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Calderón López-Velarde, Jaime Rogelio

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Investigation on Youth and Adult Education: the theses of a Latin American Contest

Jaime Calderón López Velarde¹

Abstract

Aiming to know the status of research on Youth and Adult Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, I have conducted a comparative study that reviewed 170 undergraduate and graduate thesis involved in a contest between 2005 and 2011. Institutions, gender and also studies conducted by the contestants and the themes of their theses were compared in order to establish correspondence and changes in relation to the areas and topics of investigation proposed in the regional documents prior to the V and VI International Conferences on Adult Education (Hamburg - 1997 and Belem - 2009). Research on Youth and Adult Education is scarce, absent in many countries and unequal. It is concentrated in Brazil, Mexico and Argentina. It is done in public universities in undergraduate or graduate programs in education, education sciences, education and psychology, but they coexist with a variety of programs attended mostly by women. Research on Youth and adult education – which replaces literacy campaigns and basic education – is marked by thematic diversity. Undergraduate and graduate programs on Youth and Adult Education are scarce and are not a established line of research, except for Cuba and Brazil. It is unpostponable to revive an analysis that transcends the term Youth and Adult Education from the perspective of *lifelong learning*.

Keywords

Adult education – Research – Thesis – Comparative education.

¹- Universidad Pedagógica Nacional,
Guadalupe, Zacatecas, México.
Contact: peri984@hotmail.com

La investigación sobre educación de personas jóvenes y adultas: las tesis de un concurso latinoamericano

Jaime Rogelio Calderón López-Velarde¹

Resumen

Con la finalidad de conocer la situación que guarda la investigación de la educación de personas jóvenes y adultas (EPJA) en América Latina y el Caribe se realizó un estudio comparativo mediante la revisión de 170 tesis de licenciatura y posgrado que participaron en un concurso durante los años 2005 al 2011. Se comparan las instituciones, el género, así como los estudios realizados por los concursantes y las temáticas de las tesis para establecer la correspondencia y los cambios con respecto a las áreas y temas de investigación propuestos en los documentos regionales previos a la V y VI Conferencias Internacionales de Educación de Adultos (Hamburgo, 1997 y Belén, 2009). La investigación educativa en la EPJA, es mínima, ausente en muchos países y desigual, concentrándose en Brasil, México y Argentina. Se realiza en instituciones universitarias públicas mediante programas de licenciatura y posgrados en educación, ciencias de la educación, pedagogía y psicología, pero coexisten con una variedad de programas que son cursados en su mayoría por mujeres. La diversidad temática se acentúa como un rasgo de la investigación en la EPJA, reemplazando a la alfabetización y la educación básica. Los programas de licenciatura y posgrado sobre EPJA son escasos y no constituyen una línea consolidada de investigación con excepción de Cuba y Brasil. Es impostergable reactivar un análisis que trascienda el término EPJA desde la perspectiva del aprendizaje a lo largo de toda la vida.

Palabras Clave

Educación de adultos – Investigación – Tesis – Educación comparada

¹– Universidad Pedagógica Nacional,
Guadalupe, Zacatecas, México.
Contacto: peri984@hotmail.com

Introduction

In 2005 the CREFAL (Regional Cooperation Center for Adult Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, for its acronym in Spanish) established the Program Prize for best theses on the Youth and Adult Education Program on Bachelor's degree, Master and PhD categories to promote research on this educational field in order to:

Examine and stimulate in Latin America and the Caribbean authors of the best theses about *EPJA*, which provide important basic information, propose new approaches, make methodological and theoretical contributions or show relevant finds in this field. (CREFAL/ Cátedras UNESCO, 2011).

This initiative inscribes in the action guidelines proposed by the Framework of Action for Youth and Adult Education in Latin America and the Caribbean 2000-2010 to guide attention to *EPJA* through the diffusion of quality experiences and influence their respective educative policies like "support contests of research and systematization of experience (...) and make comparative investigations" amongst others. (UNESCO et al., 2000, p. 105).

Between 2005 and 2007 annual call-offs were issued, and from 2009 in biannual periods. Integrating as a calling institution, the UNESCO Brazil Chair offered to the winning theses authors' publication of their work and prizes in Mexican pesos of 50,000.00 for Bachelor's degree, 75,000.00 for Masters and 100,000.00 for PhD. We consider important to analyze the theses of the five contests because they are academic products that through studies and research contend affirmations that put on a test the knowledge acquired by graduates of bachelor's degree and postgraduate programs and constitute a requirement to endorse the studied program. They represent, in turn, an essential reference source for education scholars and experts and also for decision makers because is there where new knowledge, finds and emerging research

guidelines are. It is worth mention that research on *EPJA* in the region since two decades ago has been incipient and focused in literacy campaigns, basic education and qualification. Has this situation been modified? What is the participation of the countries in the region in these contests? Who, where and which bachelor's degree and postgraduate programs these students graduated from? Which are the subjects, problems and tendencies that kept the attention of *EPJA* research? What differences and similarities were observed in relation to the Regional Reports of *EPJA* elaborated in 2008?

Methodology consisted on three stages. On the first one, general statements of comparison are mentioned, such as participation, type of institution and educational program. On the second, countries are compared based on which gave the highest and the lowest number of theses, indicating name of academic program and gender of contestants as well. On third stage, a comparison between the four intervention lines and the 12 research areas of the *EPJA* Framework of Action 2000-2010 (*Marco de Acción EPJA* 2000-2010) was made, complementing with relations between "new" or different areas. Subsequently, results were compared with two Regional Reports (*Reportes Regionales*, CARUSO et al.; Torres, 2009). Finally, differences and similarities between mentioned aspects were established, and results were interpreted.

The working structure starts approaching conceptual aspects of *EPJA* in the region and a brief characterization of the situation of educative research in this matter, following order and development of methodological stages previously mentioned.

It should be noted that the contestant theses represent a reference source between different categories of academic production of research; therefore conclusions of the study are not generalizable, since they only allow a partial but significant approach of the state of educative research on this matter. Other structural elements of the theses like types of investigation, as well as theoretical and

methodological approaches, including an exam about their quality, clearly exceed the goals of this study and they will constitute a motive for future analysis to count with an integral vision of these academic products. However, we argue as a hypothesis that in several countries bachelor degree thesis is a requirement to obtain the grade, but works such as dissertations, intervention projects and monographs that develop education diagnosis are investigations that do not provide new knowledge.

Adult Education and Education Research

What should be understood as Youth and Adult Education (EPJA) in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean countries in order to determine which investigations correspond with this term as in case of theses and other academic products?

The answer (s) to this question is not a simple matter because is evident that between the countries of the region and the academic field there are differences in relation to age, education level, theoretical perspectives and terminology used to refer to this expression; likewise to the influence of political, social and cultural context on these nations and other world regions. Thus, concepts such as: permanent education, “amplified” basic education, formal and non-formal education, training for work, popular education and the expression *lifelong learning*, realize this conceptual diversity. However, since the V - Fifth International Conference on Adult Education Hamburg in 1977, important steps had been taken to elucidate the specificity of this concept, but still insufficient.

In fact, if we consider the regional agenda of the *Regional Framework of Action (Marco de Acción Regional)* before mentioned⁶⁹⁹,

699- We subscribe this document, amongst other reasons, to resume historic memory of EPJA, to recognize collective, systematic and representative work of multiple stakeholders dedicated to this education field, and for the importance and validity of many of their guidelines and proposals.

in which EPJA main problematic areas are synthesized, significant progress can be reported. In this document we emphasize four pronouncements congruent with the amplified vision of the Hamburg Declaration and the Agenda (UNESCO, 1997), oriented to transcend limits and discrimination of age, level and education modality and even to replace the term Education with Adult Learning.

First came the adoption of the term Youth and Adult Education (EPJA) whose coexistence with adults was not only product of demographic changes in the region but also from incapacity of educational systems to guarantee permanence of young people in basic or compulsory education and their necessity of being early employed in informal working, gradually replacing and even discriminating groups of adults on EPJA programs (TORRES, 2009).

Secondly, we reiterate the specificity of EPJA field, strengthening the unavoidable commitment with the most marginalized groups like indigenous, rural population, youth and women and the inclusion of seven intervention areas: 1. Literacy. 2. Education and Work. 3. Education, citizenship and human rights. 4. Education with rural and indigenous population. 5. Education and youth. 6. Education and gender issues. 7. Education, local and sustainable development. And finally, three action guidelines were raised: 1. Curriculum and evaluation. 2. Training of educators. 3. Research.

Third, assume that EPJA is an activity that transcends education, because it does not circumscribe to learning aspects in scholar spaces but in diverse places where people interact and co-exist in order to learn and recreate culture in its multiple expressions.

Fourth, to clear up the EPJA purpose and to create an open invitation to informed dialogue, in order to enrich implied notions in this concept and its connections, with emphasize in *lifelong learning* perspective in order to adequate to national, regional and local context of this region (UNESCO et al., 2000). However, mentioned improvements

also signified the emergency of problematic situations translated into new challenges:

1- Extension, diversification and more complexity on *EPJA* intervention field. Priority with before mentioned social groups and the inclusion of proposed thematic areas means, amongst other aspects, more articulation levels in cross-cutting public policies, reinforce links between the State and civil society organizations, attention to specific groups (street youth, the disabled, convicts, migrants, the elder etc.), access to digital resources and insist on initial and continuous training of educators without which it is difficult to reach the *EPJA* quality.

2- Absence of synergies. Educational links between children, young people and adults either inside schooling system (simultaneous literacy proposals between children, young people and /or adults; community programs and others) or outside (early childhood education and attention programs which operate as Parenting Education, Intergenerational Learning, learning communities and others), show necessity of coexistence and mutual interdependence between formal and non-formal systems whose limits are increasingly relative and artificial.

3- Homogeneity and isolation of the *EPJA*. Emphasis on Citizenship, Inter-culturality, Human Rights, Community Development and Environmental Protection are cross-cutting areas included in curricula from basic education to academic programs in superior levels. In this regard, is not appropriate that *EPJA* tackles this subjects separately, assuming itself as an homogenous and parallel space inside national education systems, situation that, in one way, reproduce pejorative notions towards their subjects (needy communities, vulnerable, in risk, in educational lagging etc.) and in other, reduces its visibility, importance and financial resources (TORRES, 2009).

4- Specificity of the *EPJA*. While poverty and social exclusion are identity categories of the *EPJA*, there are not enough to cover every subject who conforms it, either as

population in educational lagging (youngsters expelled from schooling systems for which compensatory policies operate), excluded and / or discriminated for diverse reasons population for whom social policies are designated and those who are not in any of those situations but have the right to demand continuous learning through permanent education programs (CARUSO et al., 2008). Even more, would youth in secondary education and intermediate levels where impoverishment in rural and marginal urban areas prevail not be part of *EPJA*? Would it not be a paradox that *EPJA* excluded from attention and study this young people, or indigenous students that accessed to intermediate and superior education?

5- Conceptual fragility. Define subjects of the *EPJA* with traditional criteria such as age, economic lags, social condition and educative modality are insufficient today, given the multiplicity of situations generated by poverty and social iniquity, and the diverse role that they assume: citizens, parents, workers, elder adults, etc.(CARUSO et al., 2008). In addition, discussion over definition and characterization that transcends the term *EPJA* from lifelong learning perspective has not prospered and explains in great part the situation described in foregoing indents.

It is clear then that *EPJA* should cover everyone no matter the formal or non-formal character of education, social condition, race, age, gender, and ethnic, sexual or religious identification. In fact, it is intended that way in the cited *Framework of Action* (UNESCO et al., 2000) when it points out:

Developing programs for young and adult people which in their condition of parenthood, are secondary level, technical, superior students or educators in any level or modality, to incorporate them as both learners and educators (p.90).

However, social reality makes compulsory that knowledge and learning essential to live

and coexist in an increasingly complex and changing society, becomes available to those subjects excluded by a system that does not enforce human rights, the right to education amongst them. This is why, and aware

of the reductionist risk, in this study, we consider subjects of *EPJA* who did not joined or were excluded by regular educational system either by potential or real demand (participants of programs offered by education institutions, public or private, and by civil society organizations to reconstitute their right to education). As well, intervention areas and emerging subjects intended to this social groups.

In respect to education research, at the most relevant international forums, particularly in the *Framework of Action for Future*, from Hamburg (UNESCO 1997, point 22), as well as Latin American monitoring of COFINTEA V (1998-1999) and the previously referred *Framework of Action*, interest to encourage and consolidate educative research about *EPJA* is a constant, because since the 70's until today, social literature and states of knowledge reviews report advances but both agree in their poor development (UNESCO/OREALC, 2003; RUIZ, 2005 SCHMELKES, 2008) particularly in basic research field, which majorly depends on each organization and international education agencies experts, and on researchers assigned to universities and public and private research centers.

Empiric studies related with *EPJA* practices (descriptions diagnosis, evaluations, teaching materials etc.), on the contrary, are overwhelming and largely promoted by governments and ministries of the region countries, focused on the most pressing subjects and issues (literacy, basic education and occupational training), as well as topics related with adult people education, quality, gender and emerging subjects related with popular education (citizenship, democracy and social participation). This weak development coincides with the evaluation made by Ruiz (2005) who reviewed 313 works from the 90's about adult and popular education made by the *REDUC* (Latin American Information and Documentation

Network, for its acronym in Spanish), concludes that only 29% were considered in research and studies category. The remaining 71% was distributed in categories such as systematization, present controversy and debate on the field and practice and experience description.

Another feature on *EPJA* research resulting from this study, is its great subject diversity since there are 30 topics gathered from examined works, without disaggregate emerging themes (gender, environment, etc.) where it is inferred that in many cases thematic coexistence and a clear knowledge fragmentation tendency are closely associated. It is worth mentioning than inside this spectrum of topics, popular education has had a leading role inside education research since 70s, under Paulo Freire and Orlando Fals Borda liberating education influence, new critical approaches to quantitative paradigm emerged, through participatory action research and the systematization that documents, with a narrative approach, thoughts on experiences from social agents, emphasizing their political and organizational dimension.

In summary in *EPJA Framework of Action*, education research is key to "provide knowledge and contribute to design strategies to respect education equal distribution and diversity" (UNESCO et al., 2000:103). Strictly speaking about the seven priority areas of action, developing education research is emphasized; adding 12 research subjects included on point 3.3 tables.

Participation, Institutions and Programs

In accordance to data provided on table 1, only 14 out of 42 Latin American and the Caribbean countries participated on 2005 to 2011 period, with 315 theses in total. However, only 170 of total, equivalent to 54% were considered about *EPJA*. Also, number of participating countries was reduced to 10 (24%) because theses of five contestants did not matched with *EPJA*. Mainly only Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa

Rica, Colombia and particularly Brazil theses where of *EPJA*, while in three countries including Mexico, their number stood less than half. This situation responds to the inclusion of children population attending mandatory education (preschool, elementary school) to young people attending higher education and, in many occasions with subjects completely unconnected with the *EPJA*, which reflects ignorance of characteristics and specifications in this field, and unclear information on contest guidelines. In the Caribbean region, Cuba presented four while Chile and Bolivia participated with a range of 5 and 7 theses. For their part, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru presented one or two theses and only one from Central America region, in Costa Rica (table 1). Countries with more contestants were Mexico, Brazil and Argentina with 77, 47 and 25 respectively, representing 88% of total theses. This has occurred not only because of territorial and demographical extension of these countries but their geopolitical and economical role on local and worldwide level, and to the conformation

of their educative systems which magnitude and diversity of problems demand more knowledge derived from social and education research. In this regard, expansion of superior education systems in Latin America on last three decades, created a favorable atmosphere in countries before mentioned for universities and superior education institutions, public and private, particularly in postgraduate studies whose academic products reflect on those percentages. We postulate in turn that competition calling had been more widespread than in the Anglo and Francophone Caribbean with little presence of *CREFAL*. As well we assume that, beyond economic stimulus, contestants needed to share their undervalued and not widely known thesis works.

As we can observe, participation of contestants countries in general is low, because it covers a four year period and becomes nonexistent between the other 32 Latin America and Caribbean countries, which reflects a research disinterest overview in university institutions in the *EPJA* field.

Table 1- CREFAL. 2005 – 2011 Theses Contest. Comparison between participant countries and number of registered works by academic program and number of theses with *EPJA* specificity.

Countries	Registered Theses by Academic Program				Total	EPJA Theses by Academic Program				Total	%
	BD	S	M	P		BD	S	M	P		
1. Argentina	19	0	11	7	37	13	0	5	7	25	68
2. Bolivia	4	1	3	0	8	2	1	2	0	5	85
3. Brazil	9	2	26	13	49	6	2	26	13	47	96
4. Colombia	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	2	100
5. Costa Rica	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	100
6. Cuba	1	0	4	4	9	0	0	3	1	4	44
7. Chile	2	0	4	2	7	2	0	4	1	7	100
8. Ecuador	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	50
9. Honduras	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
10. Mexico	64	0	91	34	189	31	0	35	11	77	41
11. Peru	2	0	1	2	5	0	0	1	0	1	20
12. Puerto Rico	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
13. Uruguay	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
14. Venezuela	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	102	3	148	64	315	55	3	78	34	170	54

BD= Bachelor's Degree. S= Specialty. M= Master. P= PhD

Source: Self-elaboration with CREFAL provided information.

From reported data on table 2, 81%, that is, the majority of contestants concluded their studies in federal, state or autonomous public universities through different Faculties, Schools and Departments, mostly in Education. Only 19% studied at private institutions, Chile and Mexico drawing attention in percentage terms (29% and 31% respectively). Likewise, contestants graduated from other higher education institutions (HEI), Mexico standing out with 10 of these for being the country with more contestants (Table 2). In this country, HEI include amongst other establishments, Institutes, Teacher Training Schools, Colleges, and Research Centers that offer professional training between 4 to 6 years and postgraduate studies no matter their legal status or financial regime, but Argentinian legislation makes distinction between Universities and HEI from their management methods, this is, courses in related knowledge areas (Faculties) or specifically dedicated to an area (Institutes).

In total, 63 public universities and 15 private participated, in addition to 16 HEI, 3 of them private. Brazil occupied the first place with 24 public and 4 private universities (Table 2).

It is important to highlight that from total theses in Mexico, 27% came from the *National Pedagogical University (UPN)* counting until 2010 with Adult Education course and from 2002 offers in bachelor's degree level, a program of Educative Intervention including a line on *EPJA*. In Argentina, the *Universidad Nacional de Córdoba (National University of Cordoba)* and from *Universidad de Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires University)* provided three theses each and, between one and two, various public universities and three private while in Brazil, from 11 Federal Universities, Sao Carlos and Minas Gerais stand out with six and five theses respectively. University of Sao Paulo also sent five theses while the rest sent between one and three works including four private universities.

Table 2- CREFAL. 2005 – 2011 Theses Contests. Participating countries and institution type by financial regime.

Countries	Universities				Higher Education Institutions			
	Public	%	Private	%	Public	%	Private	%
Argentina	16	84	3	16	2	100	0	0
Bolivia	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
Brazil	24	86	4	14	1	100	0	0
Colombia	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Costa Rica	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cuba	0	0	0	0	3	100	0	0
Chile	5	71	2	29	0	0	0	0
Mexico	11	69	5	31	7	70	3	30
Peru	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	63	81	15	19	13	81	3	19

Source: Own elaboration with CREFAL provided information.

As for *EPJA* different programs distribution, Master course occupies the first place with 78 (46%), secondly, bachelor's degree with 55 (32%), third place is occupied by PhD with 34 (20%) and, on fourth,

specialization studies with only 3 (2%) (Table 1). The majority of bachelor's degree theses concentrated in Argentina and Mexico with 13 and 31 respectively, while Masters in Brazil and Mexico. Doctoral theses distributed in three

countries (Colombia, Chile and Cuba) with one, and the rest in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico with 7, 13 and 11 respectively. Only Brazil reported two specialized studies theses in *EPJA*, and one in Bolivia.

Noteworthy is that Doctoral theses which imply deeper research and knowledge contributions to *EPJA* field are few, because the average during the five contests is hardly 6.8, Brazil standing out with higher number of theses on this level due to research unexpected increase in this area over the last 10 years. However, on reported data in Table 1, we distinguish two groups: First, conformed by countries which provided the highest number of theses (Argentina, Brazil and Mexico). Second, seven countries with a reduced number of theses (Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Ecuador and Peru). Is worth mention that were 9 Latin American graduated students from foreign universities in both groups.

Comparison between Argentina, Brazil and Mexico

In addition to reuniting the major number of presented theses, this countries present, like others, specific differences on *EPJA* that led us to comparison. Brazil was the birthplace of popular education movement developed through the 60s and extended to several Latin American countries on the next decade. At the same time, multiple politics and programs on literacy have a preponderant place on *EPJA* since Adolescent an Adult Campaign (*Campaña de Adolescentes y Adultos* - 1947) to Literate Brazil Programme (*Brasil Alfabetizado* - 2003). Nowadays, *EPJA* forums represent alternatives based on inter sectorial and decentralized structures from government and non-government instances, that mobilize to vindicate the right of basic education and to take education training tasks (DI PIERRO: 2005:22). These features differ with Mexico, where social movements influence is less, in addition to continuity and highly institutionalization on

EPJA politics and models, under the leadership of the *Instituto Nacional de la Educación para Adultos* (*National Institute of Adult Education*), organism formed in 1981, operating in every state and on which every curricula content depends on. Argentina on the contrary, have much less ethnical diversity than Brazil and Mexico, and has experimented sharp and recurrent *EPJA* politics changes, determined by military regimes and later by democratically elected governments that developed renewing movements under popular education influence between 1973 and 1974. Subsequently Menen neoliberal government policies on the 90s delved deeper in *EPJA* marginalization and until December 2006, when *EPJA* was not considered anymore a special regime in education legislation. The following focuses attention to education programs regarding their level, gender and name distribution.

There were 13 Bachelor's Degree contestants in Argentina, six male and seven female, therefore it shows a gender balance between graduates at this level (Table 3). However, authors of the 5 Master theses were female, while from the seven participating Doctoral theses, only a male author contested at this level, which indicates almost an absolute female participation on postgraduate theses (Table 3).

In Brazil, from six bachelor's degree theses, four where authored by women and two by men. The two specialization theses were also made by female, while in the 26 Masters theses, female participation was outstanding, because only two out of 10 graduates were male (19% and 81%) respectively (Table 3). Same happens in regard to preponderant role of women with 11 out of 13 doctoral theses (85%).

In Mexico 31 Bachelor's Degree and 35 Masters theses participated. Women too assumed a leading role since they are above 75% of participation in both programs, while their participation in PhD works decreases to 64%. However, female authoring and participation is prevails in this three countries

Table 3- CREFAL. 2005 – 2011. Theses Contest. Participating countries and academic programs by gender

Countries	Academic Programs															
	Bachelors Degree				Specialty				Masters				PhD			
	M	%	F	%	M	%	F	%	M	%	F	%	M	%	F	%
Argentina	6	46	7	54	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	100	1	20	6	80
Bolivia	0	0	2	100	0	0	1	100	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brazil	2	33	4	67	0	0	2	100	5	19	21	81	2	15	11	85
Colombia	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Costa Rica	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0
Cuba	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	100	0	0	1	100
Ecuador	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0
Chile	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	100	0	0	1	0
Mexico	7	23	24	77	0	0	0	0	8	23	27	77	4	36	7	64
Peru	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0
Total	16	29	39	71	0	0	3	100	15	20	63	80	7	21	27	79

M=Male. F=Female

Source: Self-elaboration with CREFAL provided information.

since the average reaches 78%. In relation to academic program names and knowledge areas which contestants graduated from⁷⁰⁰, in Argentina, from 13 bachelor's degree courses, eight are focused on Educational Sciences, followed by Psycho-pedagogy, Anthropology, Sociology and Social Communication, this last one including a journalism related thesis. As for the five Masters programs, one is about educational oriented Social Sciences and other about education focusing in Lifelong Education. The remaining three do not refer specifically to education but to: i)Evaluation ii)Social policies iii) Community Mental Health. Finally, from seven Doctoral works, two are about Educational Sciences and three correspond to: i) Social Sciences ii) Communication Sciences iii) Philosophy and Literature. The other two were coursed in foreign universities. In summary, we observe the presence of Educational Sciences course in Bachelor's degree and PhD programs

700- By its extension, we consider unnecessary to include the schedule of academic programmes

that, together account for 43% of courses and the other 57% are distributed in a diversity of bachelor's degree and postgraduate programs before mentioned.

In Brazil, of six Bachelor's degree theses, five were about Pedagogy and from 26 Master works, 14, that is, more than half of total on this level (56%) were from education programs and the rest is distributed in programs associated to this subject through lines, areas and diverse research orientations such as: Brazilian Education, Sociology of Education, Education Fundaments, Education and Public Policies. Something very similar to this can be observed in the 13 PhD programs, where 9 of them are on Education and with only one thesis: i)Sociology of Education ii) Special Education iii) Psychology. iv) Applied Linguistic. In sum, Brazil, nevertheless their reduced number of Bachelor's Degree theses is the most homogeneous country on program types offered on this level, but particularly in postgraduate programs with *EPJA* research and one of the countries where specialization occurs.

In Mexico, from 31 Bachelor's Degree theses, most of them are concentrated in three courses with five theses each: i) Pedagogy ii) Educative Intervention iii) Educational Sciences. Other two courses with four theses each were: Psychology and Adult Education, and with two theses, Indigenous Education. The rest is composed by a group of Bachelor's degree courses with one thesis, amongst them, Education and Cultural Diversity, Sociology of Education, Educative innovation and Communication. The outlook of the 35 Master works is characterized by its diversity. Education related programs are offered and also others around this area: quality, cultural diversity, educative development, teachers training, stand out those derived from sciences in general which include specialties (educational research, ecology) or specific sciences (Educational, administrative, agricultural, rural sociology). This program melting pot increases its diversity with educational and methodological research, in addition to programs from psychology and pedagogy to communication and even engineering. However, from this programme ensemble, those studies focused on research work stand out with a total of 8 theses, equivalent to 23% of totals. Finally, in 11 doctoral theses, pedagogy and education share two theses each, followed by a group

of science and social science which includes three specialties. The rest is distributed in four programs: I) Education Philosophy, ii) Educational Innovation iii) Population Studies, iv) Organizational Studies.

Through these results, we conclude that bachelor's degree theses number in Brazil is low compared to Argentina and Mexico but in masters and PhD works exceed Argentinians by far, and in a lesser degree, doctoral theses in Mexico. When it comes to Bachelor's Degree programs, Educational Sciences prevail in Argentina while it is Pedagogy in Brazil, and in Mexico both courses co-exist and a diversity of courses in addition (Table 4).

Masters course participant contestants distinguished by its diversity scarcely appeared in Argentina as well as in Mexico. On the contrary, Brazil shows homogeneity and continuity in this level and in doctoral programs, focused on education with multiple research lines, areas and specific orientations, situation that does not repeat in Mexico where although co-existing in bachelor's degree and masters, programs of: Pedagogy, Educational Sciences and Psychology, diversity prevails, including PhD. Moreover, one difference between Argentina and Mexico is the absence of PhD in Educational Science and in Brazil, of Pedagogy programs (Table 4)

Table 4- CREFAL. 2005 – 2011 Theses Contest. Comparison of tendencies in academic programs.

Academic Programs	Tendencies		
	Argentina	Brazil	Mexico
Bachelor's Degree	Homogeneity in Educational Sciences	Homogeneity in Pedagogy	Coexistence between Pedagogy, Educational Sciences, Educational Intervention and a variety of courses
Masters	Diversity	Homogeneity of education programs	Heterogeneity/ Diversity
PhD	Educational Sciences and a diversity of programs	Homogeneity and continuity of Education programs. Absence of Pedagogy and Educational Sciences	Heterogeneity/ Diversity Absence of Educational Sciences

Source: Self-elaboration.

Comparison between few participation countries

From the second group of countries, Chile presented seven theses with different program each. Two in Bachelor's Degree and four in Masters, amongst them, *Educación, mención currículo y comunidad educativa, Evaluación Educacional y Antropología y Desarrollo* (Education, curricula mention and educative community, Educational Evaluation and Anthropology and Development). The only doctoral thesis was presented in a foreigner university. For its part Bolivia had two Bachelor's Degree contestants and two in Masters, also with different programs. Costa Rica only sent one Master's thesis in Informatics and Educational Technology, while Cuba reported three Masters theses: on Education, Satisfactory Longevity and Promotion and Education for Health. The third was made in a foreign university. The only doctoral thesis was impossible to reach. From Colombia, only one Bachelor's Degree thesis was considered in Recreation course, and a Doctoral one from a foreign university. Finally, a Master's thesis was received from Peru in Cultural Studies. In summary, in this group of countries prevails Masters from very diverse courses contestants with almost a total female hegemony, since in Bolivia only two males presented two theses in this educational level.

In regard to Latin American contestants graduated from foreign universities, 9 theses were reported: five in Masters and four in PhD. In both levels, Education and Educational Sciences barely reached three, the rest distributed in a diverse program group, courses completed in their totality by women.

Comparative Summary

In the study and research on EPJA made by 10 different Latin American countries, courses of Psycho-pedagogy training and a variety of social disciplines with educational

phenomena as subject of study converge. This diversity tends to be more clear in Postgraduate programs included those made abroad and which are consistent with EPJA nature, considered an activity that transcends strictly educational fields, since does not circumscribe in school space learning but in a variety of places, dimensions and identities of young and adult people. Also matches with EPJA amplified vision and mark distance from new concepts such as Andragogy, promoted in the 70s by influential representatives like Roque Ludojoski in Argentina, Félix Adam in Venezuela and by UNESCO in the 80s. Likewise, from Sociocultural Animation and Social Pedagogy approach offered in university courses in European countries. It can be said that despite EPJA research progress, Postgraduate programs in the Region are far from being consolidated, with the exception of Cuba and Brazil, where the Group of Work in Adult Education inside the ANPED - *Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação*- (National Association of Postgraduate and Educational Research) had an important influence in this last country.

As previously mentioned, Brazil and Bolivia were the only countries where three specialty on EPJA programs were studied. This situation agrees with Maria Clara Di Pierro's (2008, p. 124) affirmation when she points out that

Bachelor's Degree and Specialization courses for EPJA professors are few, which confirms the reduced participation of universities in this matter.

In the gender area, in every participant country, female hegemony is evident and their tendency for EPJA studies obeys, according to enrollment by knowledge areas and gender statistics in the last decade in a large number on Latin American countries, to their increasing participation in higher education studies,

particularly in the Education area, in Social Sciences, Humanities and Health (DE SIERRA; RODRÍGUEZ, 2005). We conjecture that other reasons for this feminization are related with the marginal situation of *EPJA* studies and research inside Educational field, as well as its poor “reputation” amongst academic communities and experts who prioritize other subjects. Furthermore it is worth mention that studied programs with direct references to *EPJA* are minimum.

Another important aspect is that, comparing theses thematic contents mentioned on next point (*EPJA* learning processes and knowledge, curricula and evaluation in particular) the reader will note that its study in Bachelor’s Degree courses and in psycho-pedagogy oriented postgraduate programs (Table 5).

Comparison between thematic areas

Once subjects of the 170 *EPJA* thesis were identified, and their coincidence and intersection with intervention and research areas from *EPJA Framework of Action 2000 – 2010* established, three groups were conformed: The first includes four thematic areas with the most number of theses (14 to 21): 1. Training Programs 2. Cultural Diversity 3. Literacy 4. Gender and Education. The second group tackles four subjects with 5 to 7 theses: Education and Work, Education and Citizenship, Learning Processes and Local Development. The third group is conformed by the nine remaining areas with a minimum of two and four theses including two areas without theses (future *EPJA* scenarios and Educational Reforms). (Table 5).

Table 5- CREFAL. 2005 – 2011 Theses Contest. Thematic Areas of intervention and research of the *Framework of Regional Action for EPJA in Latin America and the Caribbean 2000-2010* and number of theses by academic program.

Thematic Areas of intervention and research of the <i>Framework of Regional Action for EPJA in Latin America and the Caribbean 2000-2010</i>	EPJA Theses by Academic Program				Num.
	BD	S	M	P	
1. Literacy	6	0	7	1	14
2. Education and World	2	0	3	2	7
3. Education, citizenship and human rights	0	0	2	3	5
4. Education and gender	4	2	5	3	14
5. Education, local and sustainable development	0	0	5	0	5
6. Future EPJA scenarios	0	0	0	0	0
7. EPJA demand	1	0	2	1	4
8. EPJA and Educational Reforms	0	0	0	0	0
9. Learning process and knowledge of young and adult people	3	0	2	1	6
10. Approaches and curricular practices	2	0	0	0	2
11. Evaluation and accreditation modalities	1	0	2	0	3
12. Training programs and teacher training	8	0	9	4	21
13. Strategies and programs to improve education quality	1	0	1	0	2
14. EPJA impact indicators	1	0	2	1	4
15. Cultural and Linguistic Diversity and intercultural bilingual education.	9	0	6	5	20
16. Innovation programs and /or non-formal education alternatives	1	0	2	0	3
Total	39	2	48	21	110

Source: Self-elaboration with CREFAL provided information.

Table 6 - Theses new thematic areas of CREFAL. 2005 – 2011 Contest and their distribution by academic grade

New thematic areas	BD	S	M	P	Num.
1. Basic Education	4	0	7	2	13
2. Education and Information and Communication Technologies	1	0	6	2	9
3. Systematization of educational practices	0	0	1	0	1
4. Education and disciplinary knowledge	0	0	1	0	1
5. Public Policies	0	0	5	2	7
6. Education with senior citizens	2	0	5	0	7
7. Education with prison inmates	4	0	2	1	7
8. Popular Education	5	0	0	1	6
9. EPJA with different capacities	0	0	0	1	1
10. Education and social movements	0	0	0	2	2
11. Management	0	0	1	0	1
12. Essays on Paulo Freire	0	0	1	1	2
13. Education and public health	0	0	1	0	1
Total	16	0	30	12	58

BD= Bachelor's Degree. S= Specialty. M= Master. P= PhD
Source: Self-elaboration with CREFAL provided information.

The above analysis cannot be but discouraging because from the total areas proposed in the *Framework of Action* number of theses of the first group represents barely a quarter of total, while 75% of subjects is too low. An example of the proposed line of action in the before mentioned *Framework* was about curriculum and evaluation with hardly two and three theses respectively. In sum, with the exception of teacher training and cultural diversity subjects, the amount of theses who tackled subjects suggested by the *Framework of Action* was very low, considering they are a priority and require essential knowledge for a better comprehension and resolution of problems in EPJA field.

In respect to new thematic areas included in Table 6, except basic education subject with the highest number of theses, TIC tend to gain strength and to a lesser degree other problems and specific populations that had not adequate attention before with six to seven works each (Public policies, Senior Citizens, people considered “disabled”, migrants and people in imprisonment contexts). The rest is distributed in a variety of themes with one or two theses.

Comparison with Regional Reports

We observe at least four coincidences after compare these results with Regional Reports for CONFITEA VI (TORRES, 2009) and the Regional Report of Caruso et al (2008):

1. Acknowledging the significant but insufficient progress in educational research (TORRES, 2009), with a markedly unequal distribution focusing in the biggest countries: Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Cuba in the Caribbean region.

2. Literacy, a strongly EPJA related 2. line of research decreases priority and new issues like Training Activities, Gender, Inter Culturality and new thematic areas that, together, replace Literacy and Basic Education and even pass the nine proposed subjects by the *Framework of Action* (Table 5) regardless their lesser visibility, impact and political legitimacy (TORRES, 2009). This replacement means in turn, a gradual but unequal shift to groups and intervention aspects proposed by the *Framework of Action* and coincides with the 10 awarded theses of the analyzed period, because

four of them refer directly to literacy and the rest to diverse subjects (CREFAL / UNESCO Chairs, 2011).

3. A variety of unquestionably important thematic lines have few theses or none (Evaluation, Educational Reforms, Quality, Local Development, Health, Innovation Programs). On this respect, report for CONFITEA VI agrees that quality and learning are still distant (TORRES, 2008) while in Regional Report of Caruso et al (2008), it was hypothesized that several of this absences respond to the lack of *EPJA* symbolic leadership in current juncture, which inhibits the articulation of policies and practices in its framework of action in subjects like: environmental education, education for health or the TIC incorporation. Likewise, and despite evaluation improves in some countries (Brazil, El Salvador, Mexico and Chile) is also to underline that the lack of culture and research in this field makes difficult to be aware of the *EPJA* programs and projects impact (TORRES, 2009; DI PIERRO, 2008).

4. Impulse given to "Good educational practices" and the importance of its diffusion does not appear either in contestant theses as well as innovation programs, non-formal education alternatives and social movements. On this respect, we agree that their limited spread and the application of research results and evaluation are still not influential for the design of new policies, training or teaching (TORRES, 2009, 48). It draws attention that in Venezuela, for example, no thesis works about the importance of *Misiones Robinson* had been reported.

In summary, this thematic balance invites us to think about the interest of problematize and, in its case, cover this voids not only to provide theoretical bases that orient educational practices but to claim and make worth *EPJA* importance as an open, dynamic, inclusive and essential educational

field in order to improve the economic, cultural, social and politic living conditions of learning opportunity deprived population.

Conclusions

The comparative examination of the works participating in the Theses Contest allowed us to positively judge their importance because through it, we can know and encourage the situation of *EPJA* research in the Latin American region. In this regard, while there are significant progress, the picture is not very encouraging since the participation in this contest indicates that *EPJA* research is weak, unequal and with a strong tendency of thematic variety. Indeed, research interest for literacy and basic education was replaced in the last years by multiple subjects but in theses related to *Framework of Action* research proposals were minimum, which maintains a primary issues nucleus remaining unaddressed and invite future graduates and experts in *EPJA* Field to take them up again in their intervention and research projects. We can see that, in turn, *EPJA* is tackled majorly in public universities, by women and in Bachelor's Degree and Postgraduate studies in Educational fields, in generic or from Educational Sciences and Psycho-Pedagogy terms. However, *EPJA* co-exist with a variety of programs that analyzes it beyond the educational field. Likewise, courses in universities with direct reference to *EPJA* and specialized training in adult teaching are few. That is why a closer connection of universities with *EPJA* field is imperative, in order to strengthen the before mentioned training and the development of educational research projects to contribute, amongst other aspects, to systematization of experiences that remain forgotten and to the unavoidable conceptual re-definition of *EPJA* in the context of *lifelong learning*.

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Jaime Rogelio Calderón López-Velarde is master in Education from Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (UPN) y doctor in Education Science from Universidad de Sevilla. Currently, he is coordinator of research and Post-Graduation in Zacatecas unidad UPN.