

## Educational Researcher's Professional Practices in Postgraduate Level

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**Abstract:** Within the hierarchy of the Mexican educational system, researchers have an important role because of the actions developed by them inside and outside the institutions in which they are entitled to work. Among those actions we can address knowledge-building, the development of human capital, the creation of cultural companies, and the dissemination of knowledge built both through research and guidelines for educational models.

Professional practices are complex because they require a series of conditions, processes, stages, circumstances, will, among other aspects, to achieve the expected results. Due to present times, researcher internships have increased their quantity, actions, participants, financial aid, and such unthinkable conditions that researchers must consider for developing such practices daily.

**Key words:** educational researcher, professional practices

### 1. Introduction

The present work analyses the postgraduate researcher through the professional practices. It has the purpose of providing elements that allow such educational actor to identify new practices as well as to invite researchers to perform their educational actions according to the historic present era. On the other hand, this work seeks that educational authorities support professional practices since they remain as a key component in the models of knowledge building, specifically model number 2.

The following stages of the work are: 1) general criteria of this work, 2) educational postgraduate researcher, 3) theoretical framework and educational researcher's professional practices.

### 2. General Criteria

This work tries to solve the following questions: Which are some of the problems faced by postgraduate researchers? And, how can we differentiate between those professional practices assigned from a legal/institutional perspective and the ones that unfold due to the spirit of the present days?

Based on diverse referential literature, this work is mainly theoretical and conceptual. Its main features are: a location approach developed by focusing on an educational actor in a particular educational level, and a descriptive tendency in identifying key elements within educational researcher's professional practices in the postgraduate level.

The methodology that underpins this work is the effectual history from the philosophical hermeneutics

approach by Hans-Georg Gadamer because understanding history as a double sense of influence-reception Grondin (2000) is a key research element that influences decisively behaviour and human actions, and also opens possibilities for change when conscience of facts arises.

The analogue hermeneutics of Mauricio Beuchot is the epistemological referent due to the need of identifying the difference between aspects within other referents in professional practices and different notions about education as a concept.

In the discussion of conceptual references, this work also privileges insights from finished research such as García Perea (2006), García Perea (2012), García Perea (2015), García Perea (2019). Those insights are important for the present work because they show actualized data and also link diverse aspects between professional practices and the concept of education.

### **3. Educational Postgraduate Researcher**

An educational researcher is understood to be the educational actor who is entitled, and certified to develop research and the legal functions attributed by the institution including teaching, knowledge-dissemination, advising, dissertation supervising, among others. Moreover, this actor is referred as one that conducts research on a daily basis under institutional conditions.

There are several cases in which researchers, in addition to developing institutional practices and without neglecting them, carry on other tasks that are also part of their profession with enthusiasm, commitment and high sense of responsibility.

However, there are several cases in which educational authorities within institutions and the government ignore and do not consider that professional practices of researchers are carried out mainly during non-working hours. Even so, those practices entail a positive and favorable impact for the researcher, the institution, scientific communities, and broader circles of society and the country by evidencing the need for innovation.

Other particularity of the mentioned actor is that the knowledge built by it not only is disseminated to society broadly, but also remains by being published and printed in different forms such as books, chapters, scientific articles, seminars, workshops, among others.

Moreover, this educational actor possesses a cultural capital that increases gradually, and permanently through research. In this case, we are referring specifically to the following types of cultural capital: institutional capital related to the degrees of study, symbolic capital supported by the recognition of its professional career, and objectified capital represented by knowledge dissemination (Colina & Osorio, 2004).

The last set of arguments require further description. First, some people have been appointed to work as educational researchers without fulfilling the minimum requirements and without having participated in any adequate programs to obtain academic positions. Moreover, there are others that even when possessing an academic position, as well as the right profile and a large set of competences, do not develop any research activities for diverse reasons including lack of interest, amount of administrative work, or other type of work.

Secondly, several teachers carry on educational research due to a personal initiative or because it can be an institutional requirement product of educational politics implemented during 80's decade to foster quotidian research.

There is no doubt that they, with, without and despite the institutional conditions and probably without having the profile, competencies and training for research, accepted such institutional invitation and carried it out

satisfactorily, obtaining interesting results even without the opportunity to socialize those results with the academic community of the institution, locality, region, state and the country.

This situation also generated that teachers who investigate as a daily work will not receive comments, suggestions, and feedback from specialists and experts neither publication nor legitimation by the scientific and research communities and agents of educational research.

From the perspective of Colina and Osorio (2004), the educational research agent is distinguished from amateur researchers and professionals because the knowledge constructed by them decisively influences the fields of knowledge of the subject studied as well as the training processes themselves.

One important aspect to be highlighted in this work is the degree of thematic specialization of the postgraduate educational researcher. Without a doubt, this is an epistemological principle to build new knowledge on the subject studied. Mastery and depth over the object of study is gained with effort, tenacity, consistency and will be carried out over several years.

Knowledge specialization has generated other problems for the educational researcher. Among them are the disarticulation, fragmentation (Gadamer, 1993), separation, marginalization, exclusion of said knowledge in relation to other knowledge.

For this reason, it is essential that, at the same time that the knowledge is specialized by the educational researcher, it continues to maintain its articulation with other knowledge through multi-referentiality.

Specialized knowledge is characterized by having a solid conceptual, theoretical, methodological, epistemological and ontological reference determined by a disciplinary field and the aspects studied are exclusive to a research object.

Carayannis y Campbell (Chiquiza, 2016) propose that models of knowledge production 1 and 2 must be transcended in favor of model 3 which "provides a democratic insight of the intervention that arises from concern of environmental planetary crisis under political, economic, and epistemological aspects" (Chiquiza, 2016, p. 5).

In everyday institutional life, the expressions used to address postgraduate educational researchers are diverse and generally revolve around aspects such as: cultivated knowledge, exercised power — understood as the ability to do — and desire. While some expressions are characterized by having a pejorative, ironic, and negative sense, others try to highlight attributes, merits, values and positive aspects.

Undoubtedly, this is the most controversial educational actor in the Mexican educational system not only because of the expectations that institutional and educational authorities have about the functions that it develops within the institution where it works — construction of knowledge, formation of human capital, educational innovations, quality educational models, development of competences for work and life, among others, but also because, unlike other educational actors, it receives higher salaries, the job category is the highest, and it has more possibilities to develop writing and publishing, lecturing, attending events, etc.

The recognition of the educational researcher is based on professional daily actions and is always granted by another person because the trust, competence and veracity of what he has said is mainly due to self-discipline, self-criticism, ethics (Gadamer, 1993a).

**Table 1 Expressions About Educational Researcher**

Aspect	In favor		Against	
Knowledge	Expert		Liar	Simulator
	Specialist		Improviser	Charlatan
	Authority			Ignorant
Power	Tolerant	Responsibly	Bumptious	Ironic
	Patient	Kind	Arrogant	Vain
	Respectful	Tenacious	Authoritarian	
Desire	Seductive	Committed	Unfair	Intolerant
	Systematic		Coward	Almighty
	Creative		Frustrated	Narcissist

Source: García Perea M. D. (2012)

#### **4. Theoretical Reference**

The professional practices of the educational researcher are generated on the one hand, by the technological boom and the internet, on the other, due to the model 2 of knowledge production. Furthermore, they have different conceptual references: technologist, knowledge management, learning organizations, manual worker, worker of the knowledge, business attitude. etc. In the following section, their presence in today's societies and their importance to be carried out by the educational researcher will be discussed.

The main aspects of four conceptual referents are briefly described below: Knowledge Management, Technologist, Acting as an Entrepreneur and Knowledge Worker.

a) **Knowledge Management.** It is an approach that revolves around the problems of capitalization, creation and dissemination of knowledge (Benavides, 2003). The development of new paradigms, collective work, personal and organizational development techniques, and the use of information technologies.

Its complexity lies in following the trail of knowledge from the people who have both built it and used it to successfully solve problems, the models and scenarios created to increase its mobility, the creation and distribution of explicit and implicit knowledge, achieving a balance between people, processes and technology, the creation of suitable environments, the will to share, etc.

The responsibility for knowledge management resides on the members of networks, communities, associations, colleges and scientific and research schools, because it is them who, while promoting and creating models on the enrichment of knowledge, with their actions weigh attitudes of knowledge production by analyzing and evaluating the causes that generated non-solutions of diverse problems. Likewise, they persist in the functional model even if a first time application resulted in failure, they continue to foster the will to collaborate, listen, connect, encourage to request, offer help, share what is known and undertake good leadership.

Knowledge management implies that the educational researcher leaves his place of comfort and puts distance on his own-self to open himself to the world and to other people's knowledge in diverse fields. The idea is to analyze company problems, educational institutions, among others; to seek for good practices and test them, to focus on key tools and promote them, to work in depth in some critical areas, to check the results, and to observe already existing processes and influence them with the principle of knowledge management (Collison & Parcell, 2003).

b) **Technologist.** A negative meaning is attributed to this expression due to its association with the paradigm of educational technology that characterized the Mexican Educational Modernization that prevailed in the 80's. Also because of the teaching functions restricted to the instrumental and pragmatic pedagogical field and to the primacy of didactic materials for teaching-learning.

In knowledge societies, the functions performed by the technologist are characterized by having a dynamic, open, flexible sense and for being under constant-construction due to professional ethics and the management of everyday knowledge. People who make up this type of group apply knowledge of the highest level. They occupy a preponderant place in current societies due to their leadership as knowledge managers, they represent the largest group of knowledge workers in the world that is growing because of the Internet. They are the rightful successors of the qualified workers of the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries and their productivity stands out because they link the tasks of the knowledge worker and those of the manual worker (Drucker, 2008).

c) **Acting as an entrepreneur.** It refers to the actor responsible for conceiving and innovating, that is, the responsible of knowledge application by linking science and technology in an indivisible and powerful unit (Drucker, 2008). It fulfills the social role of "advancing innovations, looking for new businesses and creating new markets and new customers" (Altarejos, 1999).

The guiding principle of business motivation — the practice of entrepreneurship- is the astuteness of managing, knowing, and effectively applying knowledge into world business. For this reason, it has to consider: conquer new customers and new markets, maintain profitable businesses and improve productivity. These actors are also responsible for incorporating knowledge to companies and industries and for monetary, cultural, technological, business benefits, that derives from this (Drucker, 2008).

d) **Knowledge worker.** It has been labeled by the administrative and accountant areas within companies and industries as a generator of expenses without realizing that knowledge production is the main asset in transformation and problem solving (Drucker, 2008).

According to Drucker (2008), the factors that shape their effectiveness are: knowing profoundly what they do, self-management, high independence levels, scientific and technological autonomy, innovation as a vital part of their daily work, continuous learning, constant evaluations through their superior feedbacks, interaction with colleagues with the same hierarchical level and with other agents outside the organizations with whom they interact and assess quality.

## 5. Professional Practices

The notions about the concept of educational researcher is a reference used in this work to start approaching the professional practices carried out by this educational actor in postgraduate studies.

From our point of view, professional practices contain explicitly or implicitly the actions, competencies, professional ethics, human qualities, areas of action, among other aspects, carried out by the researchers inside and outside the institution where they work.

Hegel (1974) would not agree with this view since it starts from the idea of representing a special phase of evolution and interpretation within the totality of the human trajectory, therefore, more than what it can offer should not be demanded or expected.

In previous research that I have developed on concepts such as training, educational researcher, authority, among others, notions occupy a relevant place due to the need to assume a critical attitude and avoid succumbing

to the arbitrariness of language and absolute notions (Gadamer, 1992).

The notion, understood as interpretation, contains elements to start a representation and characterization of the object studied. Similar to the physical phenomenon of an iceberg, in the words contained are the denotator to discover the base that notions are rooted (educational policies, historical period, situational moments, theoretical, methodological, epistemological, ontological references, worldviews, etc.) in the privileged sense.

In the present work, notions found about the educational researcher allow to reflect on the complexity of both professional career and practices developed on a daily basis within and outside the institution.

The words contained in Table 2 have been extracted from a set of notions found about the educational researcher. Those privileged elements allow us to understand not only the complexity of the educational researcher's profession, but also the scope, expectations, utopias and paradoxes of what the institutional and educational authority, the members of the scientific and research communities, and the students expect.

**Table 2 Keywords on Notions About the Educational Researcher**

Authority	Interpreter	Critical	Intellectual
Interlocutor	Expert	Technologist	Leader
Specialist	Cultural company creator	Critical attitude towards the State	Historical actor
Content and reality mediator	Knowledge builder	Concept weaver	Cultural and historical subject
Friend	Innovator	Biographer	Scientist
Research trainer	Commitment with reality and one-self	Knowledge craftsman	Individual and group change generator
Teaching	Diffusion	Tutor	Advisor

Main sources: García Perea M. D.: (2015, 2015<sup>a</sup>, 2012 y 2019), Gutiérrez Serrano (1999).

**Table 3 Educational Researcher's Professional Practices**

Group	Name	Characteristics	Context
1	Traditional	Knowledge production	Renaissance society
2	Normative	Teaching, research, and diffusion	Industrial society
3	Institutionalized	Cultural company creator, educational problem-solving, leadership, authority, intellectual, critical towards the State.	
4	Formative	Educational research agent	
5	Ex Officio	Expert, specialist, biographer, interlocutor, interpreter, knowledge craftsman, historical subject, conceptual weaver, reality and content mediator, professional and researcher trainer, scientific, professional of science, individual and group change booster, friend, way of living, negotiator ...	Transition from industrial society to post-industrial society
6	Emergent	Businessman, technologist (manual and knowledge technologist), netizen, knowledge manager, learning organization creator.	Post-industrial society

Source: García Perea M. D. (2012, 2017 y 2019), Gutiérrez (1999), Drucker (2008).

The traditional function of the educational researcher's professional practices is characterized and distinguished from scientific centers and research centers. Since their origins back in renaissance society (Heller, 1980) and nowadays, those centers have had budget limitations, material, human and technological resources as well as all kinds of opportunities to guarantee knowledge building.

Even after economic crises caused by neo-liberalism and administrative bureaucracy, they are still in force today, although economic support has decreased considerably. Furthermore, the hiring requirements for scientific and educational researchers have increased and both remain hard to be substituted by other social actors for being considered specialists and experts.

The normative professional practices of the educational researcher, like the previous one, possess a legal structure. Unlike the traditional ones, normative professional practices arise from social needs, are assigned to higher and graduate education institutions -university, private, federal, state and normal schools- of the Mexican educational system and the number varies according to the creation agreement and transformation of its administrative natures whether dependent, decentralized and deconcentrated.

Teaching, research, dissemination and extension are the main normative professional practices of the postgraduate educational researcher. The number and type of internships depends on the institution. For example, the Centers of the *Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México* (UAEMex) privilege research, the *Instituto Superior de Ciencias de la Educación del Estado de México* (ISCEEM) the four mentioned practices (Gaceta de Gobierno No. 73 y 111).

Even if there is a budget ceiling, this is assigned in dribs and drabs, and material, human and technological resources are spared more quickly due to the reduction of the economic budget and bureaucratic-administrative criteria.

In relation to the development period of an investigation, unlike the previous professional practice in which the temporality is determined by the scientific researcher, the normative professional practices are subject to institutional and administrative conditions and to research, educational and postgraduate policies. From their creation date to present day, at ISCEEM it is two years.

Research is also developed in scientific and research communities, networks, and councils among others created by non-profit researchers and characterized by a horizontal organization. It receives the name of formalized functions because it is based in the institutionalization of Mexican educational research approximately in the decade of the 80's.

According to Gutiérrez (1999), educational research becomes institutionalized and professional practices become broad by being considered in the social world. The actions implemented overcome the boundaries of the postgraduate educational institution.

The professional practices in this group purport the notion that researcher's practices are not exclusive of the classroom and the institution, but that also encompass a role within the social world.

Professional practices centered in the research agent emphasize the professional ethics of the educational researcher because of the double effect that the production of knowledge has in the thematic area where the object of study resides, and in the educational researcher training processes.

On the other hand, this professional practice is not only developed within and outside the postgraduate educational institution but it also embraces other educational levels and research communities. Through this professional practice, networks, councils and research associations are consolidated and generally led by researchers that are recognized for their cultural capital in any of its diverse types: institutionalized, objectified, symbolic as structural elements (Colina & Osorio, 2002).

As there is no legislation to support financially this activity, the members of the research communities are responsible for the economic costs, and the results obtained from collegiate, group and collaborative research impact the production of educational knowledge in the country.

The experiences developed to elaborate the state of knowledge of Mexican educational research is an activity carried out by the Mexican Council for Educational Research whose scope and impact benefit research.

The professional practices labeled as *ex officio* have been expressed by the main research informers as “the notions in research training of ISCEEM” due to the following reasons: they refer to quotidian activity that also characterizes previous professional practices, they emphasize the particularity of a postgraduate educational institution, and are issued by a group of educational researchers who strive to become educational research agents with, without, and despite institutional support (García, 2017a, 2017b).

An aspect that cannot be omitted due to its importance is that professional practices in groups 4 and 5 are characterized for being prior to the constitution of emergent professional practices.

Emerging professional practices are based on the technology boom. Their action and impact ratios are wide and powerful, they can be carried out by all educational actors and interested persons, they stop being exclusive to the researcher and are generally developed outside the institution because they go beyond its jurisprudence and, on occasions, they are also carried out after institutional working hours (García, 2019).

These types of professional practices are born from the spirit of this time and they respond to current needs. The web and the internet are the technological tools that facilitate their development, they do not have an economic budget that legally supports them and they do not have a legal and administrative structure that legitimizes them.

Their development depends mainly on the person who uses them, therefore, the educational researcher has no longer the exclusive right to develop them. Unlike the professional practices mentioned, these are supported by post-industrial societies, knowledge societies, and information societies.

Its importance is supported by the following aspects: the achievements are short-term, the results have an individual, professional, institutional and social-public impact, the benefits are economic, political, educational and ethical, collaborative work is privileged and collaborative between national and international educational and non-educational research communities, among other issues.

Ignoring or not developing the new functions by the educational researcher means its symbolic death because other educational actors, people, scientific and research communities, companies, industries, social groups perform them with successful results thanks to the technological support that has expanded to all areas of life and has collapsed geographical lines.

Today's societies demand professionals whose actions are consistent with this era. For this reason, they require professionals who use technological tools to learn and apprehend how to thrive in successfully developing the functions that have been assigned or imposed. Today's societies also need bold people, who are not afraid to take risks, dare to use such technological tools and innovate in all areas of life.

## 6. Conclusions

The professional practices of the postgraduate educational researcher have increased in number, complexity, action ratio and personnel who develop them.

The old ones remain present due to the force of custom and tradition. The new ones are generated by the spirit of the time, therefore it is important that educational actors, especially the educational researcher, be attentive to the birth of them as well as learn and apprehend them so that their actions are consistent with the historical period.

The educational researcher who carries out its work not only professionally but also lives it as part of his existence, develops traditional and normative professional practices under the principle of must be and must do due to its institutional nature.

The professional practices that have increased are developed with conviction, responsibility, commitment, ethical professionalism and critical ethos, although some of them do not recognize them.

Furthermore, professional practices of the educational researcher are complex. Those carried out within educational institutions are regulated, programmed and evaluated by the personnel in charge of the administrative area and are mandatory for the educational researcher. On the other hand, those carried out outside the institution are chosen by the educational researcher, and do not have institutional support. They are developed out of conviction and professional ethics.

In order for the actions to be consistent with present times, the postgraduate professional researcher has to develop new professional practices, since these are primary indicators that affirm that, in addition to transcending model 1 of educational knowledge production, they provide the opportunity to use model 2.

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