

Hierarchies, assimilationism and resistances: Migratory experiences in the educational field in the Norte Grande of Chile

Jerarquías, asimilacionismo y resistencias: Experiencias migratorias en el campo escolar del Norte Grande de Chile

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Background

Interregional migration in Latin America is not a new phenomenon, not even for Chile and less so for the Great North, which, some areas, shares a border with Bolivia and Peru. In other words, the territory of the Great North in Chile - which includes the regions of Arica and Parinacota, Tarapacá and Antofagasta - can be considered the gateway to the national territory due to its strategic geographic location. Migration in this area has historically been present, so it is characterized by not being a new phenomenon and by its diversity in terms of national and ethnic/racial origins. However, certain contradictions are observed that are opposed to the coexistence in the multicultural framework with strongly nationalistic aspects, especially in Iquique for being considered an iconic of the Pacific War. In this sense, understanding how migrant families experience their processes of inclusion in Chile in different social spaces becomes a relevant issue to be examined in a social and discursive context that reveals the so-called "migratory crisis in the Southern Cone of America". The educational space becomes, without a doubt, a key place for these processes of adaptation. At a theoretical level, the authors use Aníbal Quijano's concept of coloniality of power in conjunction with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice to argue that the discourses that are reproduced in schools towards the migrant community are constructed in relation to the various forces that form the school field that, in turn, would be influenced by the colonial heritage.

Aims

The article seeks to illustrate how in the case of the Chilean educational field, schools establish and reproduce ways of relating to families, and specifically migrants, using this colonial logic. In this sense, the educational field would be influenced by the forces of the field of power that order the social world according to ethnic/racial hierarchies. Specifically, the article explores the discourses produced in schools in the Great North of Chile towards migrant families and students, as well as their responses.

Method & procedures

This article uses data from two qualitative research, within the framework of the doctoral theses of both authors. The study of Sara Joiko is a four-month qualitative study including thirteen semi-structured interviews with migrant mothers and fathers; as well as eight semi-structured interviews with school staff from six public schools in Iquique and Antofagasta. The author carried out a thematic analysis using a mixed approach of inductive and deductive coding. Thematic analysis seeks to identify themes that emerge as the data is analyzed, and that can be built on the basis of similarities or differences. For her part, Andrea Cortés Saavedra conducted a school ethnography in a public school in Iquique for six months in 2019, which included interviews and informal conversations with children, teachers and educational staff, as well as participant observation. Regarding the analysis process, since ethnography is an iterative process, the analytical

approach had several interrelated levels, however, the most relevant and defined include a systematization process of the interviews through thematic analysis to give way to the application of critical discourse analysis guidelines.

Results & discussion

Migration in northern Chile is a constant historical phenomenon that has been part of the territorial, cultural, identity and social construction of its population. Therefore, the diversity of migrants together with the indigenous communities who live in the area, makes the Great North a multicultural space. Despite this, it is possible to observe contradictory ways of receiving this diversity in which nationalist and assimilationist discourses emerge that materialize in social spaces such as schools. Based on the analysis and linking of the data from both studies, the article asserts that the discourses produced about migrant families have to do with a hierarchy according to their national origin. Likewise, these social hierarchies are reproduced as a form of racism, and as a process of assimilationism both from families and schools, framed in a logic of internal colonialism. However, it is also possible to observe some resistance strategies on the part of migrant families as a way of responding to these discourses.

Conclusions

Both studies made it possible to identify how, on the one hand, migration is recognized in the school context as part of the cultural ethos of northern Chile. On the other hand, discursive hierarchies were established where recent migration, mainly of Caribbean people, is less valued than those of the Peruvian and Bolivian communities rooted in the area. In this sense, the hierarchies generated by school members are sustained by social imaginaries circulating in the North of Chile, which differ from the national imaginaries of Chileanness. This article intends to contribute to the studies on education and the border, as it situates the school space in the context of Great North as fundamental for the reproduction of some discourses addressed to migrant communities, historically anchored and daily reinforced.

Keywords: Bourdieu, coloniality, families, migration, Chilean Great North

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