Socioformation: An Integrated Approach to Competency Development and Educational Engagement

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Abstract

Faced with globalization, rapid technological advancements, and growing social inequalities, traditional educational models are showing their limits, struggling to train individuals capable of adapting to dynamic environments and contributing positively to society. How can we rethink education to meet current needs while preparing learners to face future challenges? Socioformation emerges as an ideal solution. The main objectives of this article are to analyze the impact of socioformation on the development of transversal competencies and learner engagement, evaluate the effectiveness of tools and methods used in socioformation to promote the integration of interdisciplinary knowledge, study the changes in the role of teachers induced by socioformation, identify the main challenges related to its implementation in various educational contexts, and establish fundamental distinctions between socioformation and other educational approaches. To achieve these objectives, a documentary study was employed by analyzing available sources on socioformation using concept mapping. The results show that socioformation fosters the development of essential skills such as critical thinking, communication, and project management while enhancing learners' engagement and motivation. For teachers, it transforms their role by positioning them as facilitators and mentors, although this transition presents challenges, particularly in terms of training and resistance to change. In conclusion, socioformation appears to be an effective response to the limitations of traditional educational models, preparing learners to become responsible and ethically engaged citizens while reinventing the role of teachers. To maximize its adoption, it is crucial to strengthen teacher training, develop appropriate assessment methods, and integrate educational technologies. The future of education may well involve a global expansion of socioformation.

Keywords: *Transversal competencies; Learner engagement; Ethical reflection; Role of teachers; Socioformation*

Introduction

Today's society is rapidly evolving, shifting from an information society to a knowledge society, where mere knowledge acquisition is no longer sufficient (Mounkoro, 2020). Traditional educational models are increasingly inadequate to prepare individuals for these new challenges. It is therefore necessary to develop new educational approaches, such as socioformation, to train citizens capable of adapting and contributing to the knowledge society (Mounkoro, 2020).

Socioformation is an educational paradigm that emerges in response to the complex and evolving needs of contemporary societies. Unlike traditional approaches primarily focused on knowledge transmission, socioformation emphasizes the development of transversal competencies and the acquisition of contextual knowledge, aiming to train citizens capable of actively contributing to society by solving complex problems collaboratively.

This concept, developed by theorists like Guy Le Boterf, Jean-Pierre Boutinet, and enriched by contributions from researchers such as Sergio Tobón, Philippe Perrenoud, Jacques Tardif, and Edgar Morin, has its roots in the need to train individuals capable of adapting to dynamic environments and contributing to collective well-being.

Sergio Tobón further deepened the dimension of socioformation by linking it to competency management and the competency-based approach in education, emphasizing the importance of integrating ethical values and the holistic development of the learner. Ismaila Mounkoro explored the applications of socioformation in multicultural contexts and language teaching, highlighting its potential to promote social inclusion and equity in educational systems.

Philippe Perrenoud contributed to the reflection on competency assessment, a central aspect of socioformation, by developing innovative approaches to measure learning in complex contexts.

Jacques Tardif reinforced the importance of contextualizing knowledge and developing transversal competencies, while Edgar Morin advocated for a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to education, integrating the ethical, social, and environmental dimensions of learning.

The relevance of socioformation in the current educational context is undeniable. Faced with globalization, rapid technological advances, and societal challenges such as climate change and social inequalities, it is crucial to rethink educational models. Socioformation, with its holistic approach, not only allows the acquisition of technical skills but also the development of values, attitudes, and social interaction skills essential in today's world.

Theoretical Foundations of Socioformation

Cobo and Moravec (2011) define invisible learning as a process that occurs outside the formal framework, emphasizing the importance of generating one's own content and learning through networks. This concept aligns with the principles of socioformation, where learning is not limited to the traditional classroom but extends to broader social and technological contexts.

Colás Bravo (2003) explores the impact of the internet on learning in the knowledge society, highlighting how technology can transform education by offering new forms of access to knowledge and promoting collaboration among students.

According to Flores Pacheco et al. (2007), the information society is evolving into a knowledge society, where education plays a crucial role in preparing citizens capable of addressing contemporary challenges. Hernández (2013) proposes a series of essential teaching strategies for teacher training in the 21st century, emphasizing the need for socioformative competencies that allow them to manage complex and diverse educational environments.

Hernández, Tobón, and Vázquez (2014) develop a conceptual framework for the socioformative training of teachers, which integrates knowledge management and collaborative learning as key elements to improve educational quality in diverse contexts. Marcelo (2001) analyzes how teacher training must adapt to the demands of the knowledge society, suggesting the adoption of new pedagogical methodologies that promote critical thinking and the ability to solve complex problems.

Morin (1999) introduces the notion of complex thinking as a fundamental pillar for future education, which is also a central element in socioformation, where the goal is to articulate knowledge from different disciplines to tackle the challenges of modernity. Pedraja-Rejas et al. (2006) discuss the relationship between the knowledge society and the strategic management of organizations, which is relevant for educational management in a globalized and competitive environment.

Stehr (1994) provides a theoretical framework for understanding social transformations in knowledge societies, where socioformation plays a central role in preparing individuals to manage information critically and apply it in various contexts. Tobón and Núñez (2006) explore knowledge management from the perspective of complex thinking, emphasizing the importance of an ethical approach in education, which is also a key concern in socioformation.

Tobón (2001, 2002) developed the concept of socioformation, drawing on constructivist principles and complex thinking, emphasizing the importance of the comprehensive training of individuals in real social contexts.

One of the key principles of socioformation is the emphasis on developing transversal competencies, enabling learners to mobilize their knowledge in varied and often unexpected contexts. Socioformation also emphasizes the ethical dimension of education, encouraging learners to reflect on the social impact of their actions and develop a sense of civic responsibility.

Socioformation rests on three main pillars:

- **Integration of Knowledge:** The connection between theoretical knowledge and practical situations, fostering deep and contextual understanding.

- **Collaboration and Co-construction:** Learning is conceived as a social process, where learners work together to solve complex problems by sharing experiences and co-constructing solutions.

- **Ethics and Social Responsibility:** Learners are encouraged to consider the ethical implications of their actions and contribute positively to society.

1. Methodology

Instrument

The methodology for this study is based on the use of documentary analysis. Arias (2012) defines it as a process of researching,

organizing, and critically reviewing documents aimed at answering specific research questions. Moreover, Tobón, Guzmán, Hernández, and Cardona (2015) describe documentary analysis as "a process based on research, retrieval, analysis, criticism, and interpretation of secondary data" (p. 31).

Objectives

- Analyze the impact of socioformation on the development of transversal competencies and learner engagement.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the tools and methods used in socioformation to promote the integration of interdisciplinary knowledge.

- Study the changes in the role of teachers induced by socioformation and identify the main challenges related to its implementation in different educational contexts.

Categories of Analysis

Categories	Questions or Components
Effects of socioformation on the development of transversal competencies and learner engagement	What are the effects of socioformation on the development of transversal competencies and learner engagement?
Tools and methods of socioformation	What are the tools and methods of socioformation?
Role of teachers and the main challenges in implementing socioformation	How does the implementation of socioformation change the role of teachers, and what major challenges do they face in this process?
Fundamental distinctions between socioformation and other educational approaches	What fundamental distinctions can be established between socioformation and other pedagogical approaches?

Criteria for Selecting Documents

The documents selected for the analysis were chosen according to the following criteria:

- A search for articles and books was conducted on platforms such as Google Scholar, WoS, Science Direct, Scielo, Redalyc, and Latindex.

- Keywords used in the search included: Transversal competencies; Learner engagement; Ethical reflection; Role of teachers; Socioformation.

- Selected articles came from indexed journals. In addition, books published by recognized publishing houses, research centers, or universities addressing relevant topics were also used.

2. Results

This section presents the results obtained for each category.

Category 1: Effects of Socioformation on the Development of Transversal Competencies and Learner Engagement

Socioformation stands out from traditional educational approaches in several ways. In classical models, teaching often focuses on the transmission of disciplinary knowledge, with the teacher playing the role of knowledge provider and the learner as a passive recipient. This model, focused on academic knowledge acquisition, tends to compartmentalize disciplines and emphasize measurable results through standardized tests.

In contrast, socioformation offers a more integrated and dynamic approach. Rather than focusing solely on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge, it values learners' ability to apply this knowledge in real and complex situations. Learning is seen as a continuous process of skill development, where the learner is actively engaged in their own training.

Furthermore, socioformation places central importance on ethics and social responsibility, which is not always the case in traditional approaches. While traditional models may sometimes limit themselves to technical or academic skill training, socioformation aims to train individuals capable of contributing meaningfully and responsibly to society.

In summary, socioformation stands out for its holistic approach, its emphasis on the transversal nature of competencies, and its insistence on the ethical dimension of education, making it particularly well-suited to the contemporary challenges that educational systems must face in a constantly changing world.

Adopting socioformation in educational contexts offers multiple benefits for learners, particularly in terms of developing transversal competencies and promoting collaboration.

- **Development of Transversal Competencies:** Socioformation emphasizes the development of competencies that transcend disciplinary knowledge. Students develop skills such as critical thinking, solving complex problems, effective communication, and project management. These competencies are essential not only for their academic success but also for their professional integration and their ability to adapt to the changing demands of the labor market.

- **Collaborative Learning:** Socioformation values collaboration between students, fostering mutual learning and co-construction of knowledge. Learners often work in teams to solve real problems, helping them to develop communication, negotiation, and teamwork skills. This approach also strengthens their sense of social responsibility as they are encouraged to consider the implications of their actions for the community.

- **Increased Engagement and Motivation:** By being actively involved in their learning, students often show greater engagement and motivation. Socioformation encourages learners to personally invest in their projects and see the direct connection between their academic efforts and real-world outcomes, leading to more meaningful and lasting learning.

- **Autonomy and Critical Reflection:** Learners are encouraged to critically reflect on their learning processes and make informed decisions about their educational journey. This autonomy in learning allows them to become lifelong learners, capable of evolving and adapting throughout their careers.

The application of socioformation in various educational contexts has shown its effectiveness in developing transversal competencies

and improving learner engagement. Here are some concrete examples:

- **Social Skills Education Program in Colombia:** In some schools in Colombia, socioformation has been integrated into educational programs to develop students' social skills. Rather than focusing solely on academic learning, these programs have introduced community projects where students work in teams to solve local problems. For example, students have led awareness campaigns on recycling, combining environmental science knowledge with communication and leadership skills.

- **Knowledge Co-construction Project in Canada:** In Quebec, several higher education institutions have adopted socioformation to foster collaboration between students and teachers. In an education science program, students are involved in the co-construction of training modules using the action-research method. They identify a specific educational problem, conduct research, and then create educational modules that are continuously tested and improved. This process engages students in active and contextualized learning while allowing them to contribute directly to the improvement of educational practices.

- **Professional Training in West Africa:** In professional training programs in Mali, socioformation has been used to adapt learners' skills to the needs of the local market. Students in technical and vocational training participate in community projects such as building wells or setting up irrigation systems. These projects go beyond the acquisition of technical skills and include project management, collaboration, and social responsibility.

Category 2: Tools and Methods of Socioformation

To effectively implement socioformation, several tools and methods can be used. These tools are designed to facilitate the integration of knowledge, encourage collaboration, and promote ethical reflection:

- **Concept Mapping:** Concept maps are an essential tool in socioformation. They allow learners to visualize the relationships between different notions and structure their thinking. By linking theoretical concepts to practical situations, concept maps help students integrate knowledge in a coherent and contextualized way.

- **Competency Portfolios:** Another key tool is the competency portfolio, where learners document their learning experiences and acquired competencies. This evolving document allows students to reflect on their progress, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and set continuous improvement goals.

- **Interdisciplinary Projects:** Interdisciplinary projects are a commonly used method in socioformation. These projects require learners to mobilize knowledge from different disciplines to solve complex problems. For example, a project might combine skills in mathematics, social sciences, and communication to develop a solution to a community problem.

- **Ethical Reflection:** Ethical reflection is integrated into the learning process through the use of ethical dilemmas and classroom debates. Learners are encouraged to examine the implications of their actions and discuss moral issues in groups, which develops their ability to make informed and socially responsible decisions.

- **Peer Assessment:** Peer assessment is a method that encourages collaboration and mutual learning. Students evaluate the work of their peers, which not only helps them develop critical thinking but also fosters a better understanding of quality criteria and learning expectations.

In sum, implementing socioformation requires the use of these tools and methods to ensure integrated, collaborative, and ethically-oriented learning. These practices help meet the complex and varied educational needs of learners while preparing them to become competent and responsible social actors.

Category 3: Role of Teachers and Major Challenges in Implementing Socioformation
Role of Teachers

In the context of socioformation, the role of teachers evolves significantly, shifting from that of a simple knowledge transmitter to a learning facilitator and guide for competency development. Teachers no longer merely deliver knowledge in a linear manner; they become facilitators who guide students through their learning process, creating rich and stimulating learning environments where learners are encouraged to explore, experiment, and co-construct knowledge.

As mentors and coaches, teachers provide individualized support, helping learners identify their strengths and weaknesses, set personal goals, and overcome obstacles, while offering continuous support to maintain students' engagement and motivation. Furthermore, teachers act as project designers, integrating knowledge from different disciplines to create authentic learning situations that allow learners to develop transversal competencies while addressing concrete problems. This role requires creativity and adaptability to meet the specific needs of students.

Additionally, assessment in the context of socioformation becomes more formative and reflective. Teachers no longer simply grade academic performance but help students reflect on their progress, understand their mistakes, and improve their competencies, making assessment a tool for personal and professional development.

In conclusion, socioformation profoundly transforms learning dynamics by placing the learner at the center of the process and redefining the role of the teacher, offering a more holistic and engaged approach that better prepares students for the challenges of the contemporary world.

Challenges and Perspectives

Adopting socioformation in educational institutions is not without obstacles. Among the main challenges, we can identify:

- **Resistance to Change:** Teachers and administrators may show some resistance to adopting new educational paradigms. Accustomed to more traditional methods, they may be reluctant to engage in an approach that requires a shift in mindset and pedagogical practices.

- **Lack of Training and Resources:** Implementing socioformation requires teachers to be well-trained in its

principles and methods. However, many institutions lack the resources to provide adequate training, which can lead to uneven or ineffective implementation of socioformation.

- **Competency Assessment:** Assessing transversal competencies in the context of socioformation can be complex. Traditional assessment methods are often not suited to measuring transversal skills or ethical and social aspects. This can pose a challenge for teachers who need to develop new evaluation methods.

- **Integration into Existing Curricula:** Adapting current educational programs to include socioformation can be difficult. It requires a redesign of content, educational objectives, and teaching methods, which demands time, resources, and strong institutional support.

- **Engagement of Stakeholders:** Socioformation requires the involvement of not only teachers but also students, parents, and community members. Obtaining this engagement can be challenging, especially if stakeholders do not understand or see the benefits of this approach.

Despite these challenges, socioformation offers immense potential to transform education. Here are some avenues for its future development:

- **Strengthening Teacher Training:** It is crucial to develop continuous training programs for teachers, focused on the principles and practices of socioformation. This includes creating educational resources, communities of practice, and platforms for experience sharing.

- **Development of New Assessment Methods:** To effectively assess transversal competencies, innovation in assessment practices is necessary. This could include the use of digital portfolios, peer assessments, and interdisciplinary projects as evaluation criteria.

- **Technological Integration:** Educational technologies can play a key role in implementing socioformation. Digital tools facilitate collaboration, personalize learning, and track competency development more flexibly and interactively.

- **International Expansion:** Socioformation has the potential to be applied beyond national borders. By considering local cultural and socioeconomic contexts, this approach could be adapted and adopted in various regions of the world, contributing to a more inclusive and globalized education.

- **Research and Development:** For socioformation to continue evolving, it is essential to support educational research that explores its effects, identifies best practices, and proposes new avenues for its improvement.

Category 4: Fundamental Distinctions between Socioformation and Other Educational Paradigms

Despite some points of convergence, the main differences between socioformation and other approaches can be summarized as follows:

- **Training vs. Learning:** Socioformation distinguishes itself by transcending the simple concept of learning to focus on comprehensive training. It views individuals as beings in development, committed to the society in which they live and the global environment they share. In contrast, learning is a narrower concept, limited to a behavioral change or the acquisition of skills, attitudes, and knowledge.

- **Action vs. Theory:** Unlike connectivism and invisible learning, socioformation focuses on action in the face of problems rather than their theorization. This approach is also shared by conceptual pedagogy, of Latin American origin. While other approaches primarily focus on learning theory, socioformation is distinguished by its set of practical strategies, such as formative projects and concept mapping.

- **Contributing to the Improvement of Society vs. Training to Address Social Challenges:** All approaches recognize the importance of addressing social challenges in learning or training. However, socioformation goes further by asserting that comprehensive training cannot be achieved without a real contribution to improving the community, whether in terms of social fabric, socioeconomic development, or environmental sustainability actions. Thus, training is no longer merely individual but becomes a personal, social, and environmental process. This concept of "the social" in socioformation differs from that of socioconstructivism, where "the social" means that knowledge, skills, and attitudes are first embedded in society before being individually structured.

- **Ethical Life Project vs. Affectivity:** Although all approaches recognize the importance of affectivity, socioformation is distinguished by the concept of an ethical life project, which serves as an integrative framework for the main axes related to this domain. This concept emphasizes not only the importance of attitudes, motivations, and values but also the pursuit of personal fulfillment, talent development, and the search for meaning in life, making it the structuring axis of the curriculum.

- **Problems vs. Knowledge or Skills:** Among the compared approaches, socioformation is the only one that clearly guides individuals to identify, interpret, argue, and solve problems by articulating academic and non-academic knowledge. Problem-solving is essential in the knowledge society and is a central axis that any training process must address, whether formal, informal, or non-formal, and in any context (educational, organizational, or social). Problems are addressed with specific didactic strategies of socioformation, such as formative projects, concept mapping, case studies linked to contextual problems, and synergistic collaborative work. In contrast, approaches like connectivism and invisible learning do not have such specific or adapted strategies

Discussion

Socioformation clearly stands out from traditional educational approaches by emphasizing the development of transversal competencies and the ethical responsibility of learners. This model offers a response to the current needs of a constantly evolving world, where adaptability and the ability to solve complex problems are crucial. However, the transition to socioformation is not without challenges. Teachers must not only acquire new pedagogical skills but also rethink their role as learning facilitators, which may encounter resistance. Moreover, integrating socioformation into existing curricula requires a significant redesign of teaching and assessment methods, as well as strong institutional support. Continuous teacher training and the development of new approaches to competency assessment are essential to overcoming these obstacles.

In addition, the success of socioformation also depends on the engagement of different educational stakeholders, including parents and communities, who must understand and support this approach. Educational technologies, while offering valuable tools for personalizing learning and facilitating collaboration, require thoughtful adoption to maximize their potential. It is also important to conduct ongoing research to assess the effectiveness of socioformation and adjust practices based on the results obtained.

Conclusion

Socioformation, as an educational paradigm, addresses the complex challenges posed by the rapid transformations of our global society. By focusing learning on the development of transversal competencies, socioformation goes beyond the limitations of traditional educational approaches, which are often too rigid and focused on the simple transmission of knowledge. This model places learners at the heart of the educational process, encouraging them to become engaged social actors capable of navigating a constantly changing world.

However, adopting socioformation is not without challenges. Teachers must rethink their roles, moving from simple knowledge transmitters to learning facilitators and mentors, a change that requires not only training but also strong institutional support. Moreover, challenges related to the assessment of transversal competencies, often more complex to measure than traditional disciplinary knowledge, require the development of new evaluation methods adapted to this approach.

The integration of socioformation into educational systems also requires strong engagement from all involved stakeholders, including parents, communities, and policymakers. For this transition to be successful, these stakeholders must understand the benefits of socioformation and support its implementation. Educational technologies play a crucial role here, offering tools to personalize learning and facilitate collaboration among learners, but their integration must be thoughtful and strategic.

Moreover, continuous research on socioformation is essential to assess its effectiveness and adjust practices based on the results obtained. This involves not only documenting successes but also analyzing the difficulties encountered to constantly improve pedagogical approaches.

In conclusion, socioformation offers a renewed vision of education, one that is in line with the needs and realities of the 21st century. By training individuals who are not only technically competent but also aware of their ethical and social responsibilities, socioformation prepares learners to become global citizens capable of contributing positively to society. To fully realize this vision, it is crucial to overcome current challenges and promote the global expansion of socioformation, which could profoundly transform educational systems and make education more inclusive, adaptable, and relevant for the future.

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