CONCEPTIONS ABOUT LANDSCAPE IN INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

María Rosa Mateo Girona

Centro Universitario Villanueva

rmateogirona@gmail.com

1. RESEARCH ON EDUCATION IN THE LANDSCAPE FROM THE DIDACTICS OF GEOGRAPHY

The European Landscape Convention (2000) has reinforced the study of landscape in Geography as a curricular content of innovative character. Moreover, it is considered as the axis of an adequate socio-environmental education. The initial training of teachers is key to the integration of these aspects in formal education.

Geography and landscape were born at the same time as sciences. According to Crespo (2017, p. 35) "The concept of landscape, as an object of study of Geography, is outlined at the same time that the same geographic science began to acquire its scientific corpus". However, from the field of Geography teaching, research in landscape didactics has barely started.

In the bibliographic portal Dialnet, a search with the voices "landscape didactics" and "geography" shows that, in the last 24 years, twelve doctoral theses have been defended from the areas of geography and/or education.

Likewise, the articles published in the *Didáctica Geográfica* magazine (in its second period, from 1996 to 2019) and the papers included in the proceedings of the congresses organized by the Didactics of Geography working group of the National Government (those held from 1988 to 2019) have been reviewed. The papers have been selected taking into account the key word: landscape. All of them have been included in dynamic tables from which the corresponding searches are done. Among the located articles,

Didáctica Geográfica magazine presents twenty. In the congresses of the Didáctica de la Geografía de la AGE group there are 152 papers and presentations. The total is 172 papers on this subject over the 31 years.

For this essay, in addition to the communications already commented together, the researches carried out by Gómez (1996), Liceras (1996, 2003) and Crespo (2017), from a theoretical point of view and those of the latter and Adrados (1998) from the application to the university and primary classrooms respectively, were highly inspiring.

2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The main goal of this study is to find out what conceptions of the landscape are held by students who are in the early childhood education degree (henceforth GEI), primary education degree (henceforth GEP) and university master's degree in secondary education teacher training (henceforth MFPS), who receive their initial training in university classrooms and will be the future teachers of the different levels.

The secondary goals: to think about the reasons that induce them to select some landscapes over others, to detect the degree of coherence between what they draw and what they describe, to analyze the descriptive strategies they use and to know the vocabulary they use when describing the landscape.

The sample of three academic years totals 182 students.

The instrument to know these previous ideas is a card in which a practice that has two sequences is proposed:

Make a chronological axis with the landscapes in which they were born, lived and/or visited; the places and the motivation of their trips; finally, the positive and negative experiences lived in those spaces.

2. Select, draw and describe (highlighting the elements that you consider most important) the landscape that you like the most.

Data processing is developed in phases. Firstly, the landscapes in which the students who carry out the practice were born, lived or travelled are classified (disaggregating the data by provinces in the case of the landscapes of Spain, and by countries in the case of the exterior landscapes). Also, the motivations for these trips are separated into two types: those made for tourism, summer holidays, etc. and those made for study, work or cooperation.

Secondly, the students' drawings are analyzed, by degree, and the elements that correspond to the identified categories are identified.

Third, the students' written descriptions (by degree) of their landscape drawings are analyzed in three ways.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Location of the landscapes "lived" by the students

The first piece of information that is examined is the students' place of birth.

Almost 90% of the students were born in Spain, the remaining 10% in different European, American and Asian countries. Among Spaniards, 66% are born in Madrid and the remaining 34% are distributed among 22 provinces. On the other hand, among those of national origin, 84% come from inland landscapes and 16% from coastal landscapes. Also, among Spanish students, 95% are born in urban landscapes and 5% in rural landscapes. Therefore, the profile of the origin of our sample would be national students of urban and interior origin.

Secondly, the landscapes visited by the students are analyzed. A total of 1436 landscapes visited are recorded, giving an average of 7.8 landscapes per student overall.

It is observed that, for the students as a whole, 54% of the preferred landscapes are located in coastal provinces, while 46% would be inland landscapes.

3.2. Landscapes drawn by the students

Of the 182 subjects who participated in these tests, 15 did not draw; the rest, 167 did, representing 91.8% of the students. The elements that university students draw most are within the category of abiotic elements (44%), followed by anthropic elements (32%) and lastly, biotic elements (24%). In absolute numbers, 1033 drawn elements have been identified among all the categories.

3.3. Landscapes described by the students

The students who have described the landscape have been 180 of the 182, which is 98.9%. The variety among the different descriptions stands out. On a formal level, the limit indicated in the length of the text was half a page. The students' texts ranged from 6 to 226 words, with an average of 77 words per description.

As for the contents, there is hardly any description of the landscape from a global and systemic approach, since the data show, if one looks at the classification of landscape types by Liceras (2003), that they do not explain whether it is a natural, rural or urban landscape, except in three cases (1.65%); although implicitly they can be extracted from the descriptions of the different elements that make up the landscapes. Only 20% of the students identify the type of landscape following any of the criteria of Crespo's classification (2017).

3.2.1. Description of abiotic elements

The abiotic elements of the landscape categories most frequently used by students in their descriptions are: elements of the relief 131 students, of the hydrography 108 and of the atmosphere 87. Only 11 students refer to some star.

3.2.2. Description of biotic elements

In the category of biotic elements, the subcategory vegetation stands out with the contribution of two thirds of the students. The animals in the descriptions represent a little more than a third, and the human presence is small.

It should be noted that several students commented on the protection figures of some of the spaces they selected and justified it by the richness and variety of species of flora and fauna.

3.2.3. Description of anthropic elements

In this category, it is the buildings that are described by the students in a majority (68%), the communication channels do not reach a quarter (24%), while the means of transport and other tools are mentioned in few occasions, 7% and 1% respectively.

Finally, the written descriptive strategies used by the students, future teachers, have been classified. It is verified that 65% identify and situate the elements of the landscape. Slightly more than 38% organize these elements with a reasoned structure. 43% of the students relate the elements of the three proposed categories. These results can be explained by the fact that this is an initial and open test, without previously pointing out to the students any model to follow.

3.4. Coherence between what the students draw and describe

The idea is to see if the different drawn categories of elements appear in the descriptions made by the students. Two methods have been used.

4. FINAL REFLECTIONS. LIMITATIONS AND PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENT

Firstly, it is observed that the profile of the student who has been studied is from Spain (90%), from inland landscapes (84%) and born in urban environments (95%). They declare an acceptable travel experience (7.8 trips/student), both within Spain (4.1) and abroad (3.8). However, the landscapes they prefer are different from those of their birth (72%), located in the country (74%), in coastal areas (54%) and in rural environments (64%).

The conceptions expressed in the drawings and descriptions of the landscapes preferred by the students show that the biotic and abiotic elements add up to 75% of drawings and descriptions, only 24% correspond to anthropic elements.

All this seems to show that the conceptions about the landscape of the students who come from 95% of urban environments identify it as a space little intervened and defined by its natural values. This first conclusion reinforces the idea that the current urban society identifies the idea of landscape with natural landscapes (Gómez, 1996).

Secondly, few students have shown a global and systematic concept of landscape, as only between 1.6% (Liceras model, 2003) and 20% (Crespo model, 2017) cite any of the specific landscape typologies and describe them. As noted above, MFPS students are more likely to identify landscape types following some of the criteria than GEI-GEP students. In this sense, it is necessary to rethink and/or improve the inclusion of curricular content focused from the landscape didactics in compulsory education.

Thirdly, the written descriptive strategies of students in their initial training can be improved, especially those related to ordering and relating, although this can be nuanced by degree. Given that the samples of GHG and MFPS students are not very numerous, it is opportune to continue with this line of research in future courses to improve the consistency of the results and propose writing programs that improve descriptive strategies in geography.

Fourthly, it highlights the coherence between what they draw and what they describe. Both in drawings and in descriptions, the categories of abiotic elements predominate and, in this sense, they use a greater number of geographical terms in their descriptions, although it is true that they repeat some of them in a very generic way and there are few students (especially those of MPFS) who introduce nuances or concretions. The biotic elements are drawn less and described the same or less than the anthropic elements, and of course, than the abiotic ones.

In this category of the biotics, moreover, it can be seen that the majority of the elements of vegetation stand out, while the fauna or the human presence barely show up. It is observed that the students handle a very reduced vocabulary, and they refer to the vegetation or the fauna with generic terms and, in few occasions, they make it concrete.

The more detailed descriptions of the students of GEP and MFPS stand out. Anthropic elements are also drawn more and described less. In the case of the anthropic elements, the vocabulary used by students, as we have seen in the previous ones, is generic and hardly any geographical concepts appear in their description. It can be concluded, therefore, that it is necessary to work on the specific geographic vocabulary of both physical and human geography.

To conclude, it has been seen that landscape didactics has a scarce tradition in terms of the number of registered publications; therefore, it is a science whose research is in its early stage. In this framework, studies must be continued to improve the initial training of teachers in landscape didactics, which imply the development of a global and systematic conception of landscape, which teaches the geographical vocabulary for each category of landscape elements through the development of descriptive strategies; in order that students could be trained to have a new educated and educational view of landscape.