

Narrative Research And Its Contributions To Teacher Training

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Abstract

This article aims to recognize the contributions that, from narrative research, can be provided in an attempt to contribute to the complex process of teacher training in the sub-region of Bajo Cauca Antioquia, Colombia. For this purpose, qualitative research was designed close to the hermeneutic-comprehensive approach. To generate information, a duly validated semi-structured interview was applied to the teachers invited to the study, and a workshop on narratives was held. For the information analysis, categorical matrices were used and the information was triangulated with various texts from specialized literature. The findings revealed three important issues: the possibility of self-knowledge offered by a timely narrative exercise, the catharsis that dwells in the very practice of narrating, and finally, the value of memory that resides in those matters that are narrated. In conclusion, the exercise of narrative research can offer valuable academic and reflective inputs that allow resignifying the complex processes of teacher training.

Keywords: education, school, teacher training, narrative inquiry.

Resumen

El objetivo del presente artículo es reconocer los aportes que, desde la investigación narrativa, pueden brindarse en procura de contribuir en el complejo proceso de la formación docente en la subregión del Bajo Cauca antioqueño, Colombia. Para ello se diseñó una investigación de corte cualitativo, cercana al enfoque hermenéutico-comprensivo. En pro de generar información, se aplicó a los maestros invitados a la investigación una entrevista semiestructurada debidamente validada y se realizó un taller sobre narrativas. Para el análisis de la misma se aplicaron matrices categoriales y se trianguló dicha información con diversos textos de literatura

especializada. Los hallazgos permitieron advertir tres importantes asuntos, a saber: la posibilidad de autoconocimiento que oferta un oportuno ejercicio narrativo, la catarsis que habita en la práctica misma del narrar y finalmente, el valor de la memoria que reside en aquellos asuntos que se narran. En conclusión, se evidencia que el ejercicio propio de la investigación narrativa, puede ofertar valiosos insumos académicos y reflexivos que permiten resignificar los complejos procesos de la formación docente.

Palabras clave: educación, escuela, formación de maestros, investigación narrativa.

Introduction

In recent decades, the issue of teacher training has shown numerous changes and modifications, as evidenced by the mobility and flexibility of the regulations and legal frameworks that think and legitimize this issue, as well as the neophyte pedagogical bets that seek to propose increasingly innovative methodologies. In this sense, and based on the conception of Mélich (2010), when he states that humans are “homo narrans” (p. 154), the subject who inhabits the world of the school must learn to say himself in every story he expresses and in every word he offers to the world.

In line with this principle, it will then be necessary to think of a school that provides the subject who coexists in it the opportunity to relate their experiences, their feelings and those sensations that emerge from the encounter with their peers, with their teachers and with those social, economic, political and cultural phenomena that permeate the very cosmos of the school. Thus, contemporary formative bets must allow the school subject to tell his own stories, to dwell in those feelings that converge in his words, to learn to recognize that every story becomes a public good and to understand that to tell a story is, in terms of Delory-Momberger (2015), “to put oneself on stage” (p. 23).

In this way, narrative research becomes a valuable possibility for the subject who narrates in the school to see in this narrative exercise a great opportunity for self-conquest and reinterpreting that becoming that is proper to the school cosmos. It should be clear at this point that, from the perspective enunciated by McEwan and Egan (2005), narrating becomes a reconstructive horizon of the world since every time the subject offers a narrative, they become the owner of an opportunity to re-semanticize the world they narrate. Thinking then about linking narrative research in the formative processes typical of school environments becomes an input, tool and strategy to resignify the voice and the word of those subjects who deconstruct the school itself.

Inviting the story, the experience and the sensitivity that gives the word and the feeling of those who give their own words will allow the mobility of school curricula that, in other times, would have grown in the shadow and the lap of the invisibility of the other and otherness. In this sense, narrative research will be able to offer alternatives of recognition and self-recognition to the subjects who are immersed in the complex formative processes that take place in the school. Given this conception, Ricoeur (1999) reminds the tripartite relationship between the subject who tells his story, the world that is the object of the story and those who are immersed in the narrative. There is no such thing as a narrative in solitude, just as there is no such thing as a narrative alien to otherness and distant from the public.

The word seen from narrative research grows in plural, communitarian and political spheres, since to speak in the practice of the word is to coexist in the world that the word says. In this perspective, Ricoeur (2006) urges to think that “narrating is the art of sharing experience” (p.166). Based on this assumption, the following question could be posed: Would it be possible to conceive today a school in which the word, experience, and feeling are alien and distant to a timely formative process? This question allows noticing the contributions and the validity that an adequate narrative exercise can provide to contemporary curricula for the training of teachers.

To think of narrative research in the school is to recall, as stated by Connelly and Clandinin (1995), that “human beings are storytelling organisms that, individually and socially, live narrated lives” (p.11). Thus, the invitation to think of the school as a scenario of life implies the need to give voice and word to the subjects who cohabit with it and of which, undoubtedly, they become heirs and co-constructors. Resignifying then the formative processes that take place in the cosmos of the school is also a time to reinterpret the feeling, the becoming and the changes of the subjects who feel, become and change in the school.

To reaffirm that, as expressed by Pace (2019), “we are all made of stories” (p. 56) is to appreciate the horizon of possibilities that, in the pursuit of teacher training, offers a timely exercise of narrative research. Narrating is a bet and a wager of the subject for a community in which consensus is shared and the gestation, weaving and living amid dissent, tensions and possibilities, is also configured in an important narrative bet. The subject is not only the sum of those issues that constitute them but also the set of exegeses and interpretations through which they live the world they narrate, as they are the narrator of that world that is questioned. In this sense, Runge & Murillo (2018) see the narrative work of the teacher as a fusion of different

voices, as a polyphony of multiple sayings and as a being, as long as he knows he is the owner of some discourses.

Methodology

The project was framed in a qualitative research model which, as stated by Niño (2011), aims at perceiving the reality of the phenomenon studied as a whole which, in the classical way of understanding the term, turns out to be more than the sum of its parts. In turn, due to its proximity to the narrative exercise, the hermeneutic approach allowed access to the objective proposed in the research. The population consisted of twenty teachers from urban areas and rural territories of the Bajo Cauca sub-region of Antioquia. Among the selection criteria established, issues such as time of work experience (minimum ten years), permanence in the territory (minimum five years), availability of time to remain in the project and some issues related to their written and oral competencies were considered. Furthermore, for collecting and generating information, a semi-structured interview consisting of twelve questions, all validated by experts and with the firm intention of recognizing the contributions that narrative research can provide to teacher training, was applied to the teachers invited to the research.

Another of the strategies applied during the generation of information was the design of a workshop for elaborating narratives, which proved to be a valuable input for reflection. A categorical analysis matrix was designed and applied to analyze the information collected, which brought together those elements that stood out in the discourses of the teachers who participated in the research. Likewise, the participating teachers signed an ethical consent form to ensure transparent and adequate information handling.

Results and discussion

On storytelling and self-knowledge

There is no narrative born and flourished in a vacuum, nor are there stories that, in one way or another, do not cry out for the presence of another and otherness in the unfolding of their own doing; in this sense, the contemporary subject is, as Nussbaum (1995) expresses it, an accumulation of circumstances and becomings that remind him of that condition of contingency in which existence itself develops. The subject's stories are, in turn, the stories of changes, of unredeemed longings and of those fantasies that recall the character of a vicissitude that encloses being and being in the word that is said.

Giving the contemporary subject the possibility to say and say himself in his stories, also becomes the possibility for the subject to recognize himself in his own saying; as he will have to know himself as a participant and protagonist of those words that he addresses to the world. If it is true that, as stated by Mélich (2010), “today, education lives in an atrophy of memory” (p. 52), the narrative exercise and teaching the subject to say and to say himself in his speeches will be a vast ocean of possibilities in the treatment of this atrophy. In this regard, one of the educators who participated in the research commented: “we narrate to communicate something, but we also narrate with the desire to denounce a thousand things” (MBC-01). When narrating and narrating oneself, the contemporary subject becomes aware of his communitarian stay in the present and his communitarian and shared future. To understand the complex role of the narrative spheres is to try to understand the realities that frame the existence of the subject who offers his own story.

The reflection made by the subject, who lives in a world of the school, on his story and his narration allows him to know himself as an interpreter and interpreter of all those contingencies that frame his formative process, thus; the subject does not only narrate to say something but also to know that feeling that overwhelms him and assists him in his saying. Every time a word is given as a gift, something of the explanation that the word demands from the subject who confers it and transforms it into an object of donation is also offered as a gift. Narrating has to invite, in the words of Skliar (2017), “to return differently and to a different way of returning” (p. 106), on all those matters that are susceptible to be narrated, on all those realities that become worthy objects of epistemic appetite and, above all, of that feeling of the subject which lends himself to know himself, as he knows he is the owner of the story he utters.

It would then be right to affirm that every narrative exercise entails, within itself, a vast opportunity for self-knowledge for its offerer, audience and for all those subjects who authentically and genuinely are linked to the narration itself. To say oneself in the word is also to recognize the words one has to say. The world is, therefore not only what is said about it but also the experience of those sayings that make up the interpretation that the subject makes of the world itself. The subject’s life is always narrated; it is an opportunity to say a saying that cries out to be interpreted. In this sense, Bruner (2003) encourages to think of the story as that clothing with which the feelings and interpretations that the subject forges of the world he inhabits and of which he knows he is heir and co-constructor are dressed since in this world are located both the selfhood of the subject and those

othernesses that question him. In a similar perspective. Agudelo Torres (2016) states:

The other must be in symmetry, in selfhood and in constant exhortation. The irruption, the penetration and the incursion of the other in my own selfhood, make evident the necessity of the existence of an otherness to say, of another to think and of an otherness to unveil (p. 45).

Working with narratives becomes then, from a training perspective, an exercise that provides the subject and the school community with an enormous possibility of self-knowledge because, undoubtedly, in the act of narrating, the subject knows himself to be the owner of epistemic stakes to say, as he recognizes himself as heir of diverse feelings to share. In the school, not only are narrated those issues that expect to be perpetuated but above all, those elements that expect to be transformed are narrated.

On the catharsis of the narrative exercise

Writing from experience, narrating oneself from the place of vicissitude and recounting, while recognizing oneself in the story, is one of the most important icons that narrative research can offer to the complex process that concerns a teacher's training. Undoubtedly, there is a valuable healing element in the exercise of warmly and placidly granting a word, a gesture and a gesture to all those who question and are questioned in the very act of narrating. Let us remember that the aphonies and silences of the subject are also narratives procured by a subject of language. In line with this idea, Bordelois (2003) reminds that language not only communicates but also presents the history of many peoples and the feelings of those who preceded in the experience of such feelings.

One does not narrate just for the sake of narrating, nor does one narrate a story to entertain; for the voice and the word of the subject lead one to think the words and voices of many peoples. The narrated life and the narration of many lives contain an enormous reserve of hope. To know oneself to be narrated and mediated by the word is to know oneself to be the owner of a destiny written in the plural. Remember that the word can be, in unison, bridge and abyss. Understanding the practice of the word as an exercise of catharsis, as expressed by Arias and Alvarado (2015), summons to sacrifice the explanatory level of the discourse, as it brings us closer, irremediably, to the prioritization of a comprehensive interest. One does not relate exclusively to know, one also relates in order to be known, in a world eager for neophyte unveilings.

To think narrative research from formative environments is to try to give the floor to those who historically have been the epicenter of the process but

who paradoxically have kept a vast silence. The invitation to say oneself in the spoken word is also the exaltation to think and think of oneself in everything said. Regarding this idea, it is convenient to remember Bordelois (2003), who once stated that “language is before and after us, but it is also, happily, among us” (p.25). Thus, it should be clear that the times of storytelling and narration become different from those of events and facts. The contemporary subject does not live only in the chronology of an event; he also lives in those senses and meanings given to the narrated events.

The relief that a word can bring to the subject reminds us of the need to train men to say and express their feelings, always knowing that this experience is the sensitivity of many other subjects. Thus, to teach the teacher to speak his word is to invite him to the conquest of his innermost being, to remind him that the transcendence of discourse is not only in its form or structure but in the interpretation that the subject makes of those words. As Duch (2002) warns, to plot the world will have to be one of the noblest teleologies of each teacher.

Notice the principle of catharsis that coexists in the narrative exercise will undoubtedly help to resignify the very processes of teacher training. In this sense, making the classroom and the school a place for dialogue will allow the contemporary subject to know and be the owner of a story to share. A narrative does not necessarily invite one to look forward or backward; on the other hand, it does encourage one to look inward. Hence, the subject’s importance in school became the owner of his narratives.

Transforming a certain event or a particular life story into a narrative, as expressed by Clandinin (2007), becomes a vast formative possibility since it is through the mediation of the word that the subjects immersed in their history unfold countless feelings and an enormous amount of political stakes. Hence, the narrative exercise becomes a valuable pedagogical contribution. In line with this approach, Denzin (1989) urges us to think of the subjects involved in the story as potential interpreters, which gives them an active role since, undoubtedly, an interpreter and a hermeneut must always be in an investigative attitude.

On memory and narration

There is no single memory, just as there is no single way of remembering what is remembered; for in the very act of remembrance, there is a mobility that is consubstantial to the subject who remembers. No two stories are the same since the subject which relates is always the fruit of contingency and becoming. Stories are not only constituted in a chronological time, they inhabit a kairos time rather, that is to say, a time in which the senses and

meanings that the subjects give to that feeling converge, which is also constituted in the genesis of the narrative itself. As expressed by López and Quintero (2020), all memory waits to be unveiled, heard and shared.

Faced with the question posed by Skliar (2017), namely: “What makes us turn our faces backward, in an era that twists our bodies forward” (p. 106), one could well answer, tentatively and momentarily, that it is the feeling and the knowledge of being the owner of such sensitivity that pushes the contemporary subject to resignify that memory that is present in every story. One does not only remember what was, but one also commemorates the existence of those things that were not, of those realities that inhabit, perhaps in the form of ghosts, in the soul of the subject who remembers. The invitation made by Mélich (2010) to think that “human beings do not only limit ourselves to live with the memory, we also live with it, with our own and those of our predecessor” (p. 154) becomes a valuable exhortation to understand those problems that we think about in the different school environments.

The memory of the subject is not only the fruit of his mimesis and his mnemonic, it is rather the fruit of those links that unite him to the complex warp that constitutes the world and the world of life. Memories do not only summon us to think about absences, for in them also coexist those virtues that allow the contemporary subject to fantasize about times and spaces that are not yet, but of which a longing and a hope have been forged. Memory is not only linked to the past, but also to the present and the future. It then becomes necessary for the school to teach other ways of remembering, other ways of being and inhabiting the world; in this sense, Lévinas (2015) raises the need to think of memory not only as a remembrance but as testimony, as a possibility for the subject to cry out a sensitive “here I am” (p.89).

To propose then a memory, mobile and mobilizing reminds us of the proposal of Arias Gómez (2016), who warns of the need to teach a shared memory. This memory contains both the selfhood of the subject and the discourses, words and stories of those othernesses silenced in the past, but without which there would be no selfhood to resignify. The memory alluded to in this research is similar to the conception of memory enunciated by Mélich (2010), that is, that which in the words of the good Spanish philosopher, invites us to “live life, one’s own life, as if it were a work of art” (p. 86).

When conceiving a memory of this typology, the school’s task and the formative processes that take place in it become a titanic task, especially when the contemporary subject has to question that school tradition that likened the exercise of memory to the knowledge of a past time. Mélich

(2019) raises the need to move from a static memory anchored in the past to a prosaic memory, where perhaps the only certainty that such memory must possess is precisely the knowledge of being in the midst of uncertainty. The idea of thinking that there is no single memory, but rather multiple memories, is close to Ricoeur's conception (2003), when he argues that it would not be possible to think, in the world's mobility, of an immutable, equivocal and unalterable narrative.

Thinking of the narrative, the story and the word of the subject as elements close to a mobile and constantly changing memory is configured in the possibility of understanding the subject as the interpreter of a world that is waiting to be interpreted, while the subject himself knows himself to be contingent in that questioned world. In a similar perspective, Bolívar (2002) enunciates an idea that transcends any narrative exercise, namely, the author proposes the task of narrative and memory as a work close and near to hermeneutics since the subject which lends his story becomes an interpreter of the story itself. The times of the subject's narratives and memories then surpass, by far, the chronological times of events. Thus, as Ricoeur (2006) argues, life has as much to do with narratives as the latter has as much to do with memory. One does not remember then only to keep away those structures of oblivion but rather to keep in mind the mobility, instability and the flow of the contingency of life. In a similar perspective, one of the teachers invited to the research referred to the following idea: "in our stories and in our narratives, there is the possibility of reliving good moments, but also the need not to repeat so many other" (MBC-02).

Understanding then the memory of a subject, as a matter that links the memories of other subjects will become, as expressed by Alliaud (2018), a valuable political bet because, undoubtedly, the memories of the subjects are also the feelings that are experienced in front of others and in front of diverse othernesses. It is also necessary to allude to the virtue that memory possesses to forge the subject's identity. Hence Vanegas and Fuentealba (2019) warn of the urgent need to cultivate, in all school environments, a practice and an exercise of memory that invites its constant transformation.

Thus, thinking about memories also becomes thinking about those school practices that are generated in the world of the school and the formative processes of teachers and students. In terms of (2015), knowing those memories and those practices allows, among other issues, to know the school culture in which the diverse and complex formative processes imbricated in the school unfold. Similarly, Lizarralde (2015) recalls that the productive contexts are also a memory practice and, therefore, a new opportunity for transformation.

The very exercise of narrative activity will provoke, as Mayo Beltrán (2021) puts it, a kind of feedback of retroactive memory in the subjects immersed in the narrative itself. This, in turn, allows the narrator to broaden his or her self-recognition horizon. In a similar perspective Barrios, Peña & Cifuentes (2019), encourage to think about those complex scenarios that frame the feeling and the subject's emotionality at the moment of sharing and being shared in a story, a feeling that is imbricated with the subject's memory. In this sense, it is then impossible to think of the univocity of a story since the mobility and changes experienced by the narrator tend to become evident in the very act of narrating.

Conclusions

In line with the analyses carried out in this research and faithful to its methodological design, it is necessary to note the contributions from narrative research that can be offered to teacher training processes. Thus, it could be pointed out that, in the exercise of narrative research, the subject gains access to elements that become a valuable opportunity for self-knowledge. In this sense, one of the teachers who participated in the research stated: "thinking about my own stories, their mobilities and variations; it allows me to know something about my own being" (MBC-02).

In the same way, the research proves the importance that both the specialized literature and the voice of the participants confer to the act of saying a word, to the exercise of sharing a story and to the front of being a witness and protagonist of specific narrative practice. In general terms, on the part of the teachers participating in the research, there is a consensus on the catharsis offered by the very act of narrative action, on its deployment and its professional action. The polysemic value given to the conception of memory is also evident, moving from a static and officialized vision to a mobile perspective, in which the subject is linked to that becoming that is proper to the narrative exercise. Consequently, it is important to invite narrative research to rethink those complex processes of teacher training, knowing that this practice undoubtedly offers academic, critical and reflective elements to the subject immersed in school training environments.

Issues such as the recognition of otherness, the configuration of selfhood, the intentional sharing of stories and the subject's ability to say a word as they know they are immersed in it highlight some contributions of narrative research in teacher training. Finally, it is important to recognize that in this betting, the act of narrating must be seen as an exercise close to rebuke, to the manifestation of the subject's political stance and the longing for the achievement of mobile and mobilizing memories.

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