also been integrated, challenging Eurocentric epistemologies by promoting methods that value the knowledge and practices of non-Western cultures. This paradigm advocates for an "epistemology of the South" (Santos, 2010) that prioritizes local and community narratives as legitimate sources of knowledge.

3.2. Research methods and techniques

The methods used in ethnocultural research are usually qualitative, as they allow for a deep exploration of cultural dynamics. The most common techniques include:

1. Participant observation:
   This technique, derived from anthropology, allows researchers to engage directly in the cultural context studied, documenting practices, interactions and meanings from an insider's perspective (Spradley, 1980). Participant observation is essential to capture the experiential dimension of cultures and build a contextualized understanding.
2. Open interviews and narratives
   Open interviews allow us to gather the perspectives and experiences of community members on their own terms. Riessman (2008) highlights the usefulness of narrative analysis in cultural research, as narratives offer insights into how people construct and transmit cultural meanings.
3. Documentary analysis:
   The study of historical documents, legal texts and other cultural records is a key tool for contextualizing ethnocultural research. This method allows us to analyze how cultural representations have evolved over time and how they relate to current dynamics.
4. Participatory methods:
   Inspired by Freire's participatory action research, these methods involve communities at all stages of the research process. This ensures that the findings are relevant and useful to the communities, and that the research contributes to their empowerment and development.
5. Digital visual and ethnographic methods:
   With the advancement of technologies, ethnocultural research has incorporated tools such as the analysis of images, videos and digital media to study cultural practices in physical and virtual spaces (Pink, 2013).

The methodological design of ethnocultural research should take into account ethical considerations that respect and protect the cultures and communities studied. Research ethics require researchers to obtain informed consent, avoid exploitation of communities, and ensure that results are accessible and beneficial to participants. Furthermore, ethnocultural research should be sensitive to power dynamics, ensuring that communities' voices are central and that researchers act as facilitators rather than imposing external interpretations.

The methodological design of ethnocultural research combines theoretical approaches and practical techniques that allow exploring the complexities of cultures in their specific contexts. By integrating interpretive, critical and decolonial paradigms, and by employing qualitative and participatory methods, these investigations promote a deep understanding of cultural and social dynamics, contributing to respect, inclusion and empowerment of communities. This approach not only enriches academic research, but also strengthens educational and political practices, fostering a more equitable and culturally aware society.

3.3. Findings of emerging categories in transdisciplinary and intercultural studies

Transdisciplinary and intercultural research has emerged as a crucial approach to addressing the complex challenges of the contemporary world, where cultural and social dynamics interact in a multidimensional way. This type of research allows for the integration of perspectives from diverse disciplines and cultural traditions, generating analytical categories that transcend conventional epistemological boundaries. Recent findings in this

field have identified key categories that not only enrich academic understanding, but also have significant implications in educational and social spheres.

1. Cultural hybridization:

    Cultural hybridization, as an analytical category, describes how cultures interact and transform each other in contexts of globalization and migration. García Canclini (2004) highlights that this process does not involve a simple mixture, but the creation of new cultural forms that combine local and global elements. Recent research has analyzed hybridization in educational contexts, such as the incorporation of traditional pedagogical practices into modernized curricula, generating approaches that respect local identities while responding to global demands.

2. Critical Interculturality:

    Critical interculturality goes beyond peaceful coexistence between cultures, focusing on the need to confront and transform power relations that perpetuate inequalities. Walsh (2009) points out that this category implies a dialogue that recognizes and values subaltern epistemologies, promoting a horizontal exchange of knowledge. This approach has been central to educational research that seeks to decolonize curricula, integrating indigenous and local knowledge into formal learning.

3. Epistemologies of the South:

    Santos (2010) introduces this category to challenge the Eurocentric narratives that dominate the production of knowledge, proposing an approach that prioritizes the knowledge and practices of the global south. In the educational field, the epistemologies of the south have inspired initiatives that rescue oral traditions, agroecological knowledge and spiritual practices as legitimate sources of learning.

4. Transnational identities:

    Transnational identities emerge as a result of cultural and social connections that transcend national borders. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) analyze how migrants and their descendants construct identities that combine elements of their cultures of origin and those of the receiving countries. This category has been used in studies on bilingual and multicultural education, highlighting the importance of validating the experiences and perspectives of migrant students in the classroom.

5. Cultural sustainability:

    Paris (2012) proposes this category to describe pedagogical approaches that not only respect local cultures, but also seek to preserve and revitalize them. In educational research, cultural sustainability has been used to design programs that integrate local languages and traditions, strengthening students' self-esteem and sense of belonging.

3.4. Educational and social implications of these categories

The findings related to these emerging categories have profound implications for educational practice and social policy-making:

1. In education:

    o   More inclusive curricula: The categories of cultural hybridity and critical interculturality encourage the creation of curricula that integrate local and global knowledge, promoting an education that respects and values cultural diversity. For example, programs in Bolivia and Ecuador have incorporated indigenous knowledge into science subjects, promoting intercultural dialogue in the classroom (Walsh, 2009).

    o   Teacher Education: Including Southern epistemologies and cultural sustainability in teacher education helps prepare teachers to work in multicultural environments, fostering pedagogies that strengthen students' cultural identities.

    o   Bilingual and multicultural education: Research on transnational identities has inspired the implementation of bilingual programs that validate students' native languages while developing competencies in global languages such as English (Portes & Rumbaut , 2001).

2. In the social sphere:

    o   Inclusive public policies: Emerging categories have been fundamental to the design of public policies that recognize and protect cultural identities, especially in contexts of migration and ethnic diversity. These policies range from the creation of spaces for intercultural dialogue to the implementation of strategies for linguistic revitalization.

- Community empowerment: Valuing southern epistemologies and cultural sustainability strengthens local communities, promoting their autonomy and ability to face global challenges. This is evident in community development projects that integrate traditional knowledge into environmental sustainability strategies.
- Reducing inequalities: By confronting power relations through critical interculturality, these categories contribute to reducing social and cultural inequalities, promoting a more equitable society.

Emerging categories in transdisciplinary and intercultural studies offer a rich analytical framework to address the complexities of cultural and social dynamics in the contemporary world. These categories not only enrich academic analysis, but also have significant practical implications in education and public policy. By integrating concepts such as critical interculturality, southern epistemologies, and cultural sustainability, research in this field contributes to building a more inclusive, equitable, and culturally diverse society. This approach highlights the importance of continuing to develop transdisciplinary research that connects theory and practice, promoting a genuine dialogue between cultures and knowledge.

3.5. Proposals for applying social theory to educational studies

Social theory not only offers tools for interpreting cultural and social phenomena, but also inspires practical proposals for transforming educational systems into more inclusive environments. Some key proposals include:

1. Designing inclusive curricula based on cultural capital:
   Following Bourdieu's (1986) concept, educational curricula can incorporate the "funds of knowledge" (González & Moll, 2002) of local communities, integrating cultural practices and community knowledge into teaching and learning activities. This not only fosters inclusion, but also strengthens students' self-esteem and sense of belonging.
2. Critical pedagogies and cultural sustainability:
   Paulo Freire (1970) and Paris (2012) have put forward pedagogical approaches that acknowledge the cultural and social realities of students, promoting education that is both critical and sustainable. Critical pedagogy invites students to reflect on the power structures that influence their lives and to act to transform them, while cultural sustainability ensures that educational practices not only respect but also preserve cultural identities.
3. Participatory action research:
   Inspired by Freire's theories, this methodology integrates social theory with educational practice by involving communities in the research process. This approach allows researchers and participants to work together to identify problems and develop solutions that are culturally relevant and sustainable.
4. Integrating decolonial theory into educational studies:
   Decolonial approaches by authors such as Walter Mignolo (2011) suggest rethinking hegemonic narratives in educational systems, incorporating knowledge and epistemologies from the global south. In practice, this involves designing educational programs that value indigenous and local knowledge as part of the formal curriculum.
5. Critical analysis of educational policies:
   Using frameworks such as Nancy Fraser's (2008) on social justice, researchers can analyze how educational policies impact intercultural communities, identifying areas of exclusion and proposing alternatives that promote equity and cultural recognition.

The integration of social theory into research and educational practices in intercultural contexts offers a rich approach to understanding and transforming cultural and social dynamics. By applying concepts such as cultural capital, structuration, and critical pedagogies, it is possible to design research and educational strategies that respond to the needs of diverse communities, promoting inclusion, respect, and cultural sustainability. In this sense, social theory not only provides analytical tools, but also drives transformative practices that contribute to a more just and equitable education.

3.6. Case studies

Case studies are a key methodology in qualitative research, allowing for in-depth and contextualized analysis of social, cultural and educational phenomena. In the field of education, ethnology and interculturality, case studies offer the opportunity to explore how theoretical concepts materialize in specific contexts, providing valuable insights into the cultural and social dynamics that influence educational processes.

3.6.1. Concrete examples of research that integrate education, ethnology and interculturality

1. Case 1: Integrating Wayuu Culture into Basic Education in La Guajira, Colombia
    Research by Ortiz and Guzmán (2018) explored how educational practices in Wayuu communities incorporated indigenous cultural elements to enhance student engagement. This study highlighted the importance of integrating the native language, Wayuunaiki , and oral traditions into the school curriculum. Results showed that these practices strengthened students' sense of cultural identity and improved their levels of academic engagement, demonstrating that intercultural education can be a powerful tool to combat educational lag in indigenous communities.
2. Case 2: Language revitalization projects in rural schools in Mexico
    In a study of Zapotec communities in Oaxaca, Pérez (2019) documented the impact of an educational program that used traditional songs and narratives to teach Zapotec language in primary schools. The research showed that these activities not only promoted language preservation, but also fostered more meaningful learning by connecting the school curriculum to students' cultural experiences.
3. Case 3: Building a bilingual intercultural citizenship
    In the study *"Building a bilingual intercultural citizenship in a decolonial key,"* Soto-Molina (2023) analyzed how an intercultural and bilingual pedagogical approach could promote the construction of critical citizenship in high school students in the Colombian Caribbean. This case focused on a school in Barranquilla where a Spanish-English bilingual curriculum was implemented that incorporated elements of coastal culture, such as music, festivities, and traditional orality.
    The author highlighted how activities based on vallenato music and the traditions of the Barranquilla Carnival helped students reflect on their cultural identities while developing English language skills. The study concluded that this approach not only improved students' academic performance, but also strengthened their sense of belonging and cultural pride, while promoting a critical view of globalization and its cultural impacts.

3.6.2. Critical analysis of the selected studies

The analysis of these cases highlights both the achievements and the challenges of integrating education, ethnology and interculturality:
1. Successes and contributions:
    o Cultural enrichment: All three cases demonstrated that integrating cultural practices into the curriculum strengthens students' identities and promotes more meaningful learning.
    o Pedagogical innovation: The use of local narratives, music and traditions proved to be an effective pedagogical tool, connecting formal learning with students' cultural experiences.
    o Promoting interculturality: These investigations promoted an intercultural dialogue by incorporating local knowledge into a broader educational framework, challenging hegemonic narratives and fostering respect for cultural diversity.
2. Challenges identified:
    o Lack of resources: In many cases, schools faced difficulties in implementing these programmes due to a lack of adequate educational materials and insufficient training of teachers in intercultural approaches.
    o Institutional resistance: Some programs faced resistance from educational authorities and parents, who felt that the intercultural approach could divert attention from traditional academic content. (Soto-Molina, 2019).

- Sustainability: The continuity of these programs often depended on external projects or specific researchers, putting their long-term sustainability at risk.
3. Contributions of the Soto-Molina study

   This case is particularly relevant for its decolonial approach, which questions power structures in education and promotes critical intercultural citizenship. Its innovative methodology, which combines local cultural practices with English language teaching, offers a replicable model for other multicultural regions. However, the study also highlights the need for public policies that support and strengthen these types of initiatives, ensuring their sustainability and expansion.

The case studies analysed demonstrate the transformative potential of research that integrates education, ethnology and interculturality. By connecting formal learning with cultural identities, these initiatives not only improve academic outcomes, but also strengthen the social fabric and promote a deeper respect for diversity. However, it is essential to address the challenges identified through inclusive educational policies and strengthening teacher capacities, ensuring that these practices become a sustainable component of educational systems. The case of Soto-Molina and Parra Fandiño represents an inspiring example of how these research can contribute to a more equitable and culturally relevant education.

4. Discussion

The article strongly highlights the importance of integrating ethnoculture into teaching, learning and social research processes, proposing a transdisciplinary approach that allows us to transcend traditional boundaries between disciplines in order to address cultural diversity in a comprehensive and critical manner. In this sense, it is evident that the incorporation of ethnographic, ethnological and intercultural perspectives not only enriches the understanding of cultural practices and meanings but also favors the development of policies and curricula that respect and strengthen local identities.

One of the central aspects discussed is the need to articulate theory and practice through methodologies that allow researchers and teachers to situate themselves in real and dynamic contexts. The use of participant observation, open interviews and narrative analysis have proven to be effective tools for capturing the complexity of cultural interactions in educational environments. These techniques facilitate the dense description of local realities, as proposed by Geertz, and enable the design of pedagogical strategies that adapt to the "funds of knowledge" of each community, which translates into a more inclusive and meaningful education (Soto-Molina, 2023).

The discussion also emphasizes the relevance of adopting critical and decolonial theoretical frameworks that question the hegemony of traditional Eurocentric approaches. Authors such as Paulo Freire, Bourdieu, and Mignolo provide solid arguments for rethinking the role of education in the construction and transformation of cultural identities. The application of concepts such as cultural hybridity, critical interculturality , southern epistemologies , and cultural sustainability provides an analytical framework that not only diagnoses existing inequalities but also proposes paths for the emancipation and empowerment of communities.

Transdisciplinarity is a fundamental pillar, since it integrates diverse perspectives and methodologies that allow a holistic approach to cultural phenomena in globalized and locally specific contexts. This approach is essential in a world in which mobility, migration and globalization processes generate new forms of identity and cultural resistance. However, the article also points out important challenges: institutional resistance, lack of resources and the need for sustained support through public policies that promote and maintain these initiatives over time.

The case studies presented, such as the integration of Wayuu culture in basic education, language revitalization projects in Zapotec communities, and the construction of a bilingual intercultural citizenship, exemplify how the application of these theoretical and methodological frameworks has the potential to transform educational practices and strengthen the social fabric. These cases also show the duality between the achievements and the difficulties in implementation, highlighting the urgent need to coordinate efforts between researchers, teachers, communities, and government entities.

5. Conclusions

1. Integration of ethnoculture in education:
   The study reaffirms that ethnoculture constitutes a strategic axis for the design of inclusive and pedagogically relevant curricula. By recognizing and valuing the knowledge and traditions of each community, the cultural identity of students is strengthened and their active participation in the educational process is encouraged. This is especially relevant in multicultural contexts, where diversity must be understood as a strength and a pedagogical resource.

2. Contribution of transdisciplinary methodologies:
   The combination of qualitative methods, such as ethnography, narrative analysis and participatory approaches, allows for a more precise and contextualized approach to cultural dynamics. These methods facilitate the identification of emerging categories (cultural hybridity, critical interculturality, epistemologies of the South, transnational identities and cultural sustainability) which, in turn, offer analytical and practical tools to rethink education in a globalized world. The integration of social and decolonial theory with educational practice reveals itself as a path towards the transformation of power structures and the reduction of inequalities.

3. Implications for educational policy and community empowerment:
   The experiences and case studies illustrated in the article demonstrate that, for intercultural initiatives to be sustainable, institutional support and the formulation of public policies that encourage teacher training in intercultural approaches, the inclusion of local knowledge and the active participation of communities in decision-making are necessary. Education, understood from a critical and culturally sustainable perspective, is presented as an essential instrument for the construction of more just and equitable societies, in which cultural diversity is recognized and valued as an integral part of the learning process and social development.

In summary, the discussion and conclusions presented in this article underline that ethnoculture is not only an object of study, but a transformative agent in education and social research. The integration of transdisciplinary perspectives and critical methodologies allows for a holistic approach to cultural diversity, offering concrete paths for the construction of curricula, pedagogical practices and public policies that respect and enhance cultural identities. Moving forward in this direction implies a commitment to social justice and the recognition of the plurality of knowledge, which is essential to respond to the challenges of a globalized and culturally diverse society.

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