Democratic coexistence in rural Colombian educational environments

Convivencia democrática en entornos educativos rurales colombianos

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few decades, the educational framework in rural regions of Colombia. The research objective is to analyse democratic coexistence in rural Colombian educational environments. Documentary methodology from 25 scientific articles. The scientific review carried out shows that education in rural areas of Colombia is a comprehensive process that transcends mere academic instruction. Likewise, the construction of democratic coexistence goes hand in hand with the formation of citizenship, the strengthening of social ties and the transformation of contexts historically marked by inequalities. The results indicate that pedagogical practices adapted to local realities, the integration of traditional knowledge and the active participation of the community are essential elements for generating spaces for dialogue and collective construction.
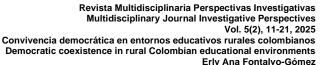
Descriptors: social pedagogy; community education; community development. (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

A lo largo de las últimas décadas, el entramado educativo en las regiones rurales de Colombia. Se plantea como objetivo de investigación analizar la convivencia democrática en entornos educativos rurales colombianos. Metodología documental proveniente de 25 articulos científicos. A partir de la revisión científica realizada se evidencia que la educación en las zonas rurales de Colombia constituye un proceso integral que trasciende la mera instrucción académica, así mismo, la construcción de una convivencia democrática va de la mano con la formación de ciudadanía, el fortalecimiento de vínculos sociales y la transformación de contextos históricamente marcados por desigualdades. Los resultados indican que las prácticas pedagógicas adaptadas a las realidades locales, la integración de saberes tradicionales y la participación activa de la comunidad son elementos esenciales para generar espacios de diálogo y construcción colectiva.

Descriptores: pedagogía social; educación comunitaria; desarrollo comunitario. (Fuente: Tesauro UNESCO).
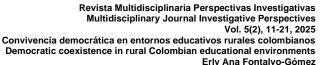
INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, the educational framework in rural regions of Colombia has been the subject of analysis and reflection as it has been recognised that the educational processes in these territories involve dimensions that go beyond mere academic instruction. This phenomenon is revealed in the way in which education is constituted as a mechanism for social transformation, whose impact goes beyond the transmission of conventional knowledge, encompassing the configuration of social relations and the consolidation of democratic practices that are expressed in the daily exercise of citizenship. The reality of Colombia's rural areas demands, therefore, a holistic approach that considers not only pedagogical aspects, but also the socio-economic and cultural determinants that intervene in the construction of coexistence environments based on values such as equity, mutual respect, solidarity and active participation.

In this sense, it is essential to recognise that the geographical and cultural diversity of the Colombian territory is a determining factor in the configuration of dissimilar educational scenarios. While in urban areas policies aimed at modernisation and the integration of technologies have been implemented, in rural areas there are still structural challenges that have a direct impact on the quality of learning and the social cohesion of communities. Differences in living conditions, access to resources and social organisation between different environments generate significant gaps, which are manifested both in the infrastructure of educational institutions and in their capacity to foster an environment of democratic coexistence. In this context, recent research has highlighted the importance of a comprehensive review of the pedagogical models applied in these areas, emphasising the need for strategies adapted to the particularities of each community (Ávila, 2017; Zambrano-Leal, 2018).

The analysis of educational dynamics in rural settings reveals a series of complex factors that affect both pedagogical practice and social interaction in institutions. Geographical dispersion, scarcity of resources and the persistence of deep-rooted cultural traditions shape a scenario in which democratic coexistence takes on particular dimensions. These conditions, which sometimes limit the possibility of implementing ambitious educational projects, require methodological approaches that integrate local experience and ancestral knowledge with contemporary demands for inclusive and transformative education. Thus, it is imperative to articulate models that facilitate the active participation of the various educational actors, teachers, students, families and local authorities in the construction of spaces for dialogue and collaboration that strengthen the social fabric and make it possible to overcome historical inequalities (López-Ramírez, 2006; Guzmán-Rodríguez & Pérez-Bejerano, 2019).

Democratic coexistence in the rural environment is revealed, in this context, as a process in which the absence of conflict is not equivalent to the existence of harmonious relations, but rather the articulation of practices and attitudes that favour the integration of diverse points of view. The exercise of democracy in these spaces is manifested in the capacity of the members of the educational community to resolve differences through dialogue, negotiation and the joint construction of solutions. This perspective also implies the formation of critical individuals who are aware of their role in society, capable of exercising their rights and assuming responsibilities in making decisions that affect the collective destiny. In this way, education becomes an essential instrument for the generation of active citizenship, whose impact transcends the boundaries of the classroom and is projected into community life (Crespo-Nievas et al., 2018).

The implementation of pedagogical strategies aimed at strengthening democratic coexistence in rural areas has shown the importance of flexible and contextualised educational models. In various experiences, it has been proven that the adaptation of pedagogical practices to the specific realities of each community can generate a substantial change in the way education is lived and understood. Therefore, in some localities, initiatives have been developed that integrate extracurricular activities, community projects and participatory methodologies, which favour the development of citizenship skills and promote a sense of belonging and responsibility among students. These strategies, far from being limited to the transmission of knowledge, are oriented towards the integral formation of the individual, promoting processes that foster

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dialogue, respect for diversity and the collective construction of a democratic identity (Zambrano-Leal, 2018).

This approach implies recognising the importance of community participation in decision-making and in the definition of educational projects, so that school spaces become true centres of social transformation. The interaction between the school and the territory is fundamental to consolidate processes of inclusion and equity, allowing education to become a vehicle for social mobility and overcoming structural inequalities. Likewise, the incorporation of local knowledge and the valuing of traditional cultural practices contribute to enriching the educational heritage, providing the community with tools that enable it to face the challenges it faces in an autonomous manner (Garcés, 2021; Padilla, 2016).

The complexity of the educational framework in rural areas also manifests itself in the need to establish institutional mechanisms that facilitate the articulation of coherent and sustainable public policies. In this sense, a review of the specialised literature allows us to identify successful experiences in which the integration of pedagogical initiatives and the strengthening of school infrastructure have contributed to the consolidation of spaces for democratic coexistence. These experiences show that, when the active participation of the different actors involved in the educational process is promoted, the creation of support networks that enhance the effectiveness of interventions and ultimately have a positive impact on the overall development of the community is favoured. The implementation of policies aimed at decentralising educational management and strengthening institutional autonomy is therefore an indispensable strategy to face the challenges of education in highly vulnerable contexts (Ávila, 2017).

Likewise, the experience of various rural communities has identified that the integration of the ethical and civic dimension into the school curriculum translates into greater commitment on the part of students and more active participation in community life. The implementation of projects involving the community, the organisation of discussion forums and the promotion of cultural and sporting activities are some of the mechanisms that have proven to be effective in fostering democratic coexistence and strengthening social ties in contexts of exclusion and marginalisation. This highlights the importance of education being articulated with a human development approach that recognises the interdependence between the individual and his or her environment, promoting an integral vision of education that encompasses cognitive as well as affective and social aspects.

Therefore, the challenge of transforming education in rural areas also implies a reflection on the role of teachers and the need to provide them with tools and competencies that enable them to face the complexities of these environments. Continuous training and the exchange of experiences among professionals are fundamental elements for the consolidation of innovative pedagogical practices adapted to the particularities of each context. Within this framework, it is important to develop training programmes that not only address technical and methodological aspects, but also encourage critical reflection on the role of education in social transformation. Educators, as agents of change, must assume the responsibility of promoting spaces for dialogue and participation that contribute to the comprehensive education of students, integrating the principles of respect, equity and solidarity into their daily practice.

Based on the above, the objective of the research is to analyse democratic coexistence in rural Colombian educational environments.

METHOD

The current review article was framed in a documentary type of research, adopting a systematic approach that allowed the integration and synthesis of information from 25 scientific articles. The methodological criteria and procedures used in the process of collecting, selecting and analysing the literature are described below:

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Inclusion and exclusion criteria

a) Timing: Studies published in the last 15 years were included, considering research that has influenced the current debate on democratic coexistence in rural contexts.

b) Thematic relevance: Only papers that explicitly addressed the issue of democratic coexistence and citizenship education processes in rural educational environments were selected.

c) Methodological quality: Priority was given to studies that offered empirical evidence, a solid theoretical framework and a methodology directly related to the research objective.

d) Geographical context: Special attention was paid to research carried out in Colombia, without ruling out comparative studies that included other countries in the region such as Brazil, Mexico or Peru, as long as they offered related contributions to the understanding of the Colombian reality.

e) Papers that did not meet the peer review criteria or were of marginal relevance to the object of study were excluded.

Document search strategy

The search for information was carried out in academic databases accessible to the researcher such as Redalyc, Scielo, Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar, using search terms such as "democratic coexistence", "rural education", "Colombia", "citizenship" and "educational inclusion".
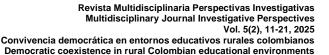
The search process took place in several phases:

1) Identification: A first selection was made of articles, theses and book chapters that appeared in the initial search results.

2) Filtering: Subsequently, inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to filter the list of documents and select those that presented a topic related to the object of study.

3) Evaluation: Each document was evaluated in terms of its methodological quality, the clarity of its theoretical contributions and the contribution of its results in relation to democratic coexistence in rural contexts.

4) Synthesis: A synthesis process was carried out in which the main contributions of each study were extracted, allowing the construction of a conceptual framework that articulated the various dimensions of the phenomenon.

Analysis of the information

The analysis of the information was carried out qualitatively, using critical reading techniques and thematic coding. Emerging categories such as "inclusive pedagogical practices", "models of citizen participation", "structural challenges" and "impact of public policies" were identified. Each category was developed by comparing and contrasting the results reported in the selected studies, allowing for a narrative that coherently and systematically integrated the different contributions.

The methodological process followed in this systematic review has allowed for a rigorous integration of theoretical and empirical contributions, which translates into a holistic and deeply contextualised vision of the challenge of building democratic coexistence in rural Colombian educational environments.

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RESULTS

The review of the literature on democratic coexistence in rural contexts has made it possible to identify various contributions that can be grouped around four main axes: 1) the theoretical dimensions of democratic coexistence; 2) pedagogical and methodological strategies; 3) challenges and opportunities in the implementation of educational policies; 4) the relevance of teacher training and community involvement. Each of these axes is described below:

1. Theoretical Dimensions of Democratic Coexistence

One of the fundamental contributions of the review consists of the consolidation of a theoretical framework that articulates democratic coexistence with the formation of citizenship in educational environments. The literature shows that democratic coexistence is not reduced to the absence of conflict, but is configured as an active process of participation, dialogue and construction of shared values (Gallardo-Vázquez, 2009; Burgos-Acosta, 2012). In this sense, it should be noted that:

Education as a transformative space: Various authors highlight the role of education in the construction of citizen identities and the promotion of social participation. The school is therefore conceived as a privileged setting for the development of democratic competencies and for the formation of critical individuals committed to their community (Garcés, 2021; Chaparro-Caso-López et al., 2015).

Ethical and moral dimension: Democratic coexistence is closely related to ethical and moral training, which involves the development of attitudes of respect, tolerance and social justice. These attitudes are essential to foster a culture of peace and to build spaces for dialogue and mutual understanding (Padilla, 2013).

Plurality and diversity: The acceptance and appreciation of cultural, social and linguistic diversity is an indispensable pillar in the construction of democratic coexistence. Studies in rural contexts have shown that the inclusion of traditional knowledge and cultural practices strengthens collective identity and promotes the integration of different worldviews (Mendoza-B., 2004; García-Correa & Yánez-Contreras, 2017).

These theoretical approaches are articulated in an interpretative framework that allows us to understand democratic coexistence as a multidimensional phenomenon, in which the interaction between pedagogical practice, educational policies and the socio-cultural context generates a web of meanings that transcend the merely institutional.
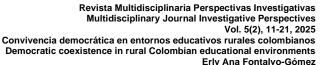
2. Pedagogical and methodological strategies

The review indicates that, in rural educational settings, the implementation of innovative pedagogical strategies has been fundamental in promoting democratic coexistence. Among the methodological approaches, the following stand out:

Participatory learning: The adoption of active and participatory methodologies, which place the student at the centre of the teaching-learning process, has made it possible to generate spaces for dialogue and shared decision-making. These methodologies favour critical reflection and the collective construction of knowledge, essential aspects for strengthening coexistence (Peirano et al., 2015; Williamson-Castro et al., 2017).

Integration of technology and traditional knowledge: Some studies have explored the convergence between new technologies and local knowledge, proposing hybrid strategies that integrate digital resources with indigenous cultural practices. This approach not only modernises education, but also respects and enhances the particularities of the rural environment (Aguilar-Forero et al., 2023; Herrera-Arias & Rivera-Alarcón, 2020).

Activist and playful methodologies: In post-conflict and highly vulnerable contexts, methodologies that combine art and play have been implemented as tools for conflict resolution and the promotion of peaceful coexistence. These strategies have been especially valued for

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their ability to transform school climate and to promote empathy and understanding among students (Bautista-Díaz et al., 2019; Holguin-Álvarez et al., 2020).

The adoption of these strategies has contributed to the generation of school environments in which coexistence is perceived not as a normative imposition, but as an organic and participatory process in which each actor - teachers, students, families and community - plays a leading role in the construction of democratic spaces.

3. Challenges and opportunities in education policy implementation

The studies analysed highlight both challenges and opportunities in the implementation of policies aimed at promoting democratic coexistence in rural settings. Among the main challenges, the following stand out:

Structural limitations: Lack of resources, inadequate infrastructure and geographical dispersion are factors that negatively affect the quality of education in rural areas. These limitations hinder the implementation of comprehensive educational programmes and continuity in training processes (Guzmán-Rodríguez & Pérez-Bejerano, 2019; Mendoza-Delgado, 2024).

Resistance to change: In many rural communities, traditional practices and cultural inertia represent an obstacle to the adoption of new pedagogical methodologies. Resistance to change, both at institutional and community level, requires awareness-raising and training strategies to break entrenched paradigms (Martínez-Sarmiento, 2024; Mollo & Yraha, 2018).

Challenges in intersectoral articulation: The integration of public policies in areas as diverse as education, culture and rural development is complex. The lack of coordination between different entities and levels of government limits the impact of interventions aimed at strengthening democratic coexistence (Pérez-Pinzón, 2021; Padilla, 2016).

Despite these difficulties, the review identifies significant opportunities that can be capitalised upon to improve coexistence in rural educational settings:
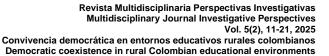
Innovation in teacher training: Strengthening pedagogical competences in contexts of diversity and conflict is a key strategy for the transformation of school coexistence. Continuous training and updating in inclusive and participatory methodologies are a fundamental pillar for the success of educational programmes (Borja-Ramos, 2025; Montoya-De-La-Cruz et al., 2022).

Community participation: The active involvement of families and the community in educational processes has proven to be a determining factor for the sustainability of democratic coexistence initiatives. The creation of collaborative networks between the school and other social actors strengthens the legitimacy and impact of interventions (Chaparro-Caso-López et al., 2015; Páez-Triviño, 2021).

Contextualised intervention models: The adaptation of pedagogical strategies to the specific reality of each community, considering its cultural, economic and social particularities, has allowed the development of educational models that respond effectively to local needs. These models, being replicable and scalable, offer a reference framework for the formulation of more inclusive and diversity-sensitive public policies (Rojas-Rodríguez, 2024; Williamson-Castro et al., 2017).

Teacher training and community involvement: The literature review places special emphasis on the role of the teacher and the community in promoting democratic coexistence. In rural environments, the work of the educator is configured as a fundamental element, not only in terms of transmitting knowledge, but also as a facilitator of integration and dialogue processes:

Professional training and updating: The training of teachers in active methodologies, in the use of technological tools and in inclusion strategies is essential for the implementation of democratic practices; therefore, teacher training should be oriented towards the development of emotional, communicative and pedagogical competencies that favour the establishment of relationships based on respect and empathy (Montoya-De-La-Cruz et al., 2022; Martínez-Sarmiento, 2024).

School-community articulation initiatives: The integration of the community in the educational process is manifested through participation programmes that include parents, local leaders and social organisations. These initiatives not only strengthen social cohesion, but also allow the school to become a meeting point for conflict resolution and the collective construction of a democratic culture (García-Correa & Yánez-Contreras, 2017; Ramos-Holguín & Aguirre-Morales, 2016).

Successful experiences in rural contexts: The literature presents various examples of successful projects in which democratic coexistence has materialised through the application of innovative pedagogical practices and the active involvement of the community. For example, initiatives aimed at building rural libraries and cultural spaces have shown a positive impact on citizenship education and the revaluation of traditional knowledge (Aguilar-Forero et al., 2023; Guzmán-Rodríguez & Pérez-Bejerano, 2019).

These contributions show that the transformation of democratic coexistence in rural educational environments requires an integral commitment, in which institutional, community and professional training efforts converge. The synergy between these elements is the driving force behind the generation of inclusive and participatory educational environments, in which each member of the community feels an active part of the process of building citizenship.

The need for an interdisciplinary approach

Although the literature has addressed the phenomenon of democratic coexistence from various psychological, pedagogical, sociological and political perspectives, it is essential to strengthen a truly interdisciplinary approach. The integration of knowledge and methodologies from different areas of knowledge would allow for the construction of more robust theoretical frameworks to explain the complexity of coexistence in rural contexts. In this sense, future research could explore the intersection between neuroeducation, emotional education and community practices, in order to design interventions that enhance both the cognitive and affective development of students (Rojas-Rodríguez, 2024).

Long-term impact assessment

Most of the studies reviewed focus on short to medium-term interventions. However, it is essential to have research that evaluates the sustained impact of democratic coexistence strategies on the lives of individuals and on the transformation of rural communities. Longitudinal monitoring of educational processes would make it possible to identify the key elements that contribute to the consolidation of a democratic culture, and the barriers that impede its continuity over time.

Deepening in contexts of high vulnerability

Rural educational environments, in many cases, are marked by highly vulnerable realities, derived from the persistence of armed conflict, poverty and social marginalisation. Future research should focus on understanding how these structural factors affect school coexistence and citizenship education. Therefore, the identification of intervention strategies that specifically address the needs of these communities can contribute to the formulation of public policies that are more sensitive and adapted to the reality of rural territories (Mauris-De-la-Ossa & Domínguez-Gil, 2022).

The cultural dimension and the revalorisation of traditional knowledge

The recognition and integration of traditional knowledge are fundamental aspects for the construction of authentic democratic coexistence in rural contexts. The review shows that cultural diversity, far from being an obstacle, is an invaluable resource that can enrich educational processes. In this sense, it is suggested that further studies be conducted to analyse how the incorporation of indigenous cultural practices and the valuing of local identity can contribute to the generation of democratic spaces and the strengthening of social cohesion (Mendoza-B., 2004; Páez-Triviño, 2021).

The review therefore raises the need for education policies to recognise and respond to the particularities of rural education. The development of policy frameworks and intervention programmes that integrate the dimension of democratic coexistence can contribute to reducing the existing gaps between urban and rural areas. It is therefore essential for both local and national authorities to incorporate evidence-based strategies into their agendas to replicate the successes observed in different contexts and overcome the challenges that persist in rural education (Pérez-Pinzón, 2021; Chaparro-Caso-López et al., 2015).

CONCLUSION

From the scientific review carried out, it is evident that education in rural areas of Colombia is an integral process that transcends mere academic instruction; likewise, the construction of democratic coexistence goes hand in hand with the formation of citizenship, the strengthening of social ties and the transformation of contexts historically marked by inequalities. The results indicate that pedagogical practices adapted to local realities, the integration of traditional knowledge and the active participation of the community are essential elements for generating spaces for dialogue and collective construction. On the other hand, the need for interdisciplinary approaches and coherent public policies that take into account both the structural limitations and the potential of each territory is highlighted. Continuous teacher training and the articulation between the school and the social environment are presented as fundamental strategies to promote inclusive and transformative education, capable of contributing to social mobility and overcoming historical gaps. In short, the challenge of transforming rural education implies a commitment to innovative and contextualised educational models that, by recognising cultural diversity and local knowledge, favour the development of democratic practices and the strengthening of social cohesion in highly vulnerable environments.

FUNDING

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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