

Sociology of Education beyond Borders

Framework for Sociological Research on Education in Spain

José Beltrán Llavador, Daniel Gabaldón-Estevan

[Abstract]

This article presents an overview of developments related to the sociology of education in Spain in recent decades. It employs Brint's and Van Zanten's models to analyze the annual meetings of the Spanish Association of Sociology of Education (ASE). It assesses how Spanish sociology is received in general, and then focuses specifically on the sociology of education in the Japanese education system and in Japanese culture and society. The findings from the analysis point to the need to expand and deepen dialogue between Spain and Japan in order to achieve social change on a global scale.

Keywords : Education, education research, sociology of education, scientific society, Japanese education system

1. Educational research in Spain through a scientific society

The recent development of education research in Spain (Beltrán, 2015, 2016; Beltrán et al., 2016; Carmena et al., 2000, 2005, 2006; Contreras and Pérez de Lara,

2010, Marcellán, 2010) cannot be understood in isolation from developments in the rest of Europe. Developments in Spain were delayed by four decades of dictatorship. Democracy was restored in 1978 and following Spain's subsequent integration into the European Union in 1986, it has been achieving the same progress and living standards as other European countries, including in relation to the role and relevance of scientific organizations.

In the sociology framework, the most important scientific society in Spain is the Spanish Federation of Sociology (FES, www.fes-sociologia.com) which brings together territorial associations, universities, scientific and professional institutions, individual partners, and research committees. Spain currently has 40 research committees (RC, CI) including the Sociology of Education (CI-13) which in 2015 merged with the Spanish Association of Sociology of Education (ASE).

The national ASE (www.ase.es) encompasses the developments made in the discipline over the last nearly 30 years. Although the ASE was officially established only in 2000, its main and most regular activity, the Conference of the Sociology of Education (CSE), has been held annually since 1990. Every three years this ASE meeting is hosted by the Spanish Congress of Sociology (CES) and organized by the Spanish Federation of Sociology (FES), and takes the form of a research committee (RC) within the CES. During the period 1990–2017 the ASE has held 17 specific CSE meetings and has participated via a RC in 10 CES conferences organized by the FES. In 2015, the ASE held the first Iberian Conference on the Sociology of Education (CISE) in collaboration with Portuguese partners; the second CISE has been held in Cordoba in July 2017. Although research activity is not paramount at this annual event, the sociology of education in Spain is what researchers and teachers recognize as practice in the field (AA.VV., 2005).

Proceedings including numerous papers have been published for most of these meetings. ASE's primary objective is to reflect the themes, dynamics, external influences and effects of research activity on the sociology of education according to the collective mind model proposed by Brint (2009) in his analysis on SE in the USA. Brint's model highlights that the discipline of SE is only part of the field of education studies. The collective mind includes all education related scientific production from scientific meetings, publications, and research projects. Thus, the ac-

tivity of the ASE is only "a small part of the division of individual work in the field of education studies" (op cit., p.14).

Brint's model is complemented by the model proposed by Agnès Van Zanten (2004: 13-29) to analyze the sociology of education in France. By applying this combined framework to the Spanish case, we focus particularly on the following three dimensions.

1.1. Historical affiliation

The conclusions of a study published in *Témpora* (AA.VV., 2005) and the analysis in Feito (2008) show that Spain's, French-speaking heritage continues to be an influence through the works of Bourdieu and his reproduction theory. This powerful effect is sustained by work in the critical pedagogy stream (e.g. Freire, Giroux, Apple, McLaren...). It can be observed also in the gradual incorporation of contributions to the "critical theory" stream of work, from the second (Habermas) and third (Honneth) generations of the Frankfurt School. Although some sociologists of education in Spain stand out for the quality of their contributions, they cannot be said to have created a "school" or "tradition." On the other hand, the influence of these authors is not so small as to warrant the lack of attention to sociological theory in the development of our discipline.

If there is something that is reflected in the ASE's "map" of conferences (Fernández Enguita and Sancho, 1999; Feito, 2008) it is the heterogeneity of themes and research proposals, a symptom of the wealth of the contributions but also a symptom of a certain dispersion. One of the dominant threads running through these conferences is education inequalities (multiculturalism, immigration, social classes, school cultures, etc.). One issue that is gaining interest is gender perspective.

1.2. The scientific community

The process of European convergence has been decisive in the internationalization of research. The European Union currently is the main body determining research priorities, and influencing the education research agenda and its organization.

From the perspective of Spanish scientific production, articles by education sociologists have a small presence in education journals which are dominated by disciplines such as pedagogy and psychology. The Spanish ASE has had its own journal (RASE: <https://ojs.uv.es/index.php/RASE>) since 2008. In terms of published work, sociology of education in Spain is accounting for an increasing number of research studies, monographs, and textbooks aimed at the discipline and university teachers. There have been some attempts to produce collections on specific areas of the discipline (as for instance, the journal *Educación y Sociedad* (with 12 numbers published), and the collection Polis Paidea (25 books published in Germania editorial), and to encourage the participation of young researchers via doctoral research.

1.3. The social context

SE is continuously entertained by the issues raised by education policies aimed at standardization of education. The relationships among researchers, education professionals, and schools are interesting. In the context of Spain, analysis needs to take account of the fact that the involvement of educators has increased since the 1970s led bottom up by pedagogical renewal movements (MRP in Spanish) rather than by top down institutional education reform processes.

2. Dialogue between Japan and Spain

One of the classical authors whose work has facilitated Europe and Spain emulating SE approaches in Japan is Max Weber and his studies of Confucianism and Puritanism (Hernández, Beltrán, Marrero, 2005: 272-333). More recent approaches which stand out in the context of Spain correspond to clearly defined social and cultural spheres such as learning languages, the influence of sport and especially martial arts, the existence of a traditional literature (through the rich heritage of the haikus, among others) and contemporary (with codes and genres such as manga, which young people manage), or the influence of Zen spirituality. A Spanish sociological study of Japan warned about important changes taking place as the result of globalization, and highlighted their effects in the education field (Vidal and Llopis, 2000: 152-154). The Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells, drew at-

tention to the transformations in Japan in *The Information Age*. (Castells, 1998).

There are two clear dimensions to education research. The first is related to the Japanese education system. In Dialnet, the main database of academic production in Spain, a search on the descriptor "educational system + Japan" produced 24 publications (March 2017). This database is indicative rather than exhaustive (see, e.g. Velloso de Santiesteban, 1994, Paz Cardona, 2002, Ramírez Carpeño and Mekochi, 2015, etc.). The second dimension corresponds to the work on comparing education systems. Here is worth mentioning the literature on and studies of higher education rankings and their relationship to world class universities (see, among others, Pérez and Aldás, 2016, and the recent Spanish edition by Arnove, Torres and Franz, 2016: pp. 497-533). Undoubtedly, the trend towards internationalization will promote academic collaboration and the sharing of knowledge in social and education sciences between Spain and Japan.

3. Final remarks

The logic of scientific research cannot be explained in isolation from socio-logical practice. Education research is aimed at understanding and committing to the social reality. The ASE scenario reflects attempts by sociology of education researchers to continue to develop and improve this area of scientific knowledge. It is essential to increase dialogue with other cultures and societies such as the Japanese whose history and current developments can provide valuable insights to the achievement of social change aimed at a better world for all.

References

- AA.VV. (2005). La sociología de la educación en España: una mirada a ras de suelo. *Témpora*, 8, 13-49.
- Arnove, R., Torres, C.A. and Franz, S. (2016). *Educación comparada. La dialéctica de lo global y lo local*. Valencia, Tirant lo Blanch. [*Comparative Education. The Dialectic of the Global and the Local*. Laham, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield, 2012: 4th ed.]
- Beltrán, J. (2015). "Investigarnos en educación, en Beltrán, J. *La escuela y sus metáforas. Materiales de sociología de la educación*. Valencia, Tirant lo Blanch.

- Beltrán, J. (2016). The State of Sociology within the Spanish University. Institutional Locus and Academic Identity. *Revista Española de Sociología*, 25 (3 supl.), 155-169. [doi.org/10.22325/fes/res.2016.12].
- Beltrán, J., Esquinas, M.F. and Navarrete, L. (2016). Introduction to the Special Issue. The Task Ahead: A Diagnosis of Spanish Sociology between the Academy and the Profession. *Revista Española de Sociología*, 25 (3 supl.), 7-14. [doi: 10.22325/fes/res.2016.15]
- Brint, S. (2010). La "mente colectiva" en el trabajo. Una década en la vida de la sociología de la Educación en los Estados Unidos. *Rase (Revista de la Asociación de Sociología de la Educación)*, vol. 2, n. 2, 13-26.
- Cardona, M.P. (2002). La formación de profesores en el sistema educativo japonés. *Edetania: estudios y propuestas socioeducativas*, 25, 59-78.
- Carmena L.G. et al. (2000). *El sistema de investigación educativa en España*. Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte. Centro de Investigación y Documentación Educativa.
- Carmena L.G. et al. (2005). *Criterios y procedimientos de Evaluación de la Investigación Educativa*. Madrid: Centro de Investigación y Documentación Educativa (CIDE).
- Carmena L.G. et al. (2006). *Promoción de la investigación educativa en las Administraciones Autonómicas*. Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia.
- Castells, M. (1998). *La era de la información. Economía, sociedad y cultura*. Vols I, II, III. Madrid, Alianza.
- Contreras, J. and Pérez de L.N. (comps.) (2010). *Investigar la experiencia educativa*. Madrid, Morata.
- Feito A.R. (2008). La sociología de la educación en España desde 1991. *Rase (Revista de la Asociación de Sociología de la Educación)*, vol. 1, n. 1, 6-24.
- Fernández E.M. and Sánchez M.J. (1999). Una década de encuentros: balance de un experiencia compartida (la Conferencia de Sociología de la Educación: 1990-1999). *Actas de la 7ª Conferencia de Sociología de la Educación*. [La Manga del Mar Menor, Murcia, 23-25 de septiembre (CD-ROM)].
- Hernández, F.J., Beltrán, J. and Marrero, A. (2005). *Teorías sobre sociedad y educación*. Valencia, Tirant lo Blanch.

- Marcellán, F. (2010). Investigación y universidad pública. En Corominas, A. y Sacristán, V. (coords.). *Construir el futuro de la universidad pública*. Barcelona: Icaria, 55-64.
- Pérez, F. and Aldás, J. (2016). U-Ranking 2016. Indicadores sintéticos de las universidades españolas. IVIE-Instituto Valenciano de Investigaciones Económicas.
- Ramírez Carpeño, E. and Mekochi, Y. (2015). Initial Teacher Education in Japan and Spain. A Comparative Study. *Revista Española de Educación Comparada*, 25 (2015), 101-127.
- Van Zanten, A. (2004). Las evoluciones de la Sociología de la Educación en Francia: dinámicas internas e influencias externas. En *Sociología de la Educación y Formación del Profesorado. Actas de la X Conferencia de Sociología de la Educación*. Alzira: Germania, 13-29.
- Velloso de Santiesteban, A. (1994). *El sistema educativo en Japón*. Barcelona, Labor.
- Vidal, M. and Llopis, R. (2000). *Sayonara Japón*. Madrid, Hiperión.