




Educational Guidance. Theoretical and practical challenges

La Orientación Educativa. Desafíos teóricos y prácticos

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ABSTRACT

Educational models recognize the way in which human beings face daily life. Thus, they are based on family, school, and community education, which they may have throughout their lives. This prerogative explains that, in contemporary pedagogical practices, educational guidance is incorporated as a quality condition, which rests on the influence that educators can exert in their guidance role or the professional specialized in this educational area. In this sense, the epistemological debate on this topic opens the possibility of analyzing this discipline from a science, technology, and society approach. Therefore, the objective was to characterize the challenges that, from the configuration, methodological, practical, theoretical structure, educational orientation has today. For this, the study was based on the reflection of the authors of some readings that, due to the relevance in the authorship or the delimitation of the objectives, were essential to reach conclusions. In this way, it is evident that educational orientation must be understood as a quality factor of education.

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INTRODUCTION

The life of human beings is marked by contradiction and uncertainty. They proliferate in all psychosocial problems that influence how people assume relationships, coexistence, and their life projects. It would seem that alienation, lack of motivation, despair, and dissatisfaction become features of an era in which the time for problem-solving is shortening. Thus, theories, methodologies, techniques, ways of access to the production, and use of information at a global level leave their mark on the way in which people's existence is configured in the face of the challenges imposed by budding development.

This reality, clearly genuine and beneficial for all, also leaves its mark on a certain socio-educational disruption. The



times, contents, and methods of education constitute a symbiosis that sediments school culture; thus, pedagogical itineraries and interrelationships respond to the dynamics that permeate the synonymy between educational policy and practice (Ainscow, 2020; Cruz, 2019; Mannix et al., 2021; Nacach, 2020; Nicolaou, 2021; Williamson et al., 2020). On the one hand, the pressures of international organizations for educational quality tend to permeate the educational discourse embodied in the regulations that establish educational systems and, on the other hand, we are witnessing a dysfunctionality of pedagogical processes by widening the gap between the influences generated by educational institutions, the family and the community (Pérez et al., 2023).

Indeed, this transition seems imperceptible or undervalued in the face of educators trained in the century who have not been able to restructure their didactic projection, even when policies announce the change and public audiences demand a dynamic educational action centered on socioemotional and citizenship training, coherent with the times. In a certain way, we are witnessing, without remedy, situations of extreme perplexity in the face of scientific and technological changes that impact socio-educational and contextualized models of society that demand a critical, emergent, and innovative posture, open to the validation of the emerging methodological experience, as a reference and guide for action (Herrmann et al., 2023; Molleví et al., 2023; Núñez-Canal et al., 2022).

In this context, it is essential to overcome the significant gaps between social and personal needs, between the national and the universal, and between the theory and the practice of registering a permanent claim. However, responding to this requires a significant openness to mediation processes that, due to their guiding character, become support and coherent help to facilitate the formation and development of the subject's personality throughout life. Indeed, the theoretical and methodological conceptions of various disciplines of the social and educational sciences attempt to dynamize change based on proposals that focus their attention on the dynamization of educational processes (Karaca-Atik et al., 2023; Kraus et al., 2022; Si et al., 2023; Vallaster et al., 2019).

The innovative trajectory of educational practices since the last century attempts to respond to the demands of training individuals throughout life, which emerge in society with specialized guiding influence and individual and group character in all contexts for any area of human development (Hays et al., 2021; Kankam & Adinkrah, 2023). The openness and the transit before this position explain the interest of politicians, psychologists, pedagogues, and sociologists. Therefore, it must be taken into account that in order to grow as a human being, it is necessary to consolidate educational influences on essential processes such as the formation and development of the personality throughout life. At the center of this confluence of criteria appear different perspectives that make it possible to understand and conceptualize educational guidance (EO), with attention to the practical complexity and eminently interdisciplinary character it possesses (Camacho, 2022; Darling et al., 2020; Di Meglio, 2022; Finkelstein et al., 2021; López, 2021; Van Leeuwen & Janssen, 2019).

In this context, EO is associated with the tasks of facilitating, convening, promoting, expanding analysis, drawing attention to what the learner needs in order to find ways to handle the situation in which he/she finds him/herself and autonomously assume how he/she will handle it and in what way he/she will find the solution to his/her current and future situation (Gómez and Cano, 2020; Hair and Alamer, 2022; López and González, 2021; Peel, 2020; Siguencia et al., 2022). However, what is most important in this process is that it should be perceived as a shared inquiry and an emotional experience that finds alternative answers that give the subject the possibility to make decisions (Kalkbrenner et al., 2019). Therefore, it does not give an indication of the solution.

At the heart of this transit is the reconceptualization of the epistemological components of EO that are also shaping a new way of seeing the intervention of guidance in human development (D'Adamo et al., 2023; Hays et al., 2021; Perez et al., 2023; Sharma et al., 2023). Precisely, the content of EO currently subscribes to the purpose of stimulating the personal development of individuals and groups of individuals, which shows that the intervention is not only focused on the learner but on the entire educational community (Hays, 2020). However, although this position considered EO as a specialized activity, it has limited the recognition of this practice as a part of the teacher's professional activity.

Thus, the transdisciplinary logic - above all practice - that EO possesses turns it at the same time into discourse, tool, activity and has become a process and a strategy for accompanying the different actors that make up the educational scene so that they can read, interpret, organize, delineate and act in the face of the problematics of each institution (Budwig & Alexander, 2020; El Bedewy & Lavicza, 2023; Espinosa, 2020; Guzmán et al., 2019; Van Breda & Swilling, 2019). From this assumption, it is known that EO theories and technologies inform the specificity that expresses it and gives it intentionality, which becomes the first field of reflection and discussion.

From this assumption, EO refers to areas of intervention, typologies, models and technologies in correspondence with the problems and purposes in which they are presented as a type of intentional activity of an integral

methodological nature within the educational act, while it is awarded a preventive and inclusive character (Alfonso et al., 2019; Desiree & Prieto, 2020; Pashby et al., 2020; Sánchez et al., 2022; Valverde et al., 2020). It is in this framework where a plot is created that accentuates the ambiguity and the inconsequential rhetoric, but by becoming scientific reflections that do not glimpse agreements or consensus but methodological contradictions that leave their mark on socio-educational practices. These disagreements become dilemmas that must be resolved in order to make pedagogical decisions.

For this reason, the responsibility assumed by researchers in the Educational Sciences justifies the purpose of several Cuban authors who, interested in developing OE as a discipline or science of education, project the epistemological debate centered on educational practice while leaving open the possibility of returning, again and again, to value the subject in correspondence with the central conflicts that educational research and practice present as challenges. Thus, it is that in recent years the professors and researchers in the country focused discussions on the specificity that defines EO for vocational, professional purposes and, above all, in the contexts of secondary education and pre-university (Gainza et al., 2016), in pedagogical (Avila et al., 2019) and non-pedagogical careers (Perez, 2022).

The reflections of the professors of the Bachelor's Degree in Education, Pedagogy, and Psychology of the University of Cienfuegos went beyond the systematization of basic ideas, to present themselves as a restructuring of contemporary theories to substantiate EO as a helping process (Rojas et al., 2020); but, at the same time, they laid the foundations to highlight the theoretical and practical challenges focused on the current epistemic reflections. Hence, the present work aimed to characterize the challenges faced by EO today, from its configuration, theoretical, methodological, and practical structure.

METHODOLOGY

In recent years, research based on systematization and knowledge construction has managed to overcome the discussion between its use as a method and methodology (Obando, 2021). In this framework, by assuming it as a type of research and methodology that serves as the axis for the articulation of theoretical-empirical methods that serve as the basis for the process of reflection, ordering, and elaboration of a result, it endorses the experience of this in function of presenting, substantiating and accentuating the ideas that centered the epistemological discussion, especially in areas or scientific fields that are still under construction (Hays & McKibben, 2021).

This prerogative guided the authors' decisions in an exercise of analysis and construction directly linked to the academic research activity in psychopedagogy. However, the process nature of the production of scientific knowledge to understand and support emerging practices in educational guidance endorses the visceral attachment to this type of exercise to bring out shared positions that deserve multiple views from a developmental critique.

This position supports the idea that the result of research aimed at the construction of knowledge must start from a tacit recognition that systematization is a permanent, cumulative process of gradual creation of knowledge from the reflection on the research experience of the participants (Espinoza, 2020). In this case, the practice subjected to scrutiny and criticism demands answers that are built from the referential theoretical framework, from which the epistemological challenges to be exposed can be posed.

In this way, theorization through systematization becomes an opportunity. All this is to identify what is essential, to present the internal and external relationships of the object of study while contributing to the delimitation of continuities, discontinuities, contradictions, tensions, and challenges that should focus the discussion in order to understand the processes from their logic and extract from them the aspects that can contribute to the improvement of both practice and theory (Martínez et al., 2019).

Then, the characteristic of systematization is identified with the critical interpretation of one or several experiences -theoretical or practical- which, from its ordering and reconstruction, discovers or makes explicit the logic of the process under study, the factors involved in its course and development, the relationships between them and the causes of their manifestation (Martínez et al., 2019). As a result of all this effort, the new knowledge is presented as an abstraction and/or generalization made by the researchers involved in the process.

In this case, the systematization in the research project that serves as a framework for this work first demanded the approach of the need to clarify the challenges in order to more fairly guide the existing contributions and the orientation of subsequent studies. Then, the systematization of previous studies made it possible to submit the contributions to critical reflection and to delimit criteria, themes, or aspects to be placed at the center of the result

of the scientific activity. In this sense, it was confirmed that systematization as a theoretical exercise contributes to the sciences when it unveils the challenges that, as interpretation and critical construction of the researchers, can be submitted to new reflections until the new knowledge allows explaining and substantiating the processes of change in the processes in which the object of study has a non-delegable responsibility.

From this general methodological stance, the researchers were involved in a study that responded to the following dynamics. At first, the reflection and discussion of the needs of the practice, which preliminarily established the criteria that allowed the delimitation of the theoretical and practical challenges. In this case, they were included as epistemological criteria that, although they did not exhaust the subject, focused on: the delimitation as a category, activity, discipline, the object, the objective of the EO, the identification of the participants in the EO, the methods and methodologies for the intervention, the specificity of the research and how they were included in the professional training profile.

The argumentation of the challenge emerged from the combination of basic theoretical methods (analytical-synthetic, inductive-deductive, historical-logical, comparison, system approach, generalization), which justified the scope and significance of the result presented. In particular, it is necessary to recognize that by linking the research exercise to the tasks of undergraduate and graduate training of education professionals, the contribution of the reflections to the epistemological component of EO was confirmed in the scientific and teaching community to which the authors belong, with the purpose of overcoming knowledge gaps and promoting participation and continuous approaches.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

While it is understandable that a change of epoch reassigns new tasks to education, it is necessary to recognize the fundamental problem it generates.

EO opens a critical and reflective debate on scientific and technological rationality based on the relevance of being included within the educational models that aspire to the integral formation of citizens throughout their lives. It implies, therefore, a critical consideration of the evolution of the epistemological configuration and its practical essentiality that is presented as a field of study in which everything fits when even its specialization and theoretical-methodological transversalization is defended.

First challenge: EO, category, activity, discipline or field of pedagogy?

Assuming one or another definition can be complex, as it requires certain references, and above all, an exercise that allows establishing limits, correspondences and, above all, allows delineating the semantic and semiotic scope that gives it an added value in the context in which it is located and the conceptual, methodological and practical dimension attributed to it. Thus, by declaring as a challenge the delimitation of EO as a category, activity, discipline, or field of educational and pedagogical sciences, the complexity of assuming a position in the face of the necessary reflection is accentuated. However, at the heart of this epistemological plot, it is necessary to overcome belligerence or extreme positions that only lead to turning the analysis and the transitions that mark the evolution of scientific knowledge under construction into a blind spot.

Indeed, the ambiguity in the justification of one or the other position welcomes and announces the unequivocal presence of the existing and intertwining of three discursive sources: the political, whose normative rationality is more recognized; the theoretical, which reinforces the need to overcome theoretical and methodological inconsistencies, rooted in its inter and multidisciplinary nature that it possesses and that - even when it tends to differentiate itself, according to context, objective, techniques and professional who performs it - fails to establish its own theoretical foundations for practical activity as an expression of a systematic and coherent integration.

Against the current, the specificity of the term EO responds to the imprint of the educational-historical time that accounts for the urgencies and educational, pedagogical, and social problems emerging for more than a century. Thus, by delimiting the guidance associated with all human activity, the entry of the term "guidance" in the socio-educational space has been at the very heart of educational practices that connote the intermediary, facilitating, and guiding character required by the process of human being formation. In this intentional symbiosis, the term is widely alluded to and associated with school and professional guidance, vocational guidance, and psycho-pedagogical guidance, and is even associated with counseling and tutoring (Martínez et al., 2022).

The second challenge: the delimitation of the object, the objective of the EO

Indeed, the delimitation of education as a specificity adopted by guidance in the field of pedagogy recognizes the complexity of the process, not only for its purposes (the integral formation of people throughout life) but also for the contexts (home, school, and community) and actors involved (family, teachers, and community members). However, the major argument in this complexity is given above all in the fact that educating implies stimulating, transforming, and enhancing the growth and development of the personality of the participants through intentional, organized, systematic, and coherent influence.

Therefore, if the objective of education is training - understood as a set of influences that make it possible to create opportunities and possibilities for learning to understand and act in various situations and to adopt a proactive, participatory position in the various fields of cultural, scientific, artistic and social production, which take shape in the construction of the individual's cultural identity and mode of action - it is possible to understand the guiding nature of these influences. It should be taken into account that it is the person, according to his/her current and potential development situation, who appropriates and resignifies what he/she learns.

Thus, the human being and his or her realization in the environment become the purpose of education, and EO is the discipline that provides the necessary tools and resources to ensure the formation of learners in different educational contexts. Specifically, it is in charge of extending the educational influence to the family and community context to achieve the unity and coherence of influences that allow the development of a life-long education.

It is understood then that EO should focus its study on the methodologies, techniques, and resources of stimulation and assistance to facilitate personality development throughout life. Therefore, the scientific and technological nature of EO is based on the recognition that conceiving the intervention of the counselor, the help, accompaniment, and advice to the educational actors contributes to improving the quality of the educational process. This intentionality is what reinforces the preventive, projective, and mediating character of EO and assures its interdisciplinary nature that allows expanding the relationships between instruction, education, training, and development, which sustains education as a school and social process.

Then, as a result of the deductions involved in this exercise, it is assumed that the object of EO refers to the educational process in its broad sense but pays attention to the mediating condition of the influences that structure the educational activity (internal and external), the interactions of the actors and the internalization-externalization synergy that takes place during the influence. It is thus explained that the EO adjusts to the demands of the social-historical moment, but undoubtedly, the common denominator is related to the intentional mediation action that stimulates, guides, and mobilizes those involved in the educational process to facilitate change, the transformation (individual and group) of the current state (current development situation) in which the subject of the orientation finds himself, the desired state (zone of potential development) in an interplay of the individual-group and the individual-social.

By assuming this position, EO can be presented implicitly and explicitly, but it is the methods, techniques, and methodologies that are resized to the intentionality of the influences on the activity and on the process as a whole. This precision informs the third challenge identified in this study.

Third challenge: Own methods and methodologies, facing the complexity of EO

From an assessment of the disciplinary status of EO, which subscribes to the character of pedagogical discipline that places its attention on the stimulation and support for the development of personality throughout life, it sediments the complexity that involves associating methods and methodologies to the intersubjective nature of the educational process (in its broad and narrow sense) and the action of the protagonists (individual and in groups), as well as the type of intervention (direct or indirect) (Carvalho et al., 2023). Thus, marked by the ecological, ethnomethodological, and psycho-pedagogical emphasis, the practice of EO uses and adapts intervention techniques for diagnosis, intervention, and evaluation of the proposal according to the case under study. However, when attempting a classification, it may be debatable but no less important because of the demands of OE practice itself (Tourrián, 2019).

Other authors have insisted on assuming the function or structure of the methods and techniques to classify them (Obando, 2021), such is the case of the stimulation techniques, among which have been identified the techniques of asking questions that involve questioning about reality with questions about the subject under study, for example: what is it, why, what for, how is it, who, where, when, when, can it be modified, where is it, where is it? In this

case, there are the participation techniques and the relaxation technique that promote the visualization of images through words, experimentation, and fantasy of experiences, encouraging the identification with social, natural, or literary phenomena.

In this order, techniques such as morphological analysis and synectics are also identified, above all, linked to socioemotional stimulation. In the former, a problem is formulated in very general terms; it is called upon to list all the possibilities or typologies in which it presents itself and proceeds to combine all the “possible” ways of variants through the use of analogies and metaphors, making the natural strange by using procedures of direct, personal and symbolic-fantastic analogy.

Fourth challenge: Beyond what and how, ... who participates in EO?

This challenge requires resolving the controversy between those who carry out the guidance and those who are the recipients. It seems that all educators are, at the same time, educational counselors or recipients of this type of action. It is thus understood that, in this regard, the debate is broad, and this diaspora tends to open or reduce depending on the approach taken. Guidance as a specialized practice conceives the guidance subject or the professional with training in this profile. On the other hand, by conceiving it as a type of activity implicit in the whole educational process, the limits of the profile are blurred, and the professional with different academic-disciplinary training is assumed to be a guidance counselor.

However, the idea that the integrative perspective of EO sustains that this type of activity constitutes a multidisciplinary practice, it is necessary to talk about the guidance team from an institutional perspective. Such a position implies the participation of a group of people who, for legal and labor purposes, have psycho-pedagogical training (pedagogy, psychology, or psychopedagogy training) but, at the same time, it includes the family, social, and cultural educators who, from the school and social context, intervene in the education of others. Thus, when delimiting who, the reference to the field of action of the educational counselor will depend on where the intervention takes place: the educational institution, in the socio-community context, and in organizations, companies, or associations. Therefore, the EO will respond to specific purposes according to the needs of the addressees or the interest of the institutions.

Fifth challenge: The specificity of OE research as a condition for its legitimacy and relevance in the educational and social sciences

Recognizing that the status of EO is debatable and under construction confirms the need to prioritize research as a key development area. Likewise, it will also give it scientific rigor in view of the contextualization, immediacy, and personalization of decisions, as well as the multidisciplinary nature that underpins it. However, in order to clarify the specificity of EO research, it is necessary to go beyond this discussion and place the analysis in the methodological underpinning that defines and characterizes it.

First of all, it is necessary to understand that EO research maintains a descriptive character, but, by its nature, it avoids the methodology based on experimentation. This led to impregnate it with criticisms and devaluations when considering that: a) the theoretical framework that justifies it is ambiguous; b) the tendency to describe the data analysis and failures in the treatment of the significance of the conclusions of the results have limited generalization possibilities, among others.

Although, during the early years, OE attempted to resolve these inconsistencies by assuming the evaluative nature of this type of research, it is shown how, in recent years, the consensus that social sciences - and in particular those of education - demand a mixed analysis but with an interpretative and explanatory tendency, which gives another relevance to the search for solutions and justifies from the singularity of people and the context; It is necessary to confirm theories, broaden approaches and unveil the interrelationships that influence the behavior and transformation of the process, but above all of the subjects and their exchanges during the activity. It is insisted that EO research must be justified in, from, and for practice.

Additionally, it is necessary to understand that, even when the methodology of EO research is based on the methodology of educational research, this demand is explained in the application of an instrumental system of other disciplines that participate in the process, and the result of the guiding activity in the educational field. Therefore, it is necessary to assume that EO research is of basic and evaluative tendency; it does not possess its own methods but employs a range of applicable methods in correspondence with the proposed research objectives. In this sense, although there is an insistence on harmonizing the qualitative and quantitative, it is certain that progress is being

made in identifying the trend in the research methodology in EO, as there is also progress in the abandonment of descriptive, differential, and correlational methods. Thus, the case method, causal analysis, and meta-analysis, emphasizing time series and sequential analysis, are placed at the center, but this does not obviate the possibility of using them.

The positions in this regard maintain the idea of relating exploratory research methods, which use techniques such as the interview, the biographical questionnaire, standardized tests, research methods, and techniques aimed at the verification methods of exploration or intervention instruments, which include psychometric verification studies of the validity of interventions, as well as theoretical or test research, which are carried out to test hypotheses deduced from theories or that were formulated to explain empirical situations. Similarly, there is research aimed at determining how to act in different situations, making decisions, providing solutions and data of practical utility, and evaluating the effects of the guidance activity on the subjects' behavior.

Therefore, the multidisciplinary nature of the educational process should be the basis for understanding that the nature of EO is not only pedagogical but also social, psychological, and ethnographic. However, the tendency to consider EO as an applied discipline of interventive and transformative rationality recovers the idea of the need to seek the integration of methods and techniques in the counseling act as unique and unrepeatable. Therefore, from this position, the flexibility, context, and the counselor's conceptions transcend as unique and unrepeatable experiences. Thus, the sustainability of EO as a scientific discipline is gained in the average that multidisciplinary projects are achieved that place comprehensive approaches, inclusion, construction, and methodologies of configurational character that bet on legitimizing its use in relations with those involved and with the context, based on a historical and cultural appropriation that is re-signified in the activity and in communication.

Sixth challenge: Educational guidance in the training profile of professionals

In fact, in Ibero-America, training programs in EO can be presented both in initial or postgraduate training, under the laudable intent of favoring, from the methodological point of view, the management of help and support, which underlies every educational process. Sharing the position of Cobos (2010), it is assumed that EO can be considered a professional activity, an occupational designation, or a feature of the educational function of educators (teachers, parents, and designated persons in the educational community). However, there is consensus in ensuring that, in any case, they should be prepared to assume this responsibility.

It is thus explained that in the curricula of the training of other specialties - as is the case of the pedagogue, psychologist, social worker, and other professionals linked to socio-educational activity - EO may appear implicitly or implicitly in consideration of developing a necessary knowledge with practical value for all those who in one way or another have some influence on other people. In accordance with this position, it is assumed that every professional educational counselor with training in this field should accredit a specialization in this educational area, which allows him/her to master the bases of the genetic method, the skills to listen, communicate, mobilize, ask questions, be flexible, work in a team, be organized, and be committed to transforming, helping and seeking the well-being of others.

Thus, it is understood that the nature of the meanings and senses attributed to educational guidance practices are framed by socio-constructivist and socio-critical currents. From these positions, it is not only possible to describe, interpret, explain social interaction, and find the intra and interpsychological resources to guide transformation, but it must be constituted through: shared motivations, values, and beliefs, related to individual and collective purposes, with agreed or accepted identities, which are exposed to the reflection and discovery of the different actors who develop and receive the EO.

It is thus assumed that professionals dedicated to EO have the fundamental purpose of stimulating the process of formation and development of the guiding subject, assuming the change and the transformation of those who participate in the educational process in order to achieve the well-being they need for their integral development. Therefore, for this purpose, it is necessary to manage the services of assistance, counseling, evaluation, and monitoring of the intervention carried out by the actors in the integral formative processes.

CONCLUSIONS

The current world panorama confirms the complex scenario in which the educational process unfolds, and it is this reality that conditions the need to strengthen the theoretical, methodological, and practical development of EO in different contexts. The study confirms that the scientific development of EO is based on the dynamics of socio-

educational problems, but its multidisciplinary character adds more tensions at the conceptual and methodological level. On the one hand, the ambiguity of the object of study, the methodological diversity used, the uncertainties with which the training process is established, and the occupational area of the counselor are identified as dilemmas of the first order.

However, there is one area of the debate that seems coherent: its link with education, a condition of the transition from an EO in school spaces to an activity increasingly open to society and to the integration of all educators (families, teachers, directors, community leaders) and the students themselves, while noting the involvement of the educational counselor in counseling and accompaniment tasks that, from a preventive and inclusive approach, shape his or her performance. Thus, it is evident that the professional development of educational counselors must be legitimized, and educational policies must be established as a specialist professional. At the same time, it is necessary to recognize that every educator must be prepared in guidance since the formation of the human being requires coherent and systematic influence with common intentions, which demands rethinking the attitudes and expectations for the development of this professional activity, as a structuring axis of the school and social educational processes.

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