



Curriculum And Management In Border Contexts: A Comparative Study On The Conceptions Of A Community Of Practice

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Abstract

This research article aims to show the conceptions that a community of practice has about curriculum and curriculum management in two institutions located in Colombia and Venezuela. The study is framed within the quantitative-descriptive approach. The study sample was intentional and was made up of parents, students, teachers and directors of the two institutions: 76 from the educational institution in Colombia and 35 from the educational institution in Venezuela. The findings indicate that in the Venezuelan country the curricular elements are designed following a national philosophy, principles and objectives, in which the particularities of each sector or region; and in the Colombian context, curricular pretensions with a more globalized tendency are evident.

Keywords: Curricular Management¹, Community of Practice², Frontier Contexts³, Elementary and Secondary Education⁴, Concepts⁵.

1 Introduction

The educational scenarios respond to the integral planning processes, teaching methods, the elements used within the training, the context, the theoretical foundation and the research, all of which have an impact on the fact that the education does not correspond to an isolated effect of a series of activities, but that they compose a detailed harmonic and functional totality.

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In this case, talking about the curricular elements within the pedagogical task is an important space for reflection since it is interested in the fundamental epistemic structure of the school operations that are carried out from the different roles that interact there. In addition, the curriculum is the pedagogical identity that schools determine as their epicenter, their starting point and the end they pursue in terms of teaching.

Thus, this research establishes a holistic view of the curricular elements of two Colombian-Venezuelan educational institutions that allow analyzing the educational landscape from the point of view of the curricular organization. In this sense, the reality of the classrooms, the projection of the teachers, and the activities of the students are a direct reflection of the organization of the curricular structure. Thus, the active correlation within the formative process of the teacher with the student influences the processes that lead to the qualification of school skills required for the strengthening of school work (Stenhouse, 1987). There, the same author emphasizes how the curriculum is subordinated to the school reality of educational institutions and the formative process in the classroom. Likewise, it is worth mentioning Gimeno's (1995) statement that the curriculum "has multiple meanings that have varied and incorporate new aspects such as values, assumptions, partial theories, rationality schemes, beliefs that condition theorization on the curriculum" (p. 13).

Not in vain, the reality of the classroom, the contextual structure and the academic precept of the educational institutions respond to the curricular order. Thus, the curriculum must not only respond to the epistemic but must also internalize the social context of the students in the classroom, which must be perceived within the processes carried out there. In turn, the problems of classroom practice should integrate the skills of teachers and the needs of students to provide aspects that affect the training process in terms of a proposal to improve human quality. In this sense, Zabalza (2017) states that "the school curriculum concretizes the whole set of opportunities for personal development and acquisition of new learning that the school offers to school-age subjects" (p. 3), which is why the teacher's thinking plays an important role, which is to investigate his or her own practice. Thus, the dynamics of the teacher in each of the border contexts should be considered in this work.

Education today is sponsored within a multilateralism of possibilities that affect the way of establishing innovative parameters within teaching itself. There, the curriculum is conceived as open or what is the same, as a great space where didactics, theory, pedagogical models and research are ratified in key to the formative process of students (Gamboa Suárez *et al.*, 2018). Being a scenario that is strengthened from the recognition of the context, it allows the adequacy of each educational scenario to prevail over the traditional, achieving respect for the difference, collaborative work, humanism, criticism and holistic thinking that receives the evolution of the context at the external and internal level of the educational scenario, emphasizing the role of the participants and admitting modifications in its objectives, contents, methodological strategies. It is important to point out, in turn, that it sponsors activities that trigger learning about the contents of each discipline, the teacher being the medium and the bridge from which the student moves between didactics and theory without ignoring the context of each student. In this sense, according to Portela *et al.* (2017),

One of the most notable elements in the curricular changes is the one that has to do with a greater combination between these (curricular contents) and the environment since the social device of the curriculum constitutes a significant advance in the reform of the traditional archetypes of training.
(p. 24)

According to Stenhouse (1987), curricular processes are a space for innovation and research characterized by their dynamic sense, their possible changes and the heterogeneity of positions they allow. From this perspective, it is the teachers who are involved in the conditioning of their work from the contextual and theoretical contents

that have an impact on helping education with their elaborations separated from the dynamics of the teaching action itself in the real context in which it is developed.

Likewise, according to Portela *et al.* (2017), “the curriculum comes from administration and economics in its schooled technique; the socio-critical perspective blurs that teleology and identifies itself with the human sciences and their underlying projects of social emancipation as dialectical rationality” (p. 31). It is imperative to assume the social context in such a way that the curriculum responds to this reality from a flexible perspective that integrates each of the subjectivities involved in the educational process in the key of its diversity and collaborative work, in which the teacher becomes the determined actor that influences the relations of the educational scenario, given his motivation, his constant self-training and his direct relationship with the social dynamics of his students. On the other hand, the importance of the students is revitalized as they bring their context directly to the classroom in such a way that they enrich the formative process.

Stenhouse (1991) considers the curriculum as a hypothetical process that is tested through research. “A curriculum is an attempt to communicate the principles and features of an educational purpose in such a way that it remains open to critical discussion and can be effectively translated into practice” (p. 91) and outlines a school and methodological route that fosters the qualification of methods and the projection of content. Similarly, the curriculum is defined as “the concreteness of the functions of the school itself and the particular way of approaching them at a given historical and social moment, for a given level or modality of education, in an institutional framework, etc.” (Gimeno, 2007, p. 16).

In this regard, Muñoz *et al.* (2017) posit that:

The construction of the border curriculum must take into account the fact that the population located in the border zone is vulnerable, hence the education sector must respond to this historical and social moment, with relevance and quality to the characteristics of this population, through levels or modalities of education according to their reality, taking into account as an essential aspect the interests and needs of the students (p. 23)

For the above, Chávez *et al.* (2016) state that the curriculum involves the development of the following components: curricular areas, contents or crosscutting axes and the curriculum developed under methodological techniques that include the selection of crosscutting axes and areas with metacognitive, attitudinal and epistemological standards (p. 235).

2 Methodology

The purposes of this research lead to define it as a descriptive-quantitative study. In this sense, this type of research generally seeks to investigate the characteristics or functions of the problem, which allows the analysis of the information and the comparison between the results of both border contexts in the two institutions taken as a sample (Gamboa-Suárez *et al.*, 2022).

To have a deeper approach to the work of the two elementary and middle schools under study and how their curricular proposal is developed, an evaluation of it was taken as a model of evaluation of the documents proposed in recent years by the Ministry of National Education and for this purpose it was carried out from each of the areas of management based on the document guide for the institutional improvement of the self-evaluation of the improvement plan, given by the Ministry of National Education, allowing to evaluate the participation of the different actors that are part of the educational task (Gamboa *et al.*, 2020; Hernández-Suárez, *et al.*, 2021; Vanegas *et al.*, 2022).

A questionnaire was applied with the following levels of development, to which a numerical value was assigned: 1) Existence: there is an incipient, partial or disorderly development, and actions are carried out in a disjointed way; 2) Relevance: there are some principles of planning and articulation of efforts and actions to achieve the objectives and goals; 3) Appropriation: institutional actions are articulated and, in general, are known by the educational community; and 4) Continuous improvement (Gamboa-Suárez *et al.*, 2022).

The study sample was intentional and consisted of parents, students, teachers and directors of the two institutions: 76 from the Colombian educational institution and 35 from the Venezuelan educational institution (Gamboa-Suárez *et al.*, 2022).

3 Results

Educational institutions have been undergoing a transformation process and have gone from being closed, hermetic and isolated institutions to becoming open, autonomous and complex institutions, seeing the need to manage each one of them to fulfill their purposes, develop capacities that allow them to articulate their internal processes and consolidate their PEI.

Today, educational institutions must respond to the articulated work in two categories: direction of the institutional horizon and strategic management, which are visible in the conceptions of the educational actors of the two institutions under study.

3.1 Direction of the institutional horizon

This process makes it possible to establish the guidelines that orient institutional action in every one of its areas of work.

[See Figure 1]

Figure 1: Mission, vision and principles within the framework of an integrated institution of Colombian and Venezuelan institutions

With the data presented, it can be observed that the process is at a level of continuous improvement; that is to say that the institution has appropriated the mission, vision and principles, evaluating its processes and results and consequently adjusting and improving them; however, in Venezuela, there is a formulation of the mission, vision and principles that articulate and identify the institution as a whole. These elements have been partially appropriated by the educational community.

[See Figure 2]

Figure 2: Institutional Goals of the Colombian and Venezuelan Institutions

Figure 2 shows that the institution works towards the achievement of the goals established in the Operational Plan of the Institutional Educational Project for the short and long term; therefore, processes and results are evaluated and adjusted for continuous improvement, and Venezuela shows that all the goals established for the institution respond to its objectives and strategic direction. Furthermore, these are known and put into practice by the community.

[See Figure 3]

Figure 3: Knowledge and Appropriation of the direction of the Colombian and Venezuelan institutions

An important aspect to highlight is that in Colombia it is reflected that the institution knows and has appropriated the institutional direction, but in Venezuela, the institution periodically evaluates the levels of knowledge and appropriation of the strategic direction by the members of the educational community and carries out actions to achieve such appropriation.

[See Figura 4]

Figure 4: Integration Policy for people with dissimilar abilities or cultural diversity in Colombian and Venezuelan institutions

Regarding the work with this integration policy in Colombia, the participants point out that the Institution has been carrying out integration work at the educational levels for people with disabilities or other aspects such as displacement, demobilized persons and children of demobilized persons, which means that the Institution is in a process of continuous improvement, evaluating processes and results and consequently adjusting to improve them; however, in Venezuela, this process is at a level of relevance.

3.2 Strategic management

This process seeks to have the essential tools to lead, articulate and coordinate all institutional actions.

[See Figure 5]

Figure 5: Leadership in Colombian and Venezuelan institutions

Leadership has a positive impact on the Colombian and Venezuelan establishment, as confirmed by the majority of those surveyed; this ensures that the projects that are proposed go ahead because they are supported by the other members of the community.

[See Figure 6]

Figure 6: Articulation of plans, projects and actions in Colombian and Venezuelan institutions

Most of the Colombian participants state that there is a coherent curriculum built by the members of the teaching team, in which the respective standards of the areas have been incorporated, taking into account the projects and actions to implement these proposals; however, for the Venezuelan participants this level has not yet been reached, there is still no systematic process; that is, this process is still in the appropriation stage.

[See Figure 7]

Figure 7: Pedagogical Strategy in Colombian and Venezuelan Institutions

The pedagogical strategy defined in the Educational Project for both countries is explicit, clear and has been appropriated by the teaching staff, according to the majority of the participants in the survey; however, a large number of respondents in both institutions believe that this process is still in the appropriation stage since systematic processes are still lacking.

[See Figure 8]

Figure 8: Use of information for decision-making in Colombian and Venezuelan institutions

It is necessary to take into account that within the sample, Colombians state at a high level that the institution uses data and information so that decisions are consistent with the problems it intends to solve, in addition to having updated records on aspects such as attendance and causes of student absenteeism, students' academic results, effective use of school time and coexistence, activities carried out by graduates, resources for teaching and learning, management of problems, among others; however, in the Venezuelan institution, this level has not yet been reached.

[See Figure 9]

Figure 9: Monitoring and self-evaluation in Colombian and Venezuelan institutions

Finally, it is important to highlight that this process is positioned in continuous improvement, since the Institution takes into account the institutional processes and self-evaluations to find weaknesses and strengths in any management component, thus obtaining results that can be adjusted and improved. It follows up on the review of the fulfillment of the objectives and goals of the improvement plan, evaluating and communicating the results. For Venezuelans, this level has not been reached and they position this process at an appropriation level.

4 Conclusion and discusión

In the Colombian educational policies, the institutional educational project PEI (Proyecto Educativo Institucional-Colombia) is a guiding document of the institutional work, which is in continuous development, with periodic evaluations that allow its adjustment to the changing situations found in the institution and its environment, from this point of view, the eagerness of the institutions to reach a continuous improvement in all the managements leads to the continuous evaluation of the characterizing aspects of each one of them, having as a result a PEI that is continuously updated, and that in its versatility responds to the needs that are observed in the environment and the members of the community, especially of its students; the priorities are oriented to strengthen the various sectors that the evaluation of the management areas show that they do not have a continuous improvement, applying various policies and plans to achieve the proposed purpose, promoting the integral development of students and their environment. Studies such as De Zubiría (2014) show that “the idea of moving from mediating and evaluating knowledge to mediating and evaluating competencies is an opportunity to transform pedagogical models in Latin America” (p. 45) taking into account that as the author states, competencies are learning that allow articulating and integrating the various fields of study and everyday life. Likewise, Casallas *et al.* (2020) and Castañeda *et al.* (2020) in their research have concluded that “the current Ten-Year Education Plan shows the commitment of the State to achieve an inclusive and economically sustained universal education, thus allowing the achievement of the educational rights of all children who are within the Colombian territory” (p. 30)

In the case of the Venezuelan educational institution, the curriculum has national guidelines that do not emphasize the needs of the border zone, the adjustments that can be made within the application of the curriculum are minimal and are mainly developed personally by some members of the community without becoming an institutional policy. The end-of-cycle evaluations are carried out at the end of the cycle and adjustments are made to comply with the national policies outlined in the Bolivarian Organic Law of Education. These guidelines can be taken to the regional educational zone to be evaluated in a regional context and, if possible, institutionalized in the entire region based on the coincidences of the shortcomings and successes observed at the institutional level. In this sense, some researchers reaffirm these findings such as that of Corona (2015) who states that a fundamental element in any educational process such as research has been affected by influencing educational results, affirming that “the distancing between the State and Venezuelan educational

institutions, who in their great majority, lack their infrastructure, laboratories, among others, to carry out extension and research activities, coupled with the salary detriment, which discourages teaching action” (p. 78). Similarly, Morillo (2007) states that the difficulties of the Venezuelan educational system are not the lack of resources; on the contrary, the problem lies in the human resources in charge of leading education in the country, since there is no “efficient, honest and transparent use of these resources, measured as the true transfer of knowledge and skills required by Venezuelans to perform jobs with high levels of productivity, taking advantage of the full potential of Venezuelans” (p. 238).

Finally, it is important to point out that the core curricula, as observed in the one applied in the Venezuelan educational institution, are drawn following a national philosophy, principles and objectives, in which the particularities of each sector or region are taken as non-transcendent variants in the general application, and their linkage is not significant for the national plans. In this sense, Scherer (cited in Muñoz *et al.*, 2017) first states that “communities are the social aggregates emerged in the network through the intervention of a debate developed by a sufficient number of people to form social networks in the educational context or cyberspace” (p. 97). To complement, Ortiz (2010, cited in Muñoz *et al.*, 2017) states that “learning communities have emphasis, not only in the generation of knowledge but in the use of the knowledge generated to transform the social structures that lead to the student's improvement” (p. 97).

However, in the Colombian case, when each sector observes that their desires and needs are binding and therefore plans are implemented to satisfy them, they are more committed to what is expressed in them and the community, in general, acquires a responsibility to successfully carry out their development. These collaborative tendencies are what Vásquez (2011) calls a community of practice, conceptualized as “a group of people linked by a common practice, recurrent and stable over time, and by what they learn in this common practice” (p. 53), which are structured based on the interests and needs of its members. Concerning the above, it is important to highlight the postulates of Wegner (1998, as cited in Sanz 2005), who establishes that the three premises on which a Community of Practice is based are mutual commitment, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (p. 33)

5 Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was carried out without any commercial or financial interest.

6 Authors' contributions

All authors contributed to the direction and objectives of the AAGS. RPN designed the questionnaire and overall strategies for data collection. WRAC led the creation of figures and with contributions of ongoing comments. AAGS, RPN and WRAC edited the final manuscript.

7 Founding

All opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the authors.

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Figure 1

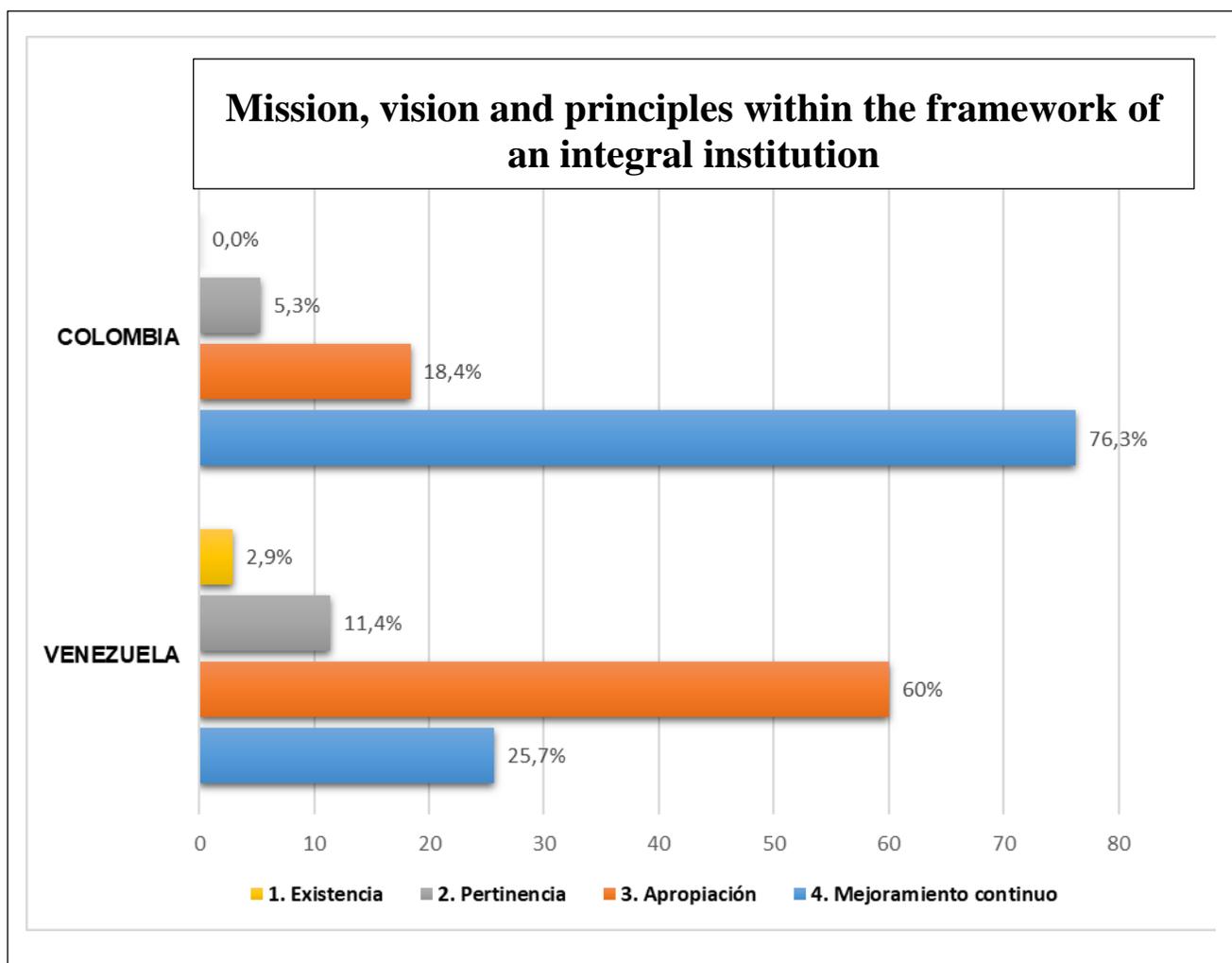


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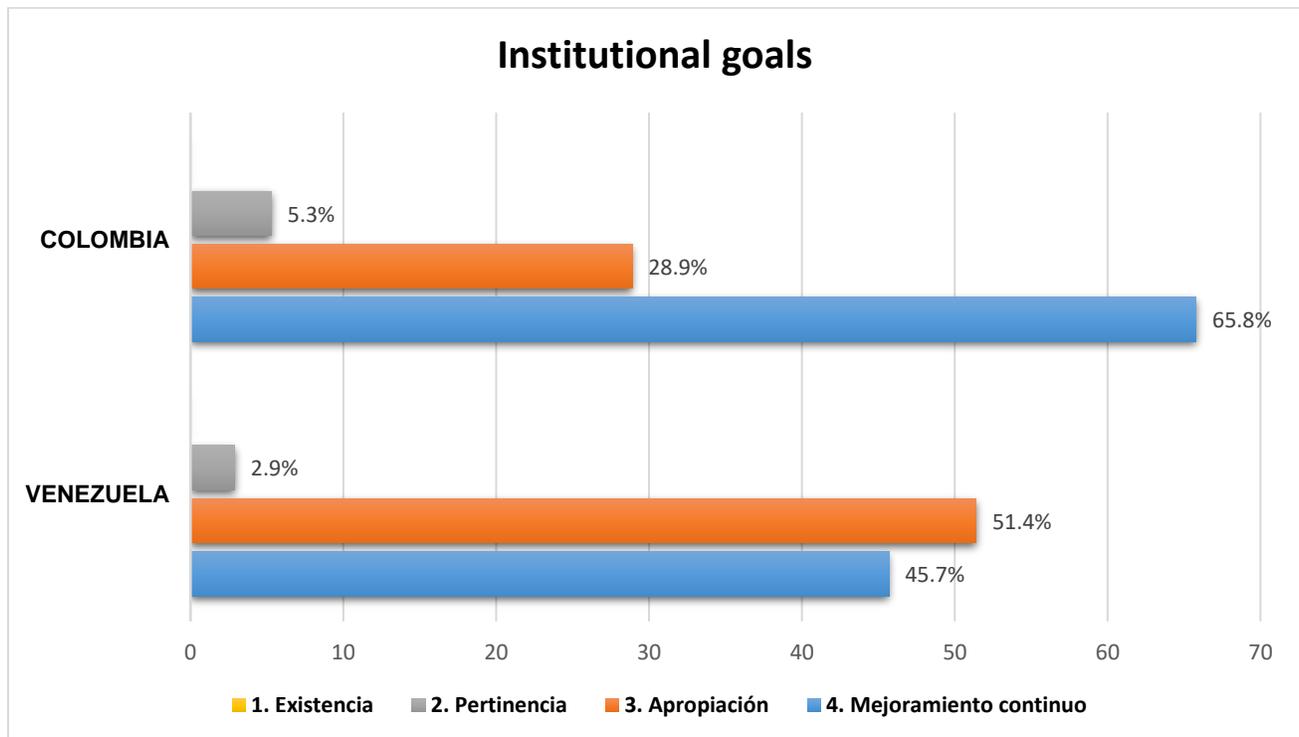


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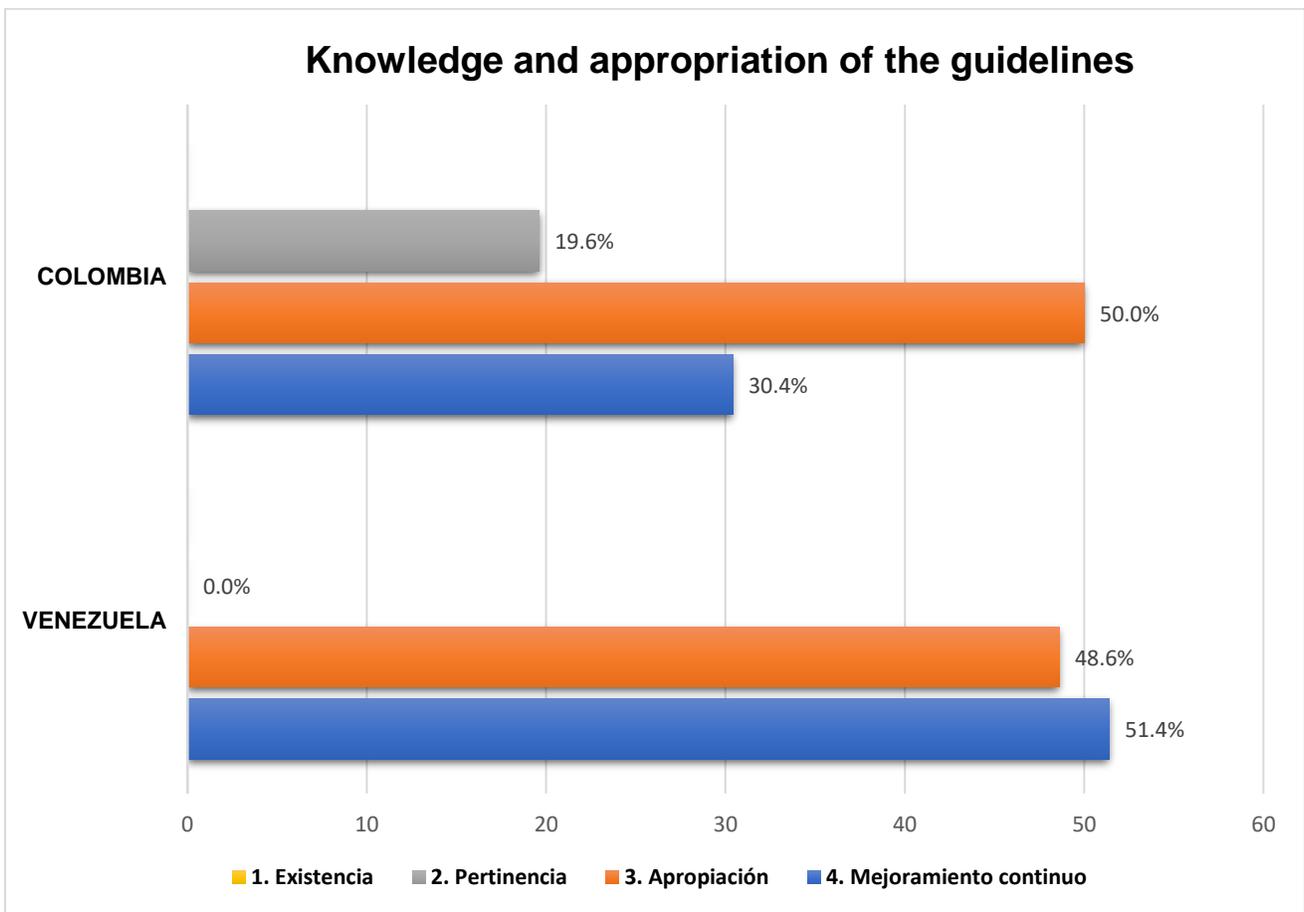


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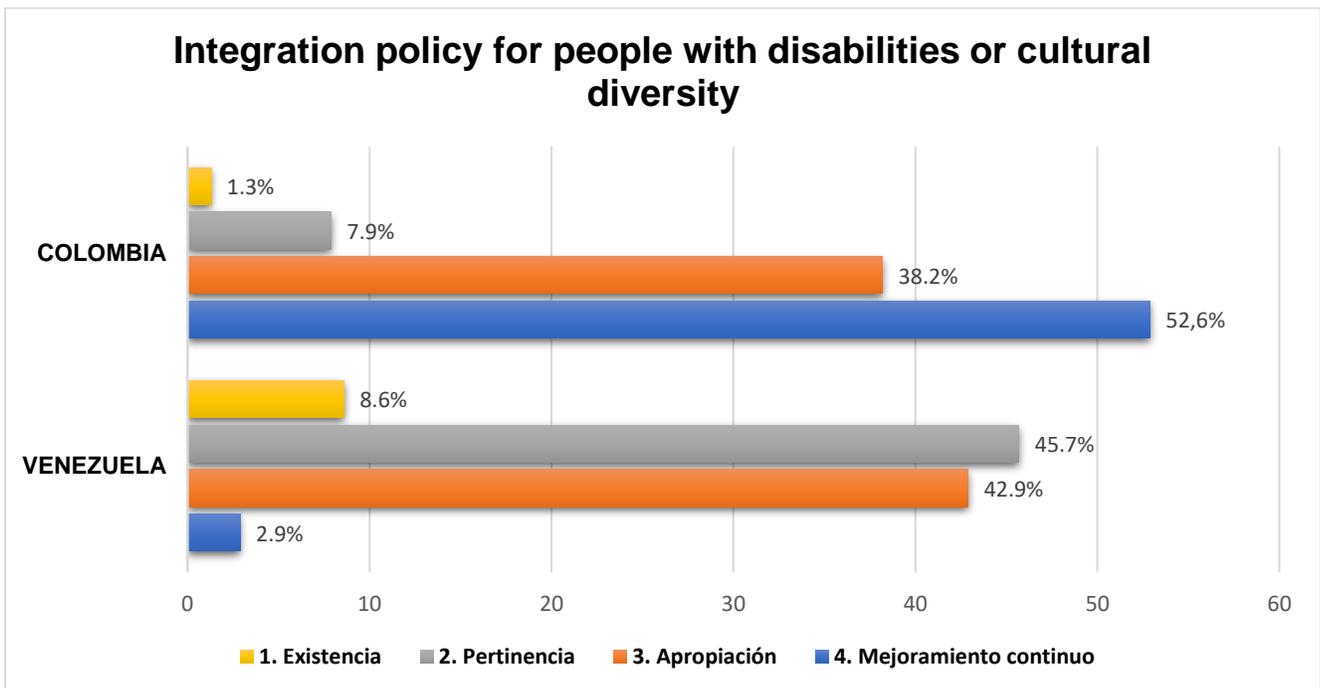


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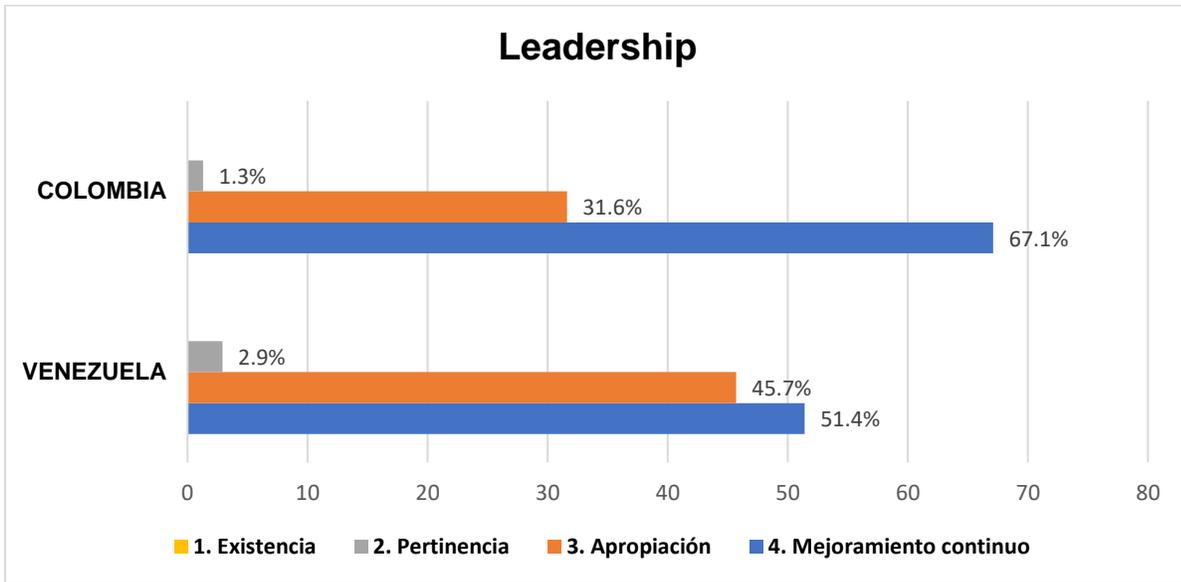


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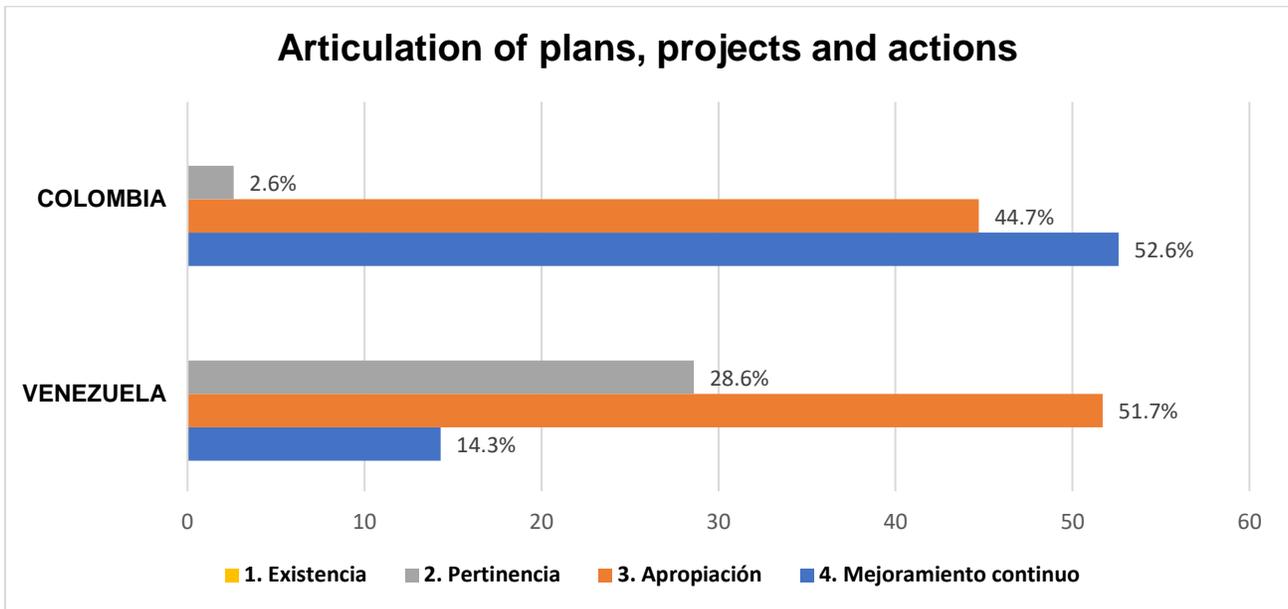


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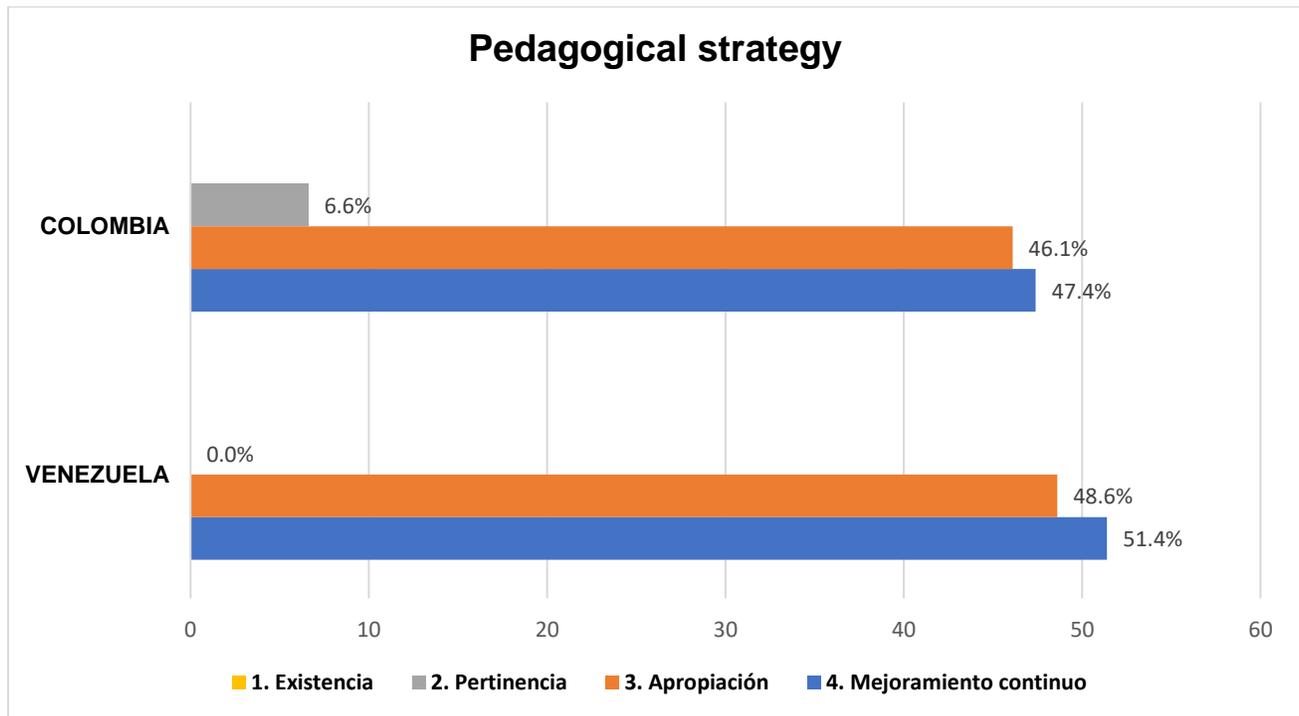


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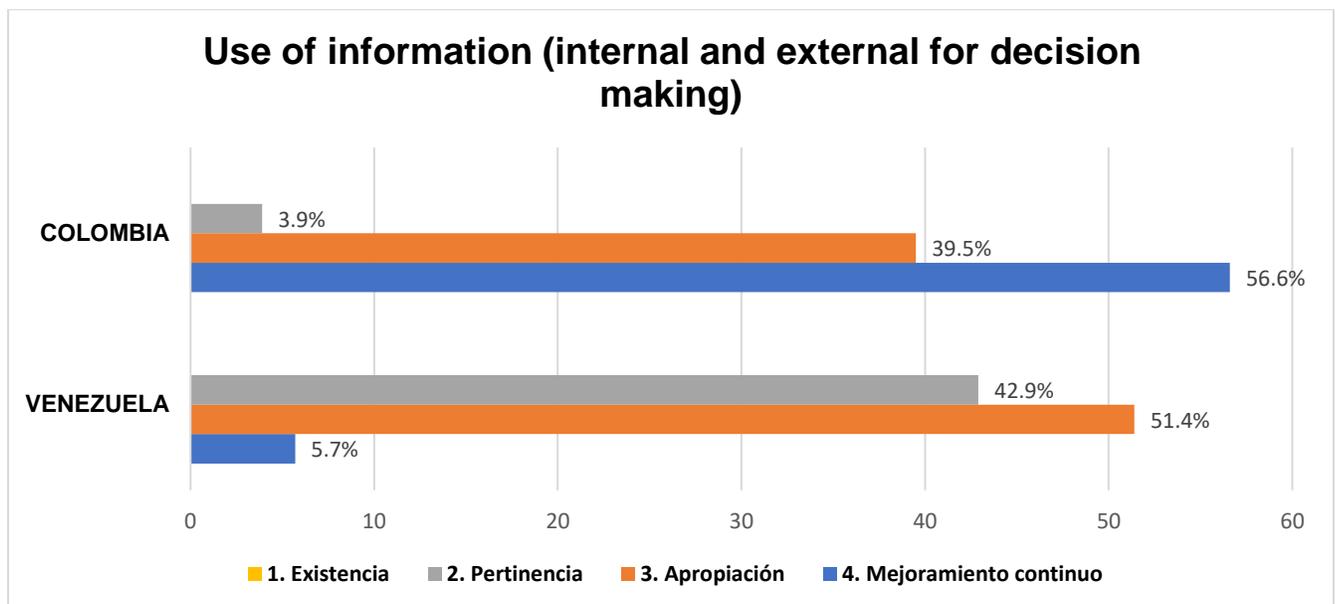


Figure 9

