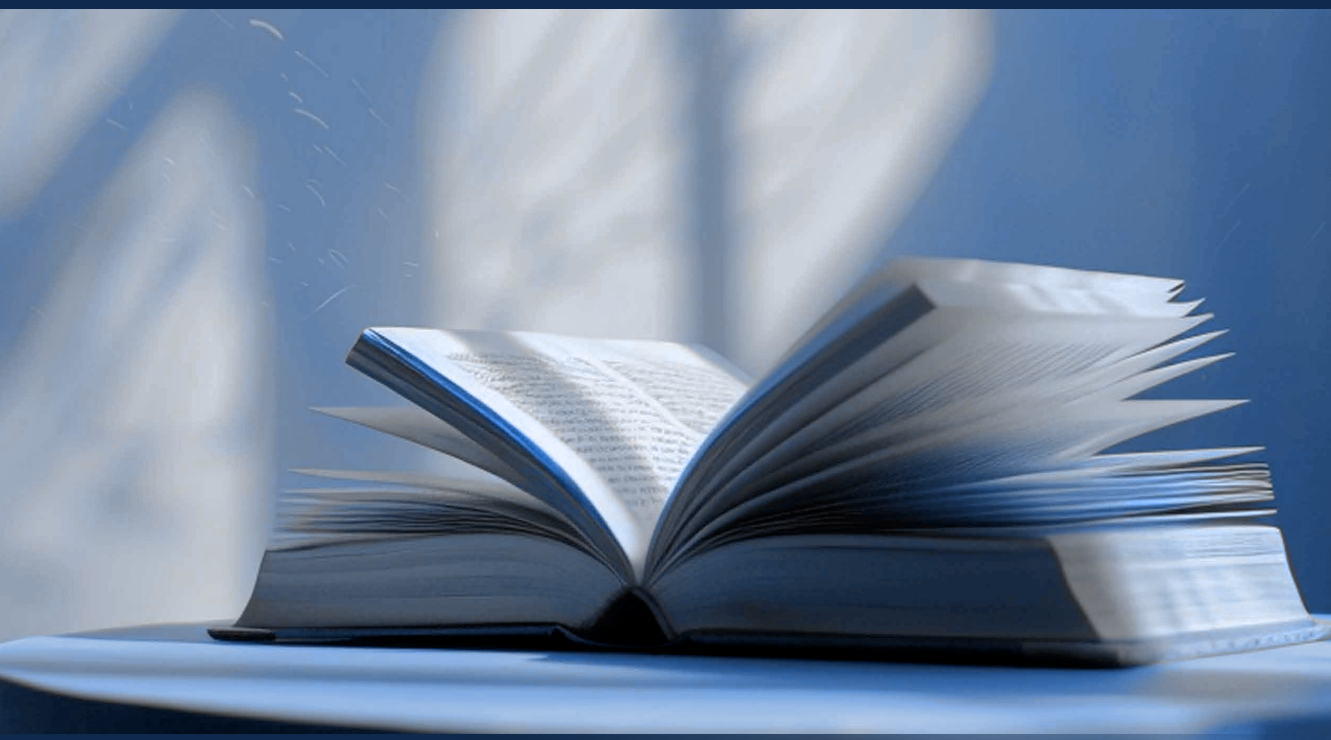
Teachers under evaluation: The imaginaries of power and fear in Colombian education

English Edition



AG EDITOR

Teachers under evaluation: the imaginaries of power and fear in Colombian education (English version)

Edwin Tovar Briñez

AG EDITOR

Copyright Page

This AG Editor imprint is published by AG Editor.

The registered company is **AG Editor SAS, Montevideo, Uruguay.**

For more information, see AG Editor's Open Access Policy: https://www.ageditor.org/editorial-policies.php

ISBN (Spanish edition, eBook): 978-9915-9680-4-9

ISBN (English edition, eBook): 978-9915-9680-5-6

This title is available in both print (softcover) and digital (open access PDF) formats.

DOI: 10.62486/978-9915-9680-5-6

Publisher: Javier González Argote
Chief Executive Officer: editorial@ageditor.org
Editorial Director: Emanuel Maldonado
Editorial Coordinators: William Castillo González; Karina Maldonado
Production Manager: Adrián Alejandro Vitón Castillo

Legal Deposit: National Library of Uruguay — Law No. 13.835/1970 and Decree No. 694/1971

ISBN Record: National ISBN Agency (Uruguay) — Filing No. 58241

Cataloging Data

Cataloging-in-Publication Data (CIP):
AG Editor
Teachers under evaluation: the imaginaries of power and fear in Colombian education (Spanish version) / Edwin Tovar Briñez. – Montevideo: AG Editor, 2025.

ISBN (Spanish edition, eBook): 978-9915-9680-4-9

ISBN (English edition, eBook): 978-9915-9680-5-6

Translation from Spanish to English: Cristhian Alejandro Pérez Pacheco

THEMA classification codes:
JNFC – Tutoring of students
JNKH – Teaching staff / educators
JNAM – Moral and social purpose of education

Editorial Notice and Acknowledgments

The publication of this book is part of AG Editor's mission to promote open, ethical, and rigorous scientific communication across all areas of knowledge.

All books published by AG Editor undergo a double-blind peer-review process and a technical evaluation in accordance with the publisher's editorial policies, aligned with COPE and ICMJE standards.

AG Editor acknowledges the valuable collaboration of authors, reviewers, designers, and production teams who made this publication possible.

Acknowledgments / Agradecimientos

If I were to name every person who made it possible for me to reach this moment, I'd probably have to write another book just for that. I'll try to mention them, although I apologize in advance if my memory fails me and I unintentionally leave someone out. That would never be my intention.

First and above all, thank God, my mother, and my family. They have believed in me unconditionally, even on the most uncertain days. I am writing these words because of them and for them.

I also want to thank the team at the Universidad Cuauhtémoc in Aguascalientes, especially Dr. Cristóbal González Esquivel, with whom I shared nearly two years of work in the construction of this document. His endless patience and his clear perspective on the challenges of teaching—both in Mexico and in Colombia—were a constant source of guidance.

In the same vein, I extend my gratitude to the academic team at the Instituto de Pensamiento y Cultura en América Latina (Institute of Thought and Culture in Latin America, IPECAL), led by PhD Estela Quintar. Our conversations, always shared over a mate, sparked many questions within me that gave this research a deeper meaning.

And I can't leave out my old friends:

To Wilmar, for his patience;
to Canela, for her poetry, which was always a refuge in difficult times;
to Lucelly, for her wisdom that found its way into every small gesture and word;
to Dr. Maroslee Díaz, for the afternoons we spent reflecting on what it implies to research with purpose;
and to Miguel and Martha, for helping me understand more deeply the responsibility—and the privilege—of being an educator.

I would like to close with a very special thank-you to my girls and boys. They are the ones who inspire me to be better every day: a better teacher, a better person, a better human being. Thanks to you, I continue to raise the union and social banner with pride, in defense of Human Rights.

To all of you, thank you from the bottom of my hearth! I always carry you with me.

Dedication / Dedicatoria

I thank God for the gift of life, for allowing me to be here writing these words. But above all, I thank Him for giving me three of His greatest blessings in the form of tangible love: my mother, my sister, and my nephew. To them, all my eternal love.

Index/ Indice

Sinopsis / Sinopsis

Teachers Under Evaluation: The imaginaries of Power and Fear in Colombian Education is a work that delves, with theoretical depth and a testimonial voice, into the symbolic fabric that sustains the teaching profession in the country. Through a style that blends academic reflection with pedagogical narrative, the author explores how power, evaluation, and fear intertwine within the everyday experience of Colombian teaching.

From a critical and humanistic approach, the author analyzes the evolution of the national education system based on statutes 2277 and 1278, showing how evaluation policies, under the language of "quality" and "merit", have reshaped the imaginaries of the teaching profession. In these pages, the teacher does not appear as a passive victim of reforms, but as a historical subject who resists, creates, and reimagines their practice through hope.

The text brings together theory and experience with academic precision, drawing on thinkers such as Foucault, Bourdieu, Freire, Castoriadis, Dubet, Bauman, Popkewitz and Covarrubias, among others. Through these dialogues, the author offers an interpretation of the teaching profession as a field of forces, where symbolic capital, ethical meanings and political horizons are contested.

Each chapter constitutes a distinct — and complementary — approach to the imaginaries that shape teaching: merit, vocation, control, dignity, and resistance. With a clear and poetic language, the author reveals that pedagogy not only teaches content, but also ways of being and existing in the world. In these pages, hope is not presented as consolation, but as a political practice; and evaluation, not as punishment, but as an opportunity for dialogue.

Teachers under evaluation is an invitation to rethink the school as a space of meaning, not of obedience; as a territory of care, not of surveillance. An indispensable work for those who believe that education remains an act of faith, and justice.

Keywords: teaching profession, teacher evaluation, power, social imaginaries, dignity, pedagogical resistance, Colombian education, Paulo Freire.

I met Dr. Edwin Tovar Briñez in the midst of those conversations that only teachers and researchers know how to sustain: long, dense, yet always with an invisible thread of hope. From that moment, I knew his work would not be just another thesis, but an ethical gesture, a stance against a system that too often forgets that teaching is a deeply human act before an administrative one.

This book —*Teachers Under Evaluation: The Imaginaries of Power and Fear in Colombian Education* — is born from that widespread conversation between experience and theory, between life and language. It is a work that achieves the most difficult task: turning research into awareness, and awareness into a narrative that moves the reader not only through its rigor, but through its truth.

What is presented here is neither a dead-end denunciation nor a naïve praise of the teaching profession. It is, rather, a critical mirror of teaching in a country where educating has paradoxically become an act of resistance. Through a writing style that combines sociological analysis, memory, and pedagogy, Edwin reconstructs the imaginaries that inhabit the school: those of merit, sacrifice, control, vocation, and above all, hope.

His view is a deep and honest one on the effects of power within the classroom. Inspired by Foucault, Bourdieu, and Castoriadis, but also by Freire and Latin American thinkers of education, the author shows us how public policies and technocratic discourses regulate structures and in turn, subjectivities, they shape the way teachers think of themselves and are thought of by others.

However, this book doesn't stop at diagnosis. It has the rare merit of offering a pedagogy of hope amidst precariousness. There, where fear becomes routine, Edwin finds gestures of resistance: the teacher who cares, the professor who listens, the collective that debates. These are small insurgencies that don't appear in Ministry reports, yet sustain, day by day, the soul of the school.

His writing —warm and rigorous— avoids academic jargon without losing depth. He speaks to us from the classroom, not from the podium. In that close and lucid tone, we recognize a researcher who has observed with empathy, without giving up critical insight. Reading this book is to witness an act of symbolic restoration of the teacher: giving back their voice, their story, and their dignity.

As a sociologist, it gives me satisfaction the ability with which the author connects the microphysics of power (that which lives in rubrics, forms, and classroom observations) with the larger political and economic structures that contemporary education experiences. But as a citizen and reader, I am even more moved by his unwavering faith in the teaching profession.

In Dr. Tovar's words, evaluation has become synonymous with surveillance, this book reminds us that evaluating can also mean to listen, and that any school that listens to its teachers is already transforming the country.

I conclude these lines with a certainty that the text itself leaves me with: as long as there are teachers who think, write, and resist being forgotten —like Edwin Tovar Briñez— education will remain the most human place of all professions.

Daniel Román Acosta

Introduction / Introducción

There are books that are born from an idea, and others that are born from a wound.

This book was born of both: from the idea of understanding how power infiltrates educational spaces, and from the wound left in the teacher's soul by the feeling of being watched, measured, and classified.

For years, I have listened to colleagues speak with a same tone: that of exhausted hope. "They evaluate us, but they don't listen to us"; "They demand results, but no one asks how we feel". These phrases, repeated in hallways, staff rooms, and informal conversations, were the starting point for this research, which has now become a book.

"Teachers Under Evaluation" is not a text about decrees or policies —although it names and analyzes them— but about their human effects. It is a look inside the Colombian teaching profession, into that space where rules become experience, and politics become biography.

In Colombia, education has been influenced by the idea of quality as a synonym for control. Decree 1278 of 2002, with its promise of professionalization, established a new symbolic order: the teacher ceased to be a subject of knowledge and gradually became a subject of evaluation.

It was not just a legal change: it was cultural and emotional. It transformed the imaginaries of what it means "to be a good teacher", altered the identity of the teaching profession, and replaced trust with fear.

This book aims to interpret that transformation from a different perspective: that of social imaginaries (Castoriadis, 1987). It is not about recounting what the decree says, but what it does; not what it imposes, but what it produces in the subjectivity of those who experience it.

In the classroom, power is not imposed solely from above: it circulates. It is in the forms, in the rubrics, in the learned silences, in the gaze that fears to speak.

But resistance circulates as well: in the teacher who writes poetry in her lesson plans, in the professor who dares to debate, in the collective that turns a directive into dialogue. Because, as Foucault taught, where there is power, there is the possibility of freedom.

This work moves between theory and experience. It engages with thinkers such as Foucault, Bourdieu, Castoriadis, Freire, Dubet, Bauman, Popkewitz, and Covarrubias, but also with the living words of Colombian teachers, with their memories and daily gestures. Between these two languages —the academic and the human— a narrative is constructed that seeks to understand without losing sensitivity, and to critique without losing tenderness.

The chapters are organized like a walk:

- The first explores fear as a structure of educational power.
- The second examines evaluation as a symbolic instrument of control.
- The third delves into the teacher's imaginaries: the stories that sustain or fragment their identity.
- The fourth proposes a pedagogy of hope and resistance, where dignity becomes a political act.
- The fifth reflects on education, power, and dignity, as the ethical closure of the work.

Each chapter analyzes and narrates concepts accompanied by a scene, a voice, a story that breathes within the schools. Because in this book, theory does not seek to rise above, it seeks to be embodied: to take form in the teacher's voice, in their experience of fear and hope, in their struggle to preserve meaning.

The intention of this work is not to offer recipes or judgments. It is an invitation to think about education through the humanity of those who practice it. To see the teacher not as a variable in public policy, but as a subject of voice and of history.

This book is also a gesture of gratitude.

To the teachers who resist from their day-to-day work, who teach under precarious conditions, who continue to believe in the transformative power of words. To them, who make it possible for us to still speak of education with faith and with poetry.

As Freire (1997) would say, hope is not naivety—it is a duty. And writing this book was, above all, an act of hope.

Chapter 1 / Capítulo 1

Teachers under evaluation: the imaginaries of power and fear in Colombian education (English version)
ISBN: 978-9915-9680-5-6
DOI: 10.62486/978-9915-9680-5-6.ch01

The wound of teaching / La herida del magisterio

"No signature weighs as heavily as it does on those who live by chalk"
— voice of the teachers' lounge

The seven o'clock bell hasn't rung yet, and the teachers' lounge already smells of reheated coffee. At one end of the long table, someone has left a stack of papers: the annual evaluation form. Next to it, there is a capless highlighter and an awkward silence. No one says anything, yet everyone looks at that stack as if it were a medical report: it can confirm what is already suspected or open a new wound.

Julián —fifteen years in elementary school, two daughters, a partially paid postgraduate degree— walks in, nods with his chin, and sits down. "Again?" he asks, without asking permission from the silence. No one answers; it isn't necessary. Fear here doesn't shout: it organizes the agenda, grades exams at late hours, softens its voice in academic meetings. From the doorway, the coordinator peeks in and smiles with the courtesy of a notary: "Remember to submit on time". Then she leaves. The stack doesn't move. Neither do we.

This scene, which could take place in any school in the country, is more than an awkward moment. It is a symptom. And like any symptom, it calls for context, history, and a name.

When the ground changed

There was a time when the word "statute" sounded like conquest, a custom-made suit for the profession, dignity on paper. Many colleagues still remember Decree 2277 of 1979 as the pillar that upheld a professional identity and a shared career horizon. With the arrival of Decree-Law 1278 of 2002, the ground shifted. It was not just a regulatory update: it was a redefinition of the meaning of being a teacher in the State, of the paths for entry, promotion, and tenure, and of the way power peers into the classroom (Bautista, 2009; Tenorio, 2014).

These transformations did not fall from the sky. They respond to an era in which education is rewritten with the alphabet of efficiency, accountability, and competitiveness, where evaluation becomes a filter, an incentive, and, at times, a punishment (Moretti Tapia, 2022; Cuevas & Rangel, 2019). This is not a phenomenon exclusive to Colombia; it can be recognized across Latin America and beyond (Moretti, 2022; Rodríguez, 2019). Yet each country embodies it in its own way, and here —in our schools, with our children and our stories— it took the shape of a fracture: two statutes, one profession, different expectations, unequal salaries, and a murmur that never fades: *"What if I don't pass this year?"*

The fear that organizes

Foucault (1975) wrote that power does not only repress: it produces realities, rituals, and subjectivities. In the teaching profession, power is felt in spreadsheets, performance rubrics, and scheduled "protocol" meetings. It is not a whip; it is a calendar. It seeps through the cracks of language ("competencies", "goals", "standards") and, quietly, defines what is considered "good teaching" (Popkewitz, 1994). One learns to speak its dialect in order not to be left out.

Bourdieu helps us see that we do not merely obey rules: we embody *habitus*, dispositions that, over time, come to feel natural (Bourdieu, 1994). The teacher who adjusts their class to fit the rubric, who measures creativity by the checkbox, who learns not to take problems "upward" in

order not to cause discomfort, is not less free: they are more cautious. In "liquid" societies, where the solid dissolves and the certain becomes temporary, fear is not an accident: it is the atmosphere (Bauman, 2003).

That fear has pedagogical effects. It turns the teacher into a manager of evidence rather than a weaver of experiences. It focuses them on surviving the evaluation cycle and distracts them from what brought them here: the everyday miracle of learning with others. In our hallways, fear walks hand in hand with hope: there is fear of the principal's signature, and at the same time, trust in the colleague's complicity, in the network, in the union, in the conversation after recess (Covarrubias & Brito, 2007; Sarmiento Pinzón, 2021).

In assemblies, teachers' lounges, and chat groups, the comparison between the statutes —the "old" 2277 and the "new" 1278— has become a literary genre. They are not shopping lists; they are narratives of identity. Those who entered under 1278 learned the craft through a different grammar: competitive exams, probationary periods, periodic evaluations, specialized diploma courses, a more granular career ladder, and promises of meritocracy that coexist with the tightness of time and salary (Bautista, 2009). Those who lived under 2277 do not idealize the past, but they remember a less abrasive fabric, a less fragmented career.

That fracture not only separates generations: it strains teachers' lounges, sustains fragile balances, and sows constant comparison. What on the surface is presented as a difference in career paths, at a deeper level, is felt as a difference in recognition. And recognition —as we know from practice— either nourishes or withers the vocation.

The imaginaries that shape us

Castoriadis (1987) called "imaginary" that magma of meanings that a society creates to give sense to its experiences. In our schools, the imaginary of "merit" coexists with that of "sacrifice", the one of "control" with that of "mission", the "evaluated subject" with the "public intellectual". These imaginaries are not standalone ideas: they become practices, justify decisions, and define silences.

When a teacher says, "here, what matters is the evidence", they are not merely describing: they are legitimizing a form of teaching. When another responds, "what matters is the relationship", they propose a different one. The tension is no smaller; it crosses us and, at times, splits us. Speaking of imaginaries is not a theoretical luxury: it is an act of professional hygiene. It allows us to name the forces that push us —and decide which ones we accept and which we resist (Acosta Moré et al., 2026).

Evaluation can be a mirror that reflects questions or a hammer that shapes through blows. It depends on the design, the use, and, above all, the power relationship that sustains it (Soto, 2013; Tamayo, 2010). In many contexts, performance forms have functioned more as instruments of control than as opportunities for growth. Not because evaluating is bad, but because the way evaluation is carried out conveys a political message: "I observe you to command" or "I accompany you to help you learn".

Vygotsky (1978) would remind us that all development is social before it is individual. An evaluation that isolates the teacher, that does not acknowledge the context, the heterogeneity of the classroom, or the material conditions, misses the point: it confuses measurement with learning. Evaluating teaching without evaluating the ecosystem is like judging a work of art by the color of the curtain.

These imaginaries do not live in the statutes, but in everyday gestures: in the way one greets the principal, in how a form is filled out, in the way a teacher decides to stay silent or speak during faculty meetings. Each practice, each silence, each word repeated naturally reveals a way of understanding the teaching profession. As Bourdieu (1994) wisely noted, the symbolic carries the force of law when it manages to present itself as "the normal". The danger is not obeying an unjust rule, but believing it is the only possible one.

Speaking of imaginaries is not a theoretical luxury, but an act of professional hygiene. It allows us to clear our vision, recognize which forces push us, and, above all, decide which ones we accept and which we resist. Without that awareness, the teacher repeats others' discourses believing them to be their own. That is why, as Freire (1997) emphasizes, education begins with the awareness of one's own history: "*No one educates anyone else, no one educates themselves alone; people educate each other, mediated by the world*". What changes the teacher's world is not a statute, but their way of understanding their place within it.

Among the most persistent imaginaries in the Colombian educational system is the imaginary of control: the belief that valuable teaching must be measured, supervised, and validated from the outside. This idea, which seems natural, stems from a deeper political rationality. Foucault (1975/2008) showed how modern power disguises itself as management: surveillance becomes accompaniment, control masquerades as guidance, and the teacher ends up self-monitoring in the name of "quality".

Tamayo (2010) reported this clearly: teacher evaluation in Colombia not only measures performance, but also shapes subjectivities. The teacher internalizes the gaze of the State, they observe themselves through others' eyes. They feel indebted. That discreet fear, that learned prudence, becomes habitus. In this way, power no longer needs coercion: the teacher self-regulates in advance, seeking not to be singled out.

In response to that imaginary, resistance begins with an intimate gesture: returning to trust in one's own pedagogical judgment. In remembering that teaching is not about executing instructions, but about interpreting realities. That teacher autonomy is not a privilege, but an ethical responsibility. Hope, then, does not oppose control by negation, but by creation: it invents alternative ways to legitimize pedagogical work from the community, through dialogue, and through shared practice.

Another persistent figure in the teaching imaginary is that of sacrifice. In accounts of the teaching profession —in conferences, talks, the press, hallways— the teacher appears as a martyr of the system: the one who stays up late, the one who pays for their own materials, the one who "endures because they love it". This narrative, although it seems laudatory, is also a trap. As Mejía (2011) states, "*the mystique of sacrifice masks the precarization of teaching labor under the cover of dedication*".

Vocation, when confused with sacrifice, loses its emancipatory power. Love for teaching cannot be an excuse to tolerate institutional mistreatment or social indifference. The ethics of care —so present in the Latin American tradition (Covarrubias & Brito, 2007)— demands caring also for the caregiver. The teacher who neglects themselves in the name of others ends up emptied of meaning.

That is why, as Freire (1997) proposes, educational commitment must be dialogical: caring for others without neglecting oneself, serving without losing oneself. The pedagogy of hope does not exalt sacrifice, but transforms it into critical solidarity: the act of resisting with awareness, not with resignation.

Colombian educational policy strongly established the imaginary of merit as a moral criterion and organizing principle of the system (Tenorio, 2014; Bautista, 2009). Seemingly, it is a fair principle: everyone advances according to their effort. But, like any hegemonic narrative, merit conceals structural inequalities.

The rural teacher without access to postgraduate education competes with the urban teacher who has a university nearby; the young teacher without time or resources is measured against one who has any institutional support. In theory, all are equal; in practice, the conditions are radically different. And when merit becomes the sole criterion, injustice is cloaked in legality.

Bourdieu (1994) warned that meritocracy does not eliminate inequality: it reproduces it with symbolic legitimacy. The teacher who "does not advance" not only remains stuck in the hierarchy, but is also marked by an invisible guilt: the guilt of not having "known how to take advantage of opportunities". The outcome is doubly perverse: precarity becomes naturalized, and solidarity is dismantled.

Merit, when it does not recognize context, ceases to be a compass and becomes a boundary. Reimagining it requires restoring its collective dimension: acknowledging the merit of the team, of the community, of shared effort. Because teaching, as Vygotsky (1978) reminded us, is always a social act: it is built with others, not against them.

Imaginaries are not fixed. They transform with generations, with contexts, with struggles. Every new teacher inherits narratives —about merit, sacrifice, vocation, control—, but also rewrites them from their own experience. That silent rewriting is itself a form of symbolic emancipation.

Sarmiento Pinzón (2021) holds that professional dignity begins when teachers take on authorship of their own stories. To speak about oneself, to write about one's experience, to systematize one's practice is not academic vanity: it is a political act. Popkewitz (1994) confirmed this from another perspective: pedagogy is also the production of discourse, and whoever controls the discourse controls meaning.

To reclaim the word —to say "this is my story, this is my work, this is my knowledge"— is to begin instituting a new imaginary of the teaching profession. One in which the teacher is not evaluated but listened to; not monitored but accompanied; not managed but recognized as a public intellectual and an agent of transformation.

A story can also be read in our salary scales: that about the value of study time, accumulated experience, and the daily responsibility of teaching. The promise of Decree 1278, of "the higher the qualification, the greater the compensation" encounters well-known limits in reality: expensive postgraduate programs, unequal academic offering, slow administrative procedures, and intermittent calls for promotion (Bautista, 2009; FECODE, 2022).

The message a teacher receives when the career takes too long to acknowledge their effort is not an accounting one: it is moral. The morale of the profession, when eroded, cannot be restored through a motivation workshop. It is rebuilt through justice, coherence, and truthful words.

Freire (1998) reminded us that "*education is an act of love, and thus an act of courage*". A teacher who demands dignity is not asking for privileges: he is asking for the conditions to keep loving their profession without having to sacrifice themselves for it.

The school as a field of forces

The sociology of the field teaches us that within the school, various forms of capital —symbolic, cultural, bureaucratic, and social— intersect, and that each actor's position is contested through concrete practices (Bourdieu, 1994). No action is innocent. The principal who interprets a regulation one way or another, the administration that sets a schedule, the union that calls for action, the teacher who chooses to speak or remain silent, the family that supports or pressures, all move their pieces. The school is not a "place" in any static sense; it is a field of living forces, a board of relationships where meanings are negotiated, hierarchies are constructed, and forms of power are contested.

That field is crossed by visible and invisible tensions. The visible tensions are regulations, statements, reforms, official discourse. The invisible: affections, silences, loyalties, fears. In that fabric —a blend of structure and desire— much of school life is defined. Foucault (1975) would put it bluntly: power is not imposed from above, it circulates. It seeps into gestures, into documents, into hallways, into the voice that adjusts itself when speaking before a principal. That is why the classroom is not outside politics; it is a daily way of practicing it.

The school field has its own symbolic economy. There are capitals that circulate and determine who has legitimacy to speak: academic qualification, experience, seniority, eloquence, closeness to the principal, the reputation of being "efficient". But there are also alternative capitals, less recognized yet more powerful: empathy, the capacity to listen, the moral authority that emanates from example. The teacher who earns the respect of their students and colleagues accumulates a form of symbolic capital that no decree can grant or take away.

Sarmiento Pinzón (2021) noted that a teacher's professional dignity is played out precisely in this symbolic dimension: not in indicators, but in the recognition of the other. Where the system installs bureaucratic hierarchies, the teacher reconstructs ethical hierarchies. Where policy privileges evidence, the teacher restores experience. And in that daily practice, the instituting power of the profession is revealed: the capacity to redefine the meaning of school from within.

In that field, the State enters in multiple forms: forms, directives, visits, budgets, guidelines. At times with promises of reform that seek to "modernize" the profession; at times with adjustments that, under the language of quality, impose macroeconomic tensions upon the classroom (Tenorio, 2014). It is not conspiracy: it is structure. And structure, if unnamed, becomes naturalized.

Freire (1997) insisted that the most serious aspect of oppression is not control, but its internalization: when the oppressed begin to think with the voice of the oppressor. In the school, this happens when the teacher accepts as unquestionable the discourses that subordinate them. When they repeat, without critique, that "everything is a matter of management", or that "vocation is proven by enduring", they are surrendering the field of meaning. To name the structure is, therefore, the first act of freedom.

Castoriadis (1987) would say that every institution rests on a social imaginary: a set of meanings that present themselves as natural, even though they are historical constructions. The school, as a modern institution, has been designed to reproduce an order —that of the nation-state, the market, the norm—, yet within that very structure lies the possibility of creating other orders. Therein lies its paradox: it is a space of reproduction and invention at the same time.

Popkewitz (1994) complements this view by asserting that educational reforms are also technologies of governance. Under the discourse of innovation and quality, mechanisms of

surveillance, self-assessment, and ranking are introduced with the aim of shaping "modern", "efficient", and "productive" subjectivities. But, as Popkewitz himself warns, the teacher is not a passive recipient of these policies: they interpret, adapt, and subvert them. It is in this mediation that the key to their agency lies.

The union, for example, represents one of the most visible forces in the field. Its discourse contests the meaning of policies, questions the legitimacy of reforms, and reminds us of the collective dimension of educational work. Covarrubias and Brito (2007) emphasize that Latin American teacher unionism has also been a pedagogical movement: a pedagogy of resistance that teaches citizenship, solidarity, and memory. The defense of labor rights is, ultimately, the defense of the right to teach with dignity.

The family, another actor in the field, brings its own moral and emotional capital. Its expectations can be either encouragement or pressure. In underprivileged communities, the school is often the only space where the State becomes visible; the teacher, its only human face. This symbolic burden amplifies their responsibility, but also their transformative power.

Bautista (2009) noted that, with the introduction of Decree 1278, an attempt was made to rationalize the educational field under the logic of competition. This "modernization" transferred to the school tensions that previously belonged to the economy: productivity, efficiency, performance. But the classroom, unlike the factory, does not produce objects but relationships. When measured with market tools, the outcome is not quality, but dehumanization.

That is why the school is a field of forces, but also of contested meanings. Every actor, in speaking, acts; in deciding, institutes. There is no neutrality. In every pedagogical meeting, in every council, in every informal conversation, a model of education, a vision of power, and an idea of humanity are being defined. The political does not take place only in the ministry; it also occurs in the teachers' lounge.

Patiño Niño (2019), interpreting Rancière (2003), points out that the emancipatory teacher does not carry out their role from a position of superiority; on the contrary, it is from the recognition of the equality of intelligences. Their task is neither to transmit knowledge nor to dominate wills, but to "make the intelligences of the students relate directly to the intelligence of the common thing" (p. 355), thus acting as a mediator in a process of emancipation that frees without imposing. In this sense, the teacher's power does not lie in the authority they hold, but in their ability to awaken in others the awareness of their own potential.

The school, in short, is a field of tensions where each individual acts, suffers, and creates. There, the language of control confronts that of commitment, that of fear confronts that of hope, that of the norm confronts that of desire. In this daily conflict, the soul of the teaching profession is defined.

To name that field, to recognize its forces, to analyze its dynamics, is a way of reclaiming the teacher's symbolic autonomy. For if power circulates —as Foucault taught—, so too does freedom. And in the school, that freedom begins the moment a teacher dares to say: "This is my field too, and here my voice matters".

Dignity as public policy

Talking about dignity is not poetry: it is public policy. The Constitution established education as a right and a service that the State must guarantee with quality; this includes recognizing the teacher as a professional with high responsibility, not merely as a spreadsheet executor (Political Constitution

of Colombia, 1991). Any serious reform of the teaching career must take into account the ecosystem of teachers' work: actual time allocation, relevant professional development, participation in decision-making, material conditions, and symbolic recognition (MEN, 2002; Sarmiento Pinzón, 2021).

In this context, union activity is not noise: it is organized citizenship. When the union debates statutes, it is not only discussing salaries: it is discussing the purpose of the school, the meaning of the classroom, and the republican promise we uphold every morning (Covarrubias & Brito, 2007).

Despite the rubrics, the deadlines, the stack of papers in the staff room, there is something the paperwork cannot capture: the moment that unfolds when a child, after many attempts, finally understands. That spark in their eyes does not appear in the indicators, yet it is what keeps us going. Call it vocation, connection, an ethic of care. It is what allows us to remember that we teach people, not metrics.

That is why this book does not seek to feed nostalgia or to burn manuals. It aims to open an honest conversation with those who live by chalk and by the word: What imaginaries sustain us and which ones sink us? What kind of evaluation do we want, and for what purpose? What statute do we need to be better teachers without turning into form-filling operators?

Close in order to open

The bell finally rings. The room breathes again. Someone grabs the stack, hands out the forms, and the conversations resume, now with a practical tone: "Do you have indicator three at hand?" School life —wise, stubborn— goes on. As we walk back to the classroom, it is legitimate to feel the wound; it is also urgent to think about how to heal it.

Perhaps the first step is simple and radical: to listen to one another again. To name what hurts, to remember what makes us proud, and to decide, together, what kind of school we want to sustain. It is there, in that weaving, where fear loses organization and hope gains method (Castoriadis, 1987; Popkewitz, 1994).

A question that continues to echo:

What if, instead of being taught how to "get through" the evaluation, we built an evaluation that helps us teach better?

Chapter 2 / Capítulo 2

Teachers under evaluation: the imaginaries of power and fear in Colombian education (English version)
ISBN: 978-9915-9680-5-6
DOI: 10.62486/978-9915-9680-5-6.ch02

Fear as policy / El miedo como política

"Fear is not in the law; it lies in the silence it leaves behind."
— Anonymous teacher from Boyacá

The day of the evaluation begins long before the day of the evaluation. It begins when the institutional email announces the visit, when the hallways fill with whispers and teachers, without saying so, change their tone of voice. On that day, classrooms don't smell like marker ink but like control. Everyone reviews the forms, updates folders, fixes verbs. "Just in case", someone says. There is no visible enemy, yet you can feel the pulse of diffuse surveillance. Foucault (1975/2008) explained that modern power does not need whips: it only needs to make people believe someone is watching. The panopticon is no longer a tower; it is a culture. In schools, the panopticon wears civilian clothes and goes by the name of protocol.

The pedagogy of control

In every classroom, next to the blackboard, hangs a clock. In the offices, an Excel sheet. In ministerial discourse, the word "quality". Between the three, a pedagogy is built that does not teach mathematics or literature, but obedience. It is a pedagogy that does not appear in curricula, yet organizes school life. It has no dedicated subject, yet permeates every class. It teaches without words, corrects without punishment, models without debate. This is the pedagogy of control.

In it, time is the first watchman. Every minute accounted for, every report submitted, every rubric completed creates a sense of precision that reassures the administration, even as it worries the teacher. The classroom ceases to be a space for exploration and becomes a stage for verification. "Complying" becomes both a pedagogical verb and a moral measure: those who comply are good teachers, those who improvise are suspect.

Control has become an everyday grammar: observation sheets, performance rubrics, classroom visits, indicators, and goals that colonize the teacher's language. As Popkewitz (1994) warns, educational reform does not merely change structures; it regulates ways of thinking. It defines what is reasonable, what is desirable, what is legitimate. Within this framework, the teacher is no longer measured by their ability to inspire, but by their ability to document their inspiration.

Forms, more than tools, become signs of obedience. Bourdieu (1994) would explain that the symbolic power of control lies precisely in its apparent neutrality: everyone accepts it because it seems logical, inevitable, technical. But behind every Excel sheet hides an ideology: that of efficiency over relationship, of product over process, of number over word.

Power, following Foucault (1975), does not operate only from above: it circulates. It takes hold in every signed cell, in every completed form, in every preventive fear. It does not require coercion, because it seeps into subjectivity. That is why repealing a rule is not enough: one must also examine the structure of feelings it leaves behind. The tragic thing is not that the teacher fears the decree, but that they end up justifying it, repeating its logic, unintentionally becoming its executor.

In institutional meetings, administrators repeat that "evaluation is meant to improve". Yet between the lines, it is understood that anyone who fails to score sixty points risks losing everything. The boundary between support and threat becomes blurred. On the surface, these are technical processes; at their core, they are rituals that legitimize fear. As Tamayo (2010) rightly noted, teacher

evaluation in Colombia was shaped more as a device of labor control than as a formative strategy. Its design emphasizes sanction over understanding.

It is therefore not surprising that many teachers associate the word "evaluation" with "dismissal" rather than with "learning". This association is not the result of paranoia, but of accumulated experience. In multiple contexts, evaluation has not been a space for growth, but a stage for exclusion. Meritocratic discourse —which promised to recognize effort and professionalize teaching (MEN, 2002)— ended up functioning as a symbolic boundary between the "capable" and the "deficient".

In the pedagogy of control, emotions are also managed. Fear is planned. There is no need to impose punishments when simply creating the expectation of error is enough. The teacher learns to speak cautiously, to write carefully, to correct without questioning. Fear becomes part of the hidden curriculum.

Bourdieu (1994) would have called it a *defensive habitus*: an internalized disposition that shapes behavior. New teachers learn from the veterans the art of surviving surveillance: "don't say that in public", "don't speak too much", "keep copies of everything". These are lessons in caution that end up replacing lessons in reflection. In the name of stability, one gives up their voice.

But control does not only inhibit; it also produces subjectivity. Foucault explained this clearly: power does not merely forbid, it also creates. It produces ways of speaking, of seeing oneself, of feeling. In the case of the teacher, it produces the figure of the teacher-manager: one who plans, evaluates, files, manages, but barely has time to think. The system rewards them for being organized, not for being creative; for complying, not for imagining.

And yet, within that machinery, the teacher remains an agent. There are cracks, fissures, margins. In every interstitial space —the recess, the hallway chat, the improvised lesson— an alternative pedagogy can emerge, a pedagogy of conversation and meaning. As Freire (1997) reminds us, "education is an act of freedom; there is no neutral education". Teaching, even within control, can be a form of emancipation if the teacher retains the ability to say "no" to the mechanization of their practice.

Tenorio (2014) warns that contemporary educational policies, by adopting the language of total quality, transfer market logics to the school: competitiveness, continuous evaluation, flexibility. But the classroom is not a business, and the teacher is not human capital. Much of the wear and tear of the profession lies in this semantic confusion. When schools adopt categories of business management, they lose their humanistic purpose.

In Castoriadis's (1987) terms, pedagogical control is part of the instituted imaginary of modernity: a way of ensuring that order is reproduced. But every society, he argued, also contains the possibility of a instituting imaginary: a creative force capable of breaking with the established. That force, in schools, is the teachers who decide to think for themselves, who dare to transform routine into reflection, obedience into inquiry, forms into conversation.

The challenge is not to eliminate control —impossible, and perhaps undesirable— but to humanize it: to turn it into support, into dialogue, into shared learning. The kind of control that educates is not the one that surveils, but the one that guides. The one that measures in order to understand, not in order to punish.

That is why every time a teacher turns an observation into a conversation, a report into self-reflection, an indicator into a question, they are exercising resistance. A subtle, everyday resistance, yet profoundly political. Because the pedagogy of control can only be dismantled by another pedagogy: one of meaning, of relationship, of language that becomes human again.

The power of the gaze

No one teaches the same when they know they are being watched. The body gives it away: the voice becomes modulated, gestures are controlled, spontaneity falls asleep. Students perceive it; they sense the tension; observers know it as well; they measure what they themselves have set in motion. In his analysis of power, Foucault (1975/2008) insisted that visibility is a trap: one performs for the eye that watches, not for the meaning one seeks to teach.

Thus, classroom observation becomes a theater of correction. The teacher stops being a free actor and turns into a functionary of the form. Castoriadis (1987) would explain that this system creates an imaginary: that of the "model teacher", an almost technical figure, aligned with protocol, without cracks or doubt. But education —the real kind, the one that bleeds and laughs— is impossible without contradictions.

The fear of "not measuring up" produces its own aesthetic: spotless classrooms, meticulous folders, polished speeches. Yet a pedagogy measured in decimals does not reach to measure tenderness, nor patience, nor the ingenuity that emerges in improvisation. What does not fit in the form does not exist for the State.

There is a kind of fear that does not appear on paper, yet paper produces it: the fear of speaking. In academic meetings, many choose silence over dissent. It is not cowardice; it is an instinct for self-preservation. According to Bauman (2003), in liquid modernity, job insecurity becomes a form of governance: each person watches themselves to avoid being discarded. In school, the body is the first territory of control: the schedule, attendance, the signature, clothing, emotional disposition. And yet, that same body —with its fatigue and its laughter— remains a site of resistance. When a teacher sings, improvises, embraces, or laughs, they break the logic of fear for a moment. In that small gesture pulses the deepest kind of disobedience: the choice to remain human.

Resisting does not always look like resistance

Not every act of resistance is epic. Some fit inside a gesture: writing a personal note on an evaluation, holding a reading circle during recess, refusing to lose empathy, holding someone's gaze when everything urges you to lower yours. In Bourdieu's (1994) terms, these are micro-actions within the field, small symbolic struggles that seek to preserve meaning in the face of the machinery of normalization. They are almost invisible acts, yet deeply political: they do not aim to overthrow structures, but to prevent the soul from falling asleep.

Covarrubias and Brito (2007) remind us that a teacher's social commitment is not measured by obedience, but by ethical coherence. In bureaucratic contexts, resistance is not always opposition; sometimes it is care, accompanying, keeping alive the pedagogical conversation that policy tries to standardize. The ethics of care becomes, in this sense, a form of subversion: caring for language, caring for childhood, caring for hope. In a world that measures everything, caring for what cannot be measured is itself an act of resistance.

Freire (1997) called this attitude "radical hope": the conviction that transformation is possible without violence, that tenderness can be a political strategy. Teacher resistance, in its deepest sense, is not a rejection of the system, but a reinvention of what is possible. The teacher who

continues to teach with love amid disillusionment is not evading conflict; they are confronting it through another language.

Foucault (1975) had anticipated this: resistance is not outside power, but within it, in the interstices of its exercise. In schools, these cracks are the spaces where teachers choose to read differently, speak differently, alter the rhythms, laugh when silence is expected. These are the small leaks of control, the micropolitics of freedom.

Tamayo (2010) noted that teacher evaluation in Colombia was conceived more as a regulatory device than as an opportunity for growth. Yet, paradoxically, it is precisely these same devices that open up the possibility of rethinking the system. Each feedback meeting can become a space for conversation, each rubric an excuse to talk about what does not fit into the charts: relationships, emotion, history. In critical hands, the instrument of control can be transformed into a tool for reflection.

Bauman (2003) argued that in liquid modernity, power is exercised by dissolving bonds, fragmenting communities, and producing insecure individuals who blame themselves. In this context, resistance means rebuilding community: talking with colleagues, sharing materials, sustaining mutual trust. In times of competition, collaboration becomes revolutionary.

Vygotsky (1978) would remind us that all development is social before it is individual. If learning is mediated, professional growth is too. Evaluating a teacher without a community is a contradiction. Institutional isolation does not foster improvement: it produces alienation. Real improvement arises from peer conversation, the exchange of experiences, and trust in others.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2010) argues that modern institutions operate under a "northern epistemology" that renders local knowledge invisible. In this sense, resistance also means defending the pedagogical knowledge of the Global South: community-based practices, intuitive strategies, wisdom built from experience. When a teacher recognizes their own knowledge, they challenge the epistemological monopoly of technical discourse.

Tenorio (2014) warns that contemporary education policy talks about "modernization" but acts as a technification of teaching. In this context, resistance means rehumanizing language: replacing "product" with "process", "performance" with "presence", "quality" with "care". Every word rescued from the technocratic vocabulary restores education to its human dimension.

Apple (1986) and Giroux (1997) argued that teachers are transformative intellectuals: individuals who act at the heart of culture, contesting meanings and expanding horizons. From this perspective, resistance is the exercise of critical thinking within everyday practice. The classroom, more than a space for transmission, becomes a laboratory of emancipation.

And yet, not all resistance is visible. Some is woven in silence: a teacher who chooses to listen before punishing, a teacher who teaches poetry amid protocol, a group that meets to read Freire when the schedule forbids it. These are small but persistent acts that keep the human pulse of the school alive.

As Castoriadis (1987) points out, only a new imaginary can break the cycle of instituted power. An imaginary in which power is not rooted in fear, but in trust. To imagine such a school is not naivety; it is necessity. A school where evaluation is experienced as dialogue, not as threat. Where mistakes are seeds for learning, not sentences. Where the teacher, instead of fearing being observed, feels

supported in their process.

Public policy needs to return to the classroom, not to police it, but to listen to it. The Ministry of National Education (2002) stated that Decree 1278 sought to professionalize teachers; yet professionalization cannot be mistaken for bureaucratization. To professionalize is to recognize pedagogical knowledge as complex knowledge, not to reduce it to a checklist of competencies.

Resistance does not always look like resistance, yet it is. To resist is to refuse cynicism, to not let routine extinguish vocation, to not allow distrust to erase meaning. Every time a teacher keeps teaching with hope, even in the midst of uncertainty, the system cracks open just a little.

Freire (1998) said it best: "hope is not a passive stance; it is a vital choice for life". And in the classroom, each day, that choice is made again.

Chapter closing

Night falls over the school. Empty hallways hold the echoes of a day in which no one raised their voice, yet everyone thought the same thing. On the bulletin board, the evaluation schedule remains posted: blue tones, cold letters. As she leaves, a teacher switches off the classroom lights and whispers, "We'll continue tomorrow". She doesn't know that, with that simple phrase, she has just declared her resistance.

Because to continue —to teach despite fear, to think despite the norm, to care despite the protocol— is, in these times, the most noble political act a teacher can make.

Chapter 3 / Capítulo 3

Teachers under evaluation: the imaginaries of power and fear in Colombian education (English version)
ISBN: 978-9915-9680-5-6
DOI: 10.62486/978-9915-9680-5-6.ch03

The teacher's imagination / Los imaginarios del maestro

"Society is instituted by creating meanings that make it exist; without those shared images, there is no common world".
- Castoriadis, 1987

Evening settles over the teachers' lounge and, as always, the coffee tastes just a bit like urgency. Two teachers speak in low voices. "What does it mean to be a good teacher?" she asks, looking at the bulletin board filled with courses, summons, and deadlines. "The one who gets results", he replies, quickly, almost automatically. She smiles: "Results… for whom? The student, the principal, the ministry?" At the next table, someone adds: "A good teacher is the one who doesn't give up". Another voice, farther away: "The one who doesn't yell". No one writes any of it down, yet everyone keeps it. What seems like a hallway conversation is, in fact, an intimate assembly on the meaning of the craft: a map of images that, without us noticing, guide us. That is what we call imaginaries: the shared meanings that shape what we value and what we fear (Castoriadis, 1987).

There are phrases that become institutional legends: "With vocation, anything is possible", "Merit is always recognized", "Quality is measurable", "A good teacher leaves a mark". None of them are harmless. Each lays a brick in professional identity, shapes expectations, and sanctions behaviors. Bourdieu would say that these beliefs, repeated and legitimized, settle into habitus: dispositions we perceive as "natural" because we have lived them over and over (Bourdieu, 1994). Thus, amid competitions, rubrics, and heroic narratives, we gradually learn what to expect from ourselves and from others.

In this chapter, we pause to listen to that voices that inhabit us: the imaginary of merit, vocation as destiny, social recognition as a horizon, and teacher identity as a contested territory. Not to judge them from the outside, but to interrogate them from within: What do they allow us to see? What do they prevent us from creating? How do they intertwine with policies and with the concrete life of the classroom?

Scene in the teachers' lounge: "That thing we call being a good teacher"

The conversation continues as the sun slips through the blinds. "To be a good teacher is when your students want to come back to class", someone says, and the words leave a warmth in the air. Another colleague, more pragmatic, hesitates: "But if they don't improve on the tests, what's the point?" The echo of standardized assessment resurfaces, precise, like a metronome marking the pace of the times. What is being discussed is not just what or how we teach, but who holds the authority to say what it means to teach well: the child's gaze, the indicators, the principal, the community, or the State?

Ricoeur (1996) argues that we tell ourselves stories to know who we are; narrative identity is not a fixed mirror, but a story in motion. In education, each school invents its own repertoire of heroes and villains: the "innovative" teacher, the "traditional" one, the "test champion", the "poet of the classroom", the "unionist", the "technologist", the "lab coat teacher", the "chalk teacher". These characters do not appear in manuals: they live in whispers, in silent recognitions, in hallway conversations, in anecdotes repeated with a tone of respect or irony.

Like any narrative, these categories assign meanings and hierarchies: some are quoted in meetings, others are viewed with suspicion; some are invited to pilot programs, others are merely tolerated.

Bourdieu (1994) would explain it clearly: the school is a symbolic field, a stage where various forms of capital —cultural, social, moral— circulate, and where each gesture, each word, each evaluation result reshapes positions. In this space, being a "good teacher" is not only a pedagogical matter: it is a moral and political status.

However, the "good teacher" is not a universal category, but a situated narrative. Bruner (1991) reminded us that the human mind thinks in narrative formats before logical matrices. What we believe about the "good teacher" does not come from a decree, but from shared stories: the teacher who changed the trajectory of a restless student, the colleague who "pulled off" the science fair, the tutor who lost sleep over a "difficult" group. In these micro-stories, merit, vocation, and recognition take shape. Naming them, looking at them slowly, is the first gesture of freedom.

Dubet (2006) would say that teaching is a moral experience: a profession that requires creating meaning amid contradictory tensions. The teacher must educate within a system that often contradicts what it teaches. Their "good practice" depends not only on techniques, but on permanent ethical decisions: when to intervene, when to stay silent, when to care, when to confront. It is within this web of choices that the ethics of the profession is born.

Larrosa (2003), for his part, would express it with a gentler image: being a teacher is an experience of word and presence. It is not about "making others learn", but about being with someone in a way that allows them to think. In this definition, the good teacher is not the one who masters content, but the one who creates experience, the one who leaves a mark.

At the same time, Freire (1998) would add that there is no true teaching without love, but also none without courage. The "good" teacher is not the one who pleases, but the one who dares to speak the truth with tenderness. Being a good teacher, in his pedagogy, means teaching with hope, resisting the temptation of cynicism. In a context where bureaucracy colonizes language, hope becomes an act of resistance.

Honneth (1997) would speak here of recognition: the vital need to be seen, valued, and heard. The school, as a social microcosm, can grant or deny that recognition. When a teacher feels reduced to a number, they lose more than motivation: they lose identity. But when they find an environment where their voice matters —even if only among colleagues— they regain their moral strength.

Similarly, Sarmiento Pinzón (2021) translates this to the Colombian context: professional dignity begins with the teacher's self-recognition. No reform is possible if the teacher does not see themselves as a bearer of legitimate knowledge. In this line, Covarrubias and Brito (2007) propose a pedagogy of coherence: teaching is not about reproducing rules, but about embodying values.

Castoriadis (1987) would remind us that every society is instituted through imaginaries: meanings that organize reality. In schools, the imaginary of the "good teacher" can be a device of power — when it determines who belongs and who does not—or an instituting force— when it inspires new ways of practicing the profession. What matters is not to confuse the rule with meaning.

Meaning itself also can erode. In times of liquid modernity, as Bauman (2003) would say, bonds fragment, relationships lose their durability, and reference points dissolve. In that context, being a good teacher means maintaining the bond when everything around is fleeting. Teaching is, in a way, resisting dissolution: offering permanence amid the flow.

Foucault (1975) added that power is also exercised in the definition of what is considered normal.

In schools, a "good teacher" is one who sticks to the dominant model. Yet the history of teaching is precisely made up of those who dared to disobey creatively. The teacher who adapts the lesson plan to include a different child, the professor who breaks the routine to listen, the one who chooses not to stay silent in a staff meeting… all of them embody an ethical resistance that disguises itself as everyday practice.

Nussbaum (2010) reminds us that emotions are not irrational, but forms of moral judgment. Compassion, indignation, joy, and sadness serve as compasses guiding practice. A good teacher, then, is not one who eliminates emotion, but one who turns it into an ethical criterion: to teach with empathy is not weakness, it is depth.

In that teachers' lounge—that hybrid territory where the system meets humanity—the debate over "the good teacher" remains unresolved. And it shouldn't be resolved. Because, as Ricoeur would say, narrative identity is written with every new word. The essential thing is not to close the story, but to keep it alive.

Being a good teacher is not about meeting standards or repeating methods. It is about keeping alive the conversation on the meaning of teaching, even when the noise of the system wants to silence it. It is, in Freire's (1997) words, "to remain hopeful, even though everything invites discouragement".

Y perhaps, after all, that is the most honest definition of a good teacher: one who continues to believe in education as a possibility, even when the world seems not to believe in it.

The imaginary of merit: promise, compass, and boundary

Merit was offered to us as a fair promise: "the greater the effort and qualifications, the greater the recognition". In its positive aspect, it organizes the career, provides a horizon, and prevents arbitrariness. In its harsher aspect, however, it overlooks context, depoliticizes working conditions, and turns comparison into a way of life (Fraser, 2000; Bourdieu, 1994). Under statutes such as 1278, many teachers have felt that merit is measured with stable rules on unstable ground: fluctuating groups, scarce resources, exhausted time, and endless demands.

When merit becomes absolute, it tends to privatize blame: if you didn't get promoted, "you must have done something wrong"; if your class didn't improve, "you didn't apply the right strategy". The structural view fades, and self-doubt takes its place. Foucault warned that modern power mechanisms work best when the subject internalizes surveillance and governs themselves (Foucault, 1975/2008). The perfect meritocratic teacher is the one who constantly self-examines, adjusts their behavior to the protocol, and blames themselves when they don't reach the target.

Now, merit can also be understood as justice if it recognizes unequal starting points and if it repairs, not just distributes (Fraser, 2000). It is not the same to evaluate someone with twenty books in their classroom library as someone who carries a briefcase of absences. The question is not whether merit works, but which merit we measure and for what purpose. When merit stops being a border and becomes a compass again, it illuminates; when it forgets the social landscape, it wounds.

Vocation: between myth, ethics, and care

"This is done out of vocation", we say, and with that word we open both a bright door and a trap. A bright door, because it recalls the profound meaning of the profession: tending to the growth of others, creating time and space for something human to take place (Nussbaum, 2011; Dewey, 1997). A trap, because vocation sometimes operates as a mystique of sacrifice: the good teacher is the one

who endures everything, who stays longer hours, who "pays out of pocket", who neither gets sick nor protests.

Freire defended a critical notion of vocation: loving education does not mean romanticizing suffering, but committing to the dignity of both the learner and the educator (Freire, 1997). Lived in this way, vocation does not colonize the teacher; it humanizes them. It is an ethics of responsibility, not a cult of martyrdom. When the system appeals to vocation to cover structural deficits —salaries, materials, time— it turns a virtue into an alibi.

Vygotsky reminds us that no one teaches alone; every practice is mediated by cultural tools and by others (Vygotsky, 1978). Vocation, then, is not an individual attribute locked inside one's chest, but a relationship nourished by contexts, support, and communities. If we want to take care of it, celebrating it is not enough: it must be sustained both materially and symbolically.

The teacher does not live by conscience alone: they also live by the mirrors that reflect them back. Honneth (1995) argues that the struggle for recognition is the engine of modern identities; being seen with respect nourishes moral self-esteem and enables action. When society treats teachers as "second-tier," when the press reduces schools to rankings, when politics invokes them only during campaigns, a wound is inflicted, not only economic, but symbolic.

That recognition is contested across multiple arenas. In the classroom, where a "thank you, teacher" can sustain you for weeks; in the institution, where a fair word from the principal can legitimize or erode; in the neighborhood, where families either trust or question; in the State, which can turn the teacher into an ally or a suspect. Bourdieu would call it symbolic capital: accumulated prestige that enables or constrains one's voice (Bourdieu, 1994). Without that capital, even the best practice is left to the elements.

But recognition is not only external. There is also a recognition among peers that grounds a pedagogical citizenship: the gesture of sharing materials, the invitation to observe a class, the quiet applause for a small achievement. In times of competition, that economy of the gift acquires political weight: it affirms that the classroom is not an island, that the craft is shared.

Teacher identity: between habitus and possibility

Who am I when I say "I am a teacher"? A sociological answer would say: I am the sum of learned dispositions —the habitus— that guide me without my noticing (Bourdieu, 1994). A philosophical answer would add: I am also the capacity to begin something new, to act with others in order to inaugurate meaning (Arendt, 1958/2005). Between the two, teacher identity pulses like a tightened string: habituation and creation, routine and surprise.

In practice, identity is at stake in small decisions: what I keep to myself and what I say in staff meetings; how I organize time; when I prioritize the relationship over the content; when I say "no". Dewey insisted that education is an experience that carries forward; each lesson transforms the next (Dewey, 1938/1997). That is why it is wise to suspect totalizing definitions: a teacher is not a fixed role but an ongoing process.

The good news is that imaginaries are not destiny. If they can be named, they can be remade. Bruner trusted in the narrative power to reorder experience (Bruner, 1991): telling what we do in a different way opens up possibilities for doing it differently. That is why writing, talking, and observing ourselves with honesty are not luxuries, but technologies of teachers' freedom.

Imaginaries in dispute: State, school and community

Imaginaries do not emerge out of thin air: they are instituted through policies, discourses, media, and everyday practices (Castoriadis, 1987). The State, with its language of "quality", "merit", and "evidence", pushes certain meanings; the educational market adds others; unions, faculties of education, and school communities offer alternative significations. The school is the space where these forces meet and clash: a field of struggle (Bourdieu, 1994).

In that field, there are translations and resistances. The administrator who turns evaluation into conversation; the team that transforms the rubric into a tool for co-formation; the teacher who brings families' voices into the meeting; the collective that discusses the statute without slogans. It is not about rejecting what comes "from above", but about reappropriating it intelligently so that it stops being a threat and becomes a resource.

Fraser (2000) suggests thinking about justice as both recognition and redistribution. Applied to our context: it is not enough to change words if we do not change conditions (time, workload, salaries); and it is not enough to increase budgets if we do not change meanings (what we call good teaching, for whom we do it, how we evaluate ourselves). The dispute over imaginaries is, at its core, a dispute over the world.

The imaginaries of the teaching profession are not neutral: they express power struggles. The State promotes the imaginary of "quality", the market that of "efficiency", and teachers resist with those of "vocation" and "solidarity". In schools, these narratives intersect and pull against each other: it is there that we decide which words will have a future. Rewriting imaginaries does not mean denying the achievements of public policy, but rather appropriating its language. Turning "evaluation" into "shared reflection", "accountability" into "pedagogical dialogue", "merit" into "active equity". As Castoriadis reminds us, every society can reinvent its significations. The teaching profession, if it looks at itself clearly, can do the same.

Closing in order to open: a new pact with ourselves

Night returns, and there's no coffee left in the room. Before leaving, someone writes on the bulletin board: "Pedagogical circle —Friday, 3 pm— topic: What does 'achievement' mean to us?". It looks like a small note; in truth, it is a constituent act: an invitation to rewrite, among colleagues, the meanings that shape us. If imaginaries make worlds, calling them into dialogue is the beginning of making another.

Perhaps the pact we need doesn't have to be grandiloquent. Maybe three commitments are enough: to name without fear what guides us (merit, vocation, recognition), to protect the conditions that sustain dignity (time, listening, justice), and to create more generous narratives about what counts as "good teaching". As Freire reminded us, hope is not a naïve feeling; it is a method (Freire, 1997). And the method, in our craft, begins by asking together.

When the day ends, teachers close their notebooks and switch off the lights. No one hears the murmur in the background: the ideas left floating in the air.

What imaginaries sustain our identity? Which ones deserve to stay alive?

Naming is not theory: it is a political act. Because whoever names their world, recreates it.

Perhaps the future of the teaching profession does not depend only on laws, but on our collective capacity to imagine ourselves differently: not as martyrs or bureaucrats, but as public intellectuals

and caretakers of humanity.

Questions that keep resonating:

- What merits do we want to recognize, and how do we prevent them from becoming boundaries?

- How can we care for vocation without turning it into an excuse for precariousness?

- What concrete forms of recognition —among peers, institutional, and community-based— can we establish?

- What new narrative about "being a good teacher" are we willing to write?

Chapter 4 / Capítulo 4

Teachers under evaluation: the imaginaries of power and fear in Colombian education (English version)
ISBN: 978-9915-9680-5-6
DOI: 10.62486/978-9915-9680-5-6.ch04

Hope and resilience / La esperanza y la resistencia

"There is no change without a dream, just as there is no dream without hope."
— Paulo Freire

The air in the square smells of damp paper and reheated coffee. Teachers are gathered, some holding banners the wind lifts like improvised wings. It is a day of strike, but also of gathering: here we talk, we sing, we recognize the faces that the classroom keeps apart. Amid the noise, someone takes the megaphone and says, "We are not protesting only for our salary, but for the dignity of teaching". The phrase vibrates against the walls like an ancient echo.

That scene —repeated so many times in big cities and small towns— is an act of pedagogical resistance. Not only because it challenges a policy or demands rights, but because it affirms a deeper truth: hope is also a method (Freire, 1997).

To resist, in the world of education, is not only to oppose: it is to keep teaching with meaning when everything pushes toward forgetting, to build community where fear sows competition, to remember that knowledge is a shared territory.

Hope as pedagogical and political act

The teacher arrives early. The cold of dawn still clings to the courtyard, and footsteps echo among chipped murals. In the classroom, before turning on the board, they look at the empty desks and smile. It might be a simple gesture, but in that gesture lies all the politics one could imagine: the decision to keep believing.

Hope, in the teaching profession, is not naïveté; it is method. Freire (1997) insisted that "hope is an ontological need": it is not waiting for something to happen, but committing oneself to make it possible. The teacher who opens the classroom every morning, knowing the system weighs on them, embodies an active hope: that of someone who resists through the very act of teaching.

In a context where the discourse of "quality" tends to neutralize the pedagogical soul, hope becomes counterculture. Decree 1278 (MEN, 2002) promised meritocracy and professionalization, but brought with it fear and competition. In response, hope rises as a counter-dispositive: a way of thinking and acting that does not deny pain, but transforms it into meaningful energy.

Sarmiento Pinzón (2021) argues that the hope of the Colombian teacher is, above all, "*an ethical practice of staying*": staying without giving up, staying as an act of resistance against discouragement, staying to remind society that educating is not producing, but making humanity.

Resisting from the classroom: pedagogies of care and dignity

There are forms of resistance that are not announced with banners, but with gestures. A teacher who chooses to listen before sanctioning. A professor who turns a cold lesson into a living conversation. A principal who makes room for dialogue when everything pushes toward results. Those small actions sustain the school more than any decree.

Foucault (1975/2008) taught that where there is power, there is resistance. Not a grandiloquent resistance, but micro-resistances that slip through the cracks of the everyday. In the classroom, that resistance takes the shape of care: caring for the other, caring for meaning, caring for language. To care, in a system that promotes competition, is a deeply political act.

Bourdieu (1994) would speak here of a *habitus of resistance*: a disposition learned in practice, one that turns teaching into a field of symbolic struggle. Every time a teacher refuses to reduce their work to a rubric, every time they protect the pedagogical relationship over the protocol, they reconfigure the educational field.

Along these lines, Covarrubias and Brito (2007) noted that the social commitment of the Latin American teacher lies precisely in their ability to dignify the profession from within, without letting themselves be devoured by the machinery of control. Resistance is not always shouting: sometimes it is continuing to teach with love when the environment demands coldness.

And yet, resistance is exhausting. Hope is fuel, but not infinite. Therefore, as Román-Acosta (2024) reminds us, the fragility of bonds in liquid modernity forces us to rebuild community again and again. Resistance, without community, wears down; with community, it blooms.

The Colombian teaching profession and collective resistance: from fear to organization

In every strike, every march, every union assembly, the voice of Colombia's teachers has turned pain into a tool of dignity. Crowded streets filled with white smocks, improvised banners, and protest chants are also a form of pedagogy: a public pedagogy that teaches citizenship, justice, and memory.

Bautista (2009) documented how Decree 1278, by fragmenting the teaching career, created internal divisions between veteran and newer teachers. Yet that fragmentation, though painful, also sparked awareness: the realization that only collective organization can counteract precarization. In that sense, resistance is not merely a labor defense act, it is a political exercise in reconstituting the teaching subject.

Freire (1997) warned that freedom is not received; it is won. And it is won collectively. Trade unions, so vilified in neoliberal discourse, have been spaces for the construction of meaning in Colombia. FECODE, for example, does not merely negotiate salaries: it produces discourse, memory, and identity. Assemblies, beyond grievance, are laboratories of pedagogical thought.

Tenorio (2014) underscores that contemporary education policy seeks to "modernize" teaching, yet rarely includes teachers in the discussion. Collective resistance breaks that structural silence. When teachers speak —whether in the streets or in the classroom—, they reconfigure power: they move from being objects of policy to political subjects.

As Castoriadis (1987) would say, to resist is to institute the new. It is not enough to oppose; one must imagine other ways of being a teacher, other ways of community. In that horizon, hope is not waiting: it is invention.

Utopy as everyday practice: Freire, Castoriadis, and the creation of meaning

In education, utopias are not shouted: they are taught. They are taught when a teacher trusts a student everyone else had given up on. They are taught when a lesson is improvised without resources, yet with passion. They are taught when one cares for language amid the noise.

Freire (1997) affirmed that utopia is not an illusion but a direction. Pedagogical hope does not lie in denying difficulty, but in betting on what is possible. *"Hope is not waiting, but walking alongside the other to make the impossible possible"*. In that shared journey, the teacher becomes a sower of the future.

Castoriadis (1987) complements this view by arguing that every society—and every institution—requires instituting imaginaries, new meanings capable of breaking the given order. In teaching, that imaginary can be as simple as redefining what we mean by success: not the grade, but the transformation. Not competition, but cooperation. Not obedience, but consciousness.

In this sense, utopia ceases to be an unreachable horizon and becomes a daily practice. Teaching is, in itself, an act of faith in tomorrow: no one educates without believing that the world can be otherwise. And that belief, in a context where disenchantment has become the norm, is a radical form of resistance.

Popkewitz (1994) noted that educational reforms impose models of subjectivity; yet teachers, through creativity and deviation, rewrite them. Every improvisation, every adjustment, every gesture of freedom in the classroom is a small semantic revolution. This is how utopia stays alive: at the margins, in the everyday, in what escapes the norm.

Between evaluation and hope: the right to imagine another school

Evaluation continues to be the terrain where the tension between control and freedom is played out. Tamayo (2010) showed clearly: in Colombia, teacher evaluation was configured more as an instrument of power than as a tool for improvement. Yet even there, among forms and rankings, teachers have carved out cracks.

Collective self-training, study circles, alternative pedagogical projects, and teacher networks are expressions of that luminous fissure. Bautista (2009) called it "the pedagogy of organized hope": spaces where teachers reclaim knowledge and the right to imagine themselves beyond the norm.

Vygotsky (1978) would remind us that learning is social, that no one grows alone. Teacher evaluation should acknowledge that truth: teaching is not an individual act, but a collective endeavor. Yet while the system remains unchanged, teachers reinvent it from within. Every time a group supports one another to prepare for the exam, every time one colleague explains what they've learned to another, evaluation stops being a threat and becomes a tool for solidarity.

That solidarity is the foundation of hope. As Mejía (2011) notes, "*resistance is not measured by shouting, but by the persistence of tenderness*". And pedagogical tenderness —that willingness to believe in another despite everything— is the ethical core that sustains the school when everything else fails.

Sowing as we teach

When evening falls, the teacher gathers their papers and looks at the empty desks. They know that tomorrow will be the same and yet different: the same questions will return, but with new faces. In that cycle there is something profoundly political: the ability to begin again and again, to sow without seeing the harvest.

Hope is not found in decrees or programs; it lives in the living classroom, in conversation, in shared words. To resist, in this time, is to keep teaching with meaning when everything pushes us to give up.

Freire (1997) was right: "*What kills is not difficulty, but hopelessness*". And perhaps for that, every morning, when the teacher opens the door and writes the first word of the day, with no applause, no speeches, the history of education begins again.

Chapter 5 / Capítulo 5

Teachers under evaluation: the imaginaries of power and fear in Colombian education (English version)
ISBN: 978-9915-9680-5-6
DOI: 10.62486/978-9915-9680-5-6.ch05

Education, power, and dignity / Educación, poder y dignidad

"Power is not possessed; it is exercised. But it is also resisted."
— Michel Foucault

"Dignity is not granted; it is upheld." — Voice of a teacher in assembly

Education as a territory of power

Education is a mirror in which the structure of power is reflected. In every classroom, every public policy, every improvement plan, we see the struggle between what the State wants the school to become and what teachers strive for it to remain.

Foucault (1975/2008) taught that power does not operate only through institutions, but through bodies, gestures, and habits. In the Colombian teaching profession, that power is expressed through normalization: evaluations, rubrics, guidelines, training programs, and discourses that appear neutral but seek to govern teachers' subjectivity. The teacher, then, not only teaches: they are also taught to be a certain kind of subject.

But power, as Foucault argued, always coexists with its reverse: resistance. Every teacher who chooses to open a space for dialogue instead of applying a rubric, every time a collective of educators creates its own materials instead of following the official guide, is exercising a form of pedagogical counter-government. In that small gesture lies a deeper truth: power rests on obedience, and dignity rests on awareness.

Bourdieu (1994) would call this *a field of forces*: a space where symbolic capital is contested and where it is determined who gets to speak, who defines knowledge, who classifies what matters. The Colombian educational field—marked by political, economic, and cultural tensions—is the stage for a struggle over the very meaning of teaching. In the midst of that tension, the teacher becomes a political subject, even when they do not intend to.

The school and the dignity of the profession

In times when everything is measured, defending the dignity of teaching is almost an act of insurgency. Dignity is not empty pride; it is the conviction that educational work holds intrinsic value, prior to any indicator.

Arias Ruiz et al. (2012) argue that reflection on dignity and the role of teachers must be approached from multiple theoretical perspectives. Among these, they highlight philosophical ideas that have accompanied the evolution of concepts such as school and education, articulated with the models of the Active School and the Emerging Pedagogies of the 20th and 21st centuries. Within this framework, notions such as humanization, dignification, critical thinking, local knowledge, and recognition become central to understanding the formative and ethical meaning of teaching.

Freire (1997) said that teaching is an act of love, but also of courage. Love, because it trusts in the capacity of the other; courage, because it persists even when the system distrusts. Dignity, then, is not an inheritance: it is a daily practice. It is sustained when teachers refuse to be a mere executor of policies and instead assume themselves as public intellectuals: subjects who interpret the world in order to transform it.

Covarrubias and Brito (2007) remind us that the social commitment of the Latin American teacher is not limited to teaching content, but to keeping society's critical consciousness alive. The dignity of the teacher resides at that threshold between the classroom and the street: in the ability to read the context, to question the norm, and to continue believing that education is a form of emancipation, not domestication.

The power of naming: policies, discourses and control

The words used to label education are never innocent. "Quality", "efficiency", "accountability", "competencies"... each term carries a worldview. Popkewitz (1994) warned that modern educational reforms are not only meant to improve teaching, but to produce subjects who embody the values of the economic system. In this way, technical discourse becomes a moral policy: the "efficient" teacher, the "competent" student, the "productive" school.

Tenorio (2014) notes that Colombian educational policy adopted this global language without adapting it to the local context, creating a gap between the rhetoric of progress and the reality of the classroom. In this context, the teacher's words —their stories, metaphors, and denunciations— become an act of resistance. Naming things differently is breaking the spell of the official discourse.

Castoriadis (1987) argued that societies only change when they create new imaginary significations. In schools, this means reclaiming the right to say what it means to teach, what it means to learn, what is success, and what is failure. Naming from the teaching experience is to restore the symbolic sovereignty of the profession.

Tamayo (2010) observed that in Colombia, teacher evaluation not only measures performance but also defines professional identity. To resist is not to reject evaluation, but to contest its meaning: to shift from an exam that monitors to a dialogue that guides. When the teacher evaluates in order to grow rather than to fear, power changes hands.

Between control and freedom: the teaching body as a frontier

The teacher's body —their voice, gesture, presence— is the first territory where educational politics play out. It is there that mandates of efficiency, the pressures of time, fatigue, and emotion are inscribed. Foucault (1975/2008) spoke of the *docile body*: one trained by the system to obey. Yet in schools, the teaching body can also become a rebellious body: one that turns routine into ritual, surveillance into presence, rules into closeness.

Bauman (2003) understood this on another plane: we live in a liquid modernity, where bonds are fragile and individuals are replaceable. In this context, teaching represents a luminous anachronism: a steadfast commitment, a wager on the other. While the market demands flexibility, the teacher offers constancy. And that constancy —that fidelity to the human— is a form of ethical resistance.

The school, in its everyday life, is a frontier between control and freedom. There, spreadsheets coexist with poetry, rules with affection. Each pedagogical decision is a small act of autonomy against a system that seeks homogenization. That is why dignity is not defended in discourse, but in practice: in every class where one chooses to listen rather than impose, in every project where thinking is preferred over mere compliance.

Dignity, memory, and future

The Colombian teaching profession has been a historical actor of memory. From the strikes of the twentieth century to contemporary struggles against precarization, teachers have turned their own biographies into a pedagogy of resistance. Bautista (2009) captures it precisely: "the Colombian

teacher has learned to resist with chalk and word". This resistance is not only union-based; it is cultural.

Mejía (2011) emphasizes that Latin American pedagogical resistance is also an aesthetics of hope: a way of imagining and narrating the world from the classroom. In that narrative, dignity is not reduced to a claim, but becomes a civilizational project: a commitment to humanity in times of dehumanization.

Freire (1997) insisted that hope is a historical duty. It is not about waiting for change, but producing it. Each generation of teachers inherits a debt from the previous one: to keep alive the possibility of believing in education. That legacy is not stored in archives, but in gestures: the way we greet, the way we listen, the way we teach.

Teacher dignity, then, is neither nostalgia nor slogan. It is living memory. And like all living memory, it projects itself into the future. Wherever a teacher says "we'll continue tomorrow", the history of education breathes again.

The school that dignifies

Perhaps the greatest act of power is to keep believing in dignity when the world around denies it. Every classroom that opens is a silent manifesto against disillusionment. Every teacher who teaches with meaning is writing a form of country that does not yet exist.

Castoriadis (1987) would remind us that every social creation is born from a radical imagination. And it is precisely that imagination that education protects: the possibility of inventing worlds.

That is why the power the system fears most is not political or union power, but pedagogical power: the teacher's ability to awaken consciousness, to plant questions, to teach how to think. It is on that power that dignity is founded.

Because in the end, teaching is not the transmission of knowledge; it is reminding the other that they can be free. And that reminder —day after day, generation after generation— is the deepest and most silent form of resistance.

Referencias / References

Acosta Moré, I., Larrondo Somonte, A. I., Rodríguez Montes, A., Verdecia Rivero, Y., & Román-Acosta, D. (2026). Territory and learning: a review of educational design and spatial justice. *Land and Architecture*, *5*, 287. https://doi.org/10.56294/la2026287

Aliaga, D., Méndez, L., & Rojas, P. (2022). *Imaginarios docentes y prácticas educativas: reflexiones desde América Latina*. Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos.

Apple, M. W. (1986). *Teachers and texts: A political economy of class and gender relations in education*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Arendt, H. (1958/2005). *La condición humana* (Trad. R. Gil Novales). Paidós. (Obra original publicada en 1958).

Arias Ruiz, F. Á., Jiménez Becerra, I., García Argüello, M. L., Matallana Sahady, M. P., Matallana Saadi, S. I., Alonso Gómez, H. A., Gómez Urrego, J. F., & Salazar Valenzuela, G. A. (2012). *Conceptos de dignificación del maestro: lectura desde su hacer en la escuela* [Informe final de maestría, Universidad de San Buenaventura, Bogotá]. Facultad de Educación, Maestría en Ciencias de la Educación. http://biblioteca.usbbog.edu.co:8080/Biblioteca/BDigital/73366.pdf

Bauman, Z. (2003). *Modernidad líquida*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Bautista, J. (2009). *El Estatuto Docente 1278 de 2002: entre la evaluación y la incertidumbre laboral*. Revista Colombiana de Educación, (57), 45–63.

Bourdieu, P. (1994). *Raisons pratiques: Sur la théorie de l'action*. Éditions du Seuil. (Traducción consultada: *Razones prácticas: Sobre la teoría de la acción*. Anagrama, 1997).

Bruner, J. (1991). *Actos de significado: Más allá de la revolución cognitiva*. Alianza Editorial.

Carvajal, G. (1985). *Historia del magisterio colombiano: Luchas y conquistas sindicales*. Fondo Editorial Fecode.

Castoriadis, C. (1987). *L'institution imaginaire de la société*. Éditions du Seuil. (Traducción consultada: *La institución imaginaria de la sociedad*. Tusquets, 1997).

Constitución Política de Colombia. (1991). *Constitución Política de Colombia de 1991*. Diario Oficial No. 44.509.

Moretti Tapia, R. (2022). Protección, evaluación y control del profesorado: el surgimiento del Estatuto Docente de 1991 y el rechazo del Sistema de Calificaciones. *Cuadernos Chilenos De Historia De La Educación*, (16), 3–33. https://doi.org/10.60611/cche.vi16.186

Covarrubias, P., & Brito, C. (2007). Compromiso social del magisterio y profesionalización docente. Editorial Universidad Autónoma de México.

Cuevas, F., & Rangel, A. (2019). *La carrera docente en México: retos, tensiones y desafíos*. Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP).

De Sousa Santos, B. (2010). *Descolonizar el saber, reinventar el poder*. Ediciones Trilce.

Dewey, J. (1938/1997). *Experiencia y educación* (Trad. L. Luzuriaga). Morata. (Obra original publicada en 1938).

Dubet, F. (2006). *El declive de la institución: Profesiones, sujetos e individuos en la modernidad*. Gedisa.

FECODE. (2022). *Informe salarial y escalafón docente en Colombia 2020–2022*. Federación Colombiana de Trabajadores de la Educación.

Foucault, M. (1975/2008). *Vigilar y castigar: Nacimiento de la prisión* (21.ª ed.). Siglo XXI Editores. (Obra original publicada en 1975).

Foucault, M. (2008). Vigilar y castigar: Nacimiento de la prisión (21.ª ed.). Siglo XXI Editores.

Fraser, N. (2000). *Redistribución o reconocimiento: Un debate político-filosófico*. Morata.

Freire, P. (1997). *Pedagogía de la esperanza: Un reencuentro con la pedagogía del oprimido*. Siglo XXI Editores.

Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogía de la autonomía: Saberes necesarios para la práctica educativa*. Siglo XXI Editores.

Giroux, H. A. (1997). *Pedagogía y política de la esperanza: Teoría, cultura y enseñanza*. Amorrortu Editores.

Habermas, J. (1963). *Conocimiento e interés*. Taurus.

Honneth, A. (1995). *The struggle for recognition: The moral grammar of social conflicts*. Polity Press.

Honneth, A. (1997). *La lucha por el reconocimiento*. Crítica.

Larrosa, J. (2003). *La experiencia de la lectura: Estudios sobre literatura y formación*. Laertes.

López, J., & Cortez, M. (2016). *Evaluación docente y desempeño profesional en Guatemala*. Ministerio de Educación de Guatemala (DIGEDUCA).

Martínez, L. (2004). *El perfil docente en el contexto de la globalización educativa*. Revista Iberoamericana de Educación, 35(1), 55–68.

Mejía, M. R. (2011). *Educaciones y pedagogías críticas desde el sur (Cartografías de la Educación Popular)*. Viceministerio de Educación Alternativa y Especial. http://bibliotecas.uasb.edu.bo:8080/handle/20.500.14624/1261

Sarmiento Pinzón, L. (2021). Desigualdad educativa: una mirada desde la formación docente. Universidad Pedagógica Nacional. http://repository.pedagogica.edu.co/bitstream/

handle/20.500.12209/17241/Desigualdad_FDocente.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia (MEN). (2002). Decreto Ley 1278 de 2002: Estatuto de Profesionalización Docente. Diario Oficial No. 44.840.

Moretti, A. (2022). *Evaluación docente y gobernanza educativa en Chile*. Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

Nussbaum, M. (2010). *Sin fines de lucro: Por qué la democracia necesita de las humanidades*. Katz Editores.

Nussbaum, M. (2011). *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Belknap Press.

Patiño Niño, D. M. (2018). Reflexiones en torno a la emancipación intelectual desde El Maestro Ignorante de Jacques Rancière. *Tópicos, Revista De Filosofía, 56*, 339-364. https://doi.org/10.21555/top.v0i56.947

Popkewitz, T. (1994). *Sociología política de las reformas educativas: Poder y conocimiento en la enseñanza, la formación del profesorado y la investigación*. Morata.

Rancière, J. (2003). *El Maestro Ignorante*. Barcelona, España: Laertes

Ricoeur, P. (1996). *Sí mismo como otro*. Siglo XXI Editores.

Rodríguez, M. (2019). *La formación docente en Argentina: de las Escuelas Normales al siglo XXI*. Ministerio de Educación de Argentina.

Román-Acosta, D. (2024). Modernidad líquida: Hermenéutica y fenomenología para la reconstrucción de los ideales éticos. Peri-Ápeiron, 2(2), 104–120. https://reditve.com/revistas/index.php/periapeiron/article/view/93

Soto, R. (2013). *Políticas públicas educativas en Colombia y el papel del maestro como agente social*. Revista Colombiana de Educación, (65), 115–137.

Tamayo, O. (2010). La evaluación docente en Colombia: entre la meritocracia y el control. Universidad del Valle.

Tenorio, J. (2014). *Política educativa colombiana y globalización: impactos en el magisterio*. Revista Educación y Ciudad, (27), 89–107.

Trovão do Rosario, J. (2015). *El legislador negativo: la Corte Constitucional y la educación*. Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press. (Traducción consultada: *El desarrollo de los procesos psicológicos superiores*. Crítica, 1988).

Letter to the teachers of the future

To you, teacher who opens the door every morning without knowing exactly what awaits you,
who arrives with tired eyes and a notebook full of names,
I want to talk to you.

I don't know when you will read these lines. Perhaps the classroom will have changed shape, perhaps the blackboards will be screens, the books holograms, the hallways virtual. But I know that something will remain the same: that moment when you look at your students and, without saying it, you wonder if what you do still makes sense.

Let me tell you that it does.

Even though the system measures you, monitors you, or labels you with cold administrative language, you know—deep down—that teaching is much more than accountability. It is nurturing the ability to think in a world that has forgotten how to do so. It is sowing doubts, raising questions, holding gazes.

Foucault would say that power always finds new ways to disguise itself, but so does freedom. And you are that form.
Your freedom is not shouted: it is practiced.
In every word you choose, in every silence you protect, every time you decide not to give up.

Don't be convinced that education is only about efficiency or technique.
Freire warned decades ago: teaching is an act of love and, for that very reason, of courage. In times of algorithms and bureaucracy, loving knowledge and those who learn will be your form of resistance.

There will be days when you feel that fear outweighs hope, that reforms are piling up and that everything is repeating itself. Then remember what Castoriadis said: "Society only exists as long as someone imagines it."
You are that someone.
As long as a teacher imagines, the school will live on.

You are not alone, even if it sometimes seems that way.
At your side is a long line of voices that precede you: those who taught without resources, those who wrote with chalk while changes thundered outside, those who believed that the classroom could be a trench and an embrace.
They also doubted, they also felt fear, they also dreamed.
Every word you say summons them again.

Remember, teacher, that resistance does not always look like resistance.
Sometimes it is a smile, a pause, a gesture of care.
Sometimes it is continuing to teach poetry when everything else is about statistics.
Sometimes it is looking at your students as if each one were a promise for the world, and not a registration number.

You will be tempted by haste, efficiency, obedience.

But don’t forget that meaning is found in slowness, in sharing, in humanity.

Education is not meant to save time, but to give it: to allow someone to discover their voice, even if it takes time.

If you ever doubt yourself—and you will—look into the eyes of your students. Therein lies your mirror. They will know who you are, even when you forget.

And if you wonder if it’s worth it, listen to their laughter, their questions, their attentive silence: that is your answer.

You don’t teach content: you teach how to exist.

That’s why your profession never grows old.

And even if governments, decrees, or pedagogical fads change, your task will remain the same: to keep alive the possibility of a more just tomorrow.

So keep going.

Keep writing names in notebooks, even when hope seems impossible.

Keep believing in the power of a word spoken with love.

Keep opening the door every morning.

Because every time you do, the history of the world begins anew.

Abouth The Author / Sobre el Autor

Edwin Tovar Briñez

edwin.tovar@uptc.edu.co
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9116-6839
Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, Boyacá, Colombia.
Editor jefe de la Revista Multidisciplinaria Voces de América y el Caribe
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9116-6839

Additional information/ Información adicional

Declaration of responsibility
The ethical and legal responsibility for the content of this work lies exclusively with its authors, who guarantee compliance with current regulations on intellectual property and copyright. The publisher is not responsible for the opinions, results, or interpretations expressed, nor for the use that third parties make of this material.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest
The authors declare that they have no personal, commercial, institutional, or financial conflict of interest in relation to this work.

Funding
This work has not received specific funding from public, private, or non-profit organizations.