

Situated Knowledge and Territorial Awareness: A Phenomenological Perspective of Managerial Training in Crisis Contexts

Saber situado y conciencia territorial: perspectiva fenomenológica de la formación gerencial en contextos de crisis

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the articulation between situated knowledge and territorial awareness in the training of industrial managers at the Rafael María Baralt Experimental National University (UNERMB), San Francisco campus, in Zulia State, Venezuela. Under a qualitative phenomenological-hermeneutic approach, the reflective narratives of 25 students who attended the sociopolitical course between 2023 and 2025 were interpreted. The thematic analysis identified four emerging categories: situated knowledge, territorial awareness, critical subjectivation, and epistemological resistance. Results reveal that training in structural crisis contexts transforms professional praxis, adding lived experience within a structural crisis to technical rationality, which contributes to the dignification of knowledge rooted in local experiences. It is concluded that managerial education from the Global South must be validated as an ethical and political act of resistance. This research expands Schutz's social phenomenology toward affective and bodily dimensions, proposing a territorial epistemology capable of guiding socioeconomic recovery through intellectual and collective sovereignty.

Keywords: Situated knowledge; Territorial awareness; Managerial training; Subjectivation; Situated hermeneutics; UNERMB San Francisco.

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza la articulación entre el saber situado y la conciencia territorial en la formación del gerente industrial en la UNERMB San Francisco del estado Zulia, Venezuela. Bajo un enfoque cualitativo fenomenológico-hermenéutico, se interpretaron los relatos reflexivos de 25 estudiantes que cursaron la cátedra sociopolítica entre 2023 y 2025. El análisis de sentido permitió identificar cuatro categorías emergentes: saber situado, conciencia territorial, subjetivación crítica y resistencia epistemológica. Los resultados revelan que la formación en contextos de crisis estructural transforma la praxis profesional, adicionando a la racionalidad técnica, la experiencia vivida en un contexto de crisis estructural que incide en la dignificación del conocimiento desde la vivencia local. Se concluye que la educación gerencial desde el Sur debe validarse como un acto ético y político de resistencia. Esta investigación expande la fenomenología social de Schutz hacia dimensiones afectivas y corporales, proponiendo una epistemología territorial capaz de orientar la recuperación socioeconómica desde la soberanía intelectual y colectiva.

Palabras clave: Saber situado; Conciencia territorial; Formación gerencial; Subjetivación; Hermenéutica situada; UNERMB San Francisco.

INTRODUCTION

Professional training in Latin America, and specifically in Venezuela, is currently undergoing a structural crisis that has transformed both the material and symbolic dimensions of higher education. In Zulia State, factors such as the precaritization of public services and forced migration have turned the university into an enclave of resistance where new meanings are produced in response to institutional erosion. Given this reality, the Rafael María Baralt Experimental National University (UNERMB), San Francisco campus, articulates academic survival with the urgent need to construct situated knowledge that responds to the needs of a territory in crisis. This proposal is grounded in Schutz's (1974) social phenomenology, which maintains that the social world is a meaningful construction developed intersubjectively, allowing for the validation of daily experience as the basis of scientific knowledge. Thus, the university ceases to be a space for mere instruction and transforms into a stage for epistemological production committed to its immediate environment.

Within this framework, the sociopolitical course in the Industrial Management degree program functions as a device of subjectivation that problematizes traditional administrative models to promote critical thinking among the student body. This pedagogical space seeks to transcend the transmission of technical content by integrating ethics and affectivity as central axes of a territorial awareness consistent with the Epistemologies of the South (Santos, 2010). In this regard, Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy sustains this vision by defining education as a practice of freedom and dialogue, which is essential for challenging decontextualized rationalities. Therefore, the training of industrial managers at UNERMB is not limited to operational efficiency but rather reclaims the legitimacy of knowledge constructed from local lived experience and history. This theoretical foundation provides the necessary support to understand management as a human praxis deeply linked to the sociopolitical reality of the territory.

The central issue addressed focuses on the lack of a critical managerial philosophy that recognizes the subject in training as a situated, ethical, and political being. Historically, technical rationality has rendered the affective dimension of professional praxis invisible, privileging foreign models that ignore the particularities of the Latin American context. In response to this gap, a need arises to analyze how situated knowledge and territorial awareness are articulated, highlighting the emergence of knowledge from lived experience in crisis scenarios. The research relies on Heidegger's (2001) notion of being-in-the-world, allowing for the interpretation of training as an ontological opening where the subject recognizes themselves in relation to their social environment. In this way, a rupture with instrumental logic is proposed to give way to a management style that assumes the complexity of its historical reality.

The relevance of this study lies in its contribution to a territorial epistemology that legitimizes resistance as a valid form of knowledge. By offering a phenomenological lens, subjectivation is recognized as a political act that establishes the industrial manager as a key social actor for socioeconomic recovery. Zemelman (2012) reinforces this idea by stating that critical thinking must open horizons of possibility in the face of crisis, reclaiming the historicity of the Latin American subject. The primary objective is to analyze this articulation through the study of reflective narratives at UNERMB San Francisco under a situated hermeneutic perspective. Ultimately, the study aims to demonstrate that critical

managerial training not only transforms praxis but also dignifies the act of knowing as an ethical commitment to the territory's destiny and the reconstruction of the social fabric.

Building on this, managerial training in the case of UNERMB San Francisco demands an epistemological approach that transcends the dominant technical rationality and situates itself in the concrete lived experience of the subjects. In this sense, Alfred Schutz's social phenomenology constitutes the central axis of this study, enabling an understanding of how actors construct typifications, motivations, and horizons of action during their time in the sociopolitical course. As Schutz (1974) asserts, "the social world is a meaningful construction developed intersubjectively" (p. 32). Recent research has revisited this perspective for higher education, noting that social phenomenology offers keys to understanding subjectivity in complex formative processes (Contreras Colmenares, 2023; Viterbo Sinche-Crispín et al., 2023). This subjectivity is not an isolated entity but is nourished by the stock of available knowledge that the student reorganizes in the face of the structural crisis experienced in their academic and personal daily lives.

Furthermore, the proposal is nourished by Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, which maintains that education is a practice of freedom and dialogue (Freire, 2005). In the sociopolitical course, this dimension is expressed in the participants' ability to challenge traditional managerial models and generate new formative rationalities rooted in affectivity and territorial awareness. Recent studies confirm the contemporary relevance of this legacy: "Freire's thought and action constitute a horizon for a new pedagogy from the South" (Jardilino & Soto Arango, 2020, p. 1080), evidencing that Freirean praxis is updated in a territorial and critical key. It is not simply technical training in administration, but a political literacy that allows the industrial manager to read their reality and act upon it to transform it.

Moreover, Martin Heidegger contributes the notion of being-in-the-world, asserting that the human being is always a being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1997). This idea allows for thinking of training as an ontological opening, where the subject recognizes themselves in relation to a world that grants meaning. In situated managerial training, this notion translates into the need to understand the subject as a political and territorial being whose existence is "thrown" into a context of institutional precariousness that forces them to redefine their professional life project. Recent research has revisited this category for education, showing that Heideggerian phenomenology allows for thinking of teaching praxis as a critical opening toward social reality (Chillón Lorenzo, 2018; Rueda Beltrán, 2018). Thus, the industrial management student not only learns to manage resources but also learns to manage their own existence in a shared world.

In addition, Maurice Merleau-Ponty introduces corporeality and perception as constitutive elements of knowledge. For this author, perception is constitutive of knowledge (Merleau-Ponty, 2006), as the body is not an object but the condition of possibility for the lived world. In this research, this perspective allows for the recognition that situated knowledge is not limited to the cognitive but includes affectivity, memory, and the territorial perception of the student who suffers through blackouts, shortages, and the intense heat of Zulia. Recent investigations corroborate this by establishing that the phenomenology of perception points toward a form of perceptual realism (Ramírez, 2021), while other works show how the presence of the body transforms critical education

(Tusso Molina, 2025). Knowledge, therefore, is figuratively a shared "flesh" between the subject and their territory.

On the other hand, Hugo Zemelman contributes the notion of situated epistemology, maintaining that "Latin American critical thinking must open horizons of possibility in the face of crisis" (Zemelman, 2012). This proposal reclaims the historicity of the subject and the need to think from Latin America, rejecting imported managerial "recipes" that ignore the complexity of the Global South. Recent authors align with this view by noting that Latin American epistemological pluralism requires recognizing the subject's historicity (López Borges & Díaz Machado, 2022), while others have developed the idea of an epistemology of the potential present as a critical horizon for education (Schavino & Villegas González, 2018). This dialogue between classical and contemporary authors grounds a management style that is, above all, an ethical response to reality.

Finally, the dialogue between Schutz, Freire, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Zemelman, contrasted with contemporary authors, allows for a theoretical framework for research that does not seek to describe phenomena from the outside but to understand the formative experience from within. Social phenomenology provides the meaning structure; critical pedagogy introduces emancipatory dialogue; Heideggerian ontology recognizes the openness of being; the phenomenology of perception makes corporeality and affectivity visible; and situated epistemology reclaims the historicity of knowledge. This theoretical convergence not only legitimizes the student's subjectivity as a source of knowledge but also cements an alternative managerial rationality capable of responding ethically to the demands for transformation in the Zulia territory.

METHOD

Methodologically, this research is defined under a qualitative approach with a situated hermeneutic design. Unlike external descriptive models, this study focuses on the interpretation of the meaning structures that students construct from their experiences at UNERMB San Francisco. The study group consisted of 25 students from the Industrial Management program who attended the sociopolitical course between 2023 and 2025. Selection criteria included active participation in the formative device and a willingness to share reflective narratives about their praxis within the context of the structural crisis in Zulia State.

Data analysis was performed through a rigorous coding and categorization process, divided into three detailed analytical phases. In the Reduction Phase, reflective written narratives and interviews were exhaustively transcribed. Meaning units or narrative "incidents" related to training, territory, and crisis were identified, filtering information to focus on the essence of the lived phenomenon. In the Categorization Phase, these meaning units were grouped through inductive logic into emerging categories: situated knowledge, territorial awareness, subjectivation, and resistance. Patterns and divergences were sought across the discourses of the 25 participants, providing a polyhedral view of the object of study.

Subsequently, in the Integration Phase, dialectical relationships were established between the identified categories and the proposed theoretical framework (Schutz, Freire,

Zemelman, among others). This synthesis phase allowed final findings to emerge not as mere data, but as deep interpretations of pedagogical reality, specifically, the subjectivity that characterizes learning as both complex and a sociological phenomenon. From this emerged findings, categories, and a phenomenological richness showing new ways of learning through feeling, that is, as feeling-thinking subjects.

To ensure scientific rigor, qualitative validity strategies were employed, namely: triangulation of techniques (reflective narratives vs. interviews), participant validation (member-checking), and researcher reflexivity. Constant epistemic vigilance was maintained regarding the educator's role as part of the phenomenon, assuming involvement not as a bias but as a condition of possibility for understanding. Ethically, the study respected informed consent, anonymity through pseudonyms, and the principle of non-maleficence, ensuring the dissemination of results to the UNERMB academic community as a gesture of social reciprocity. Recent studies emphasize that situated qualitative research must guarantee reciprocity and respect for the participants' voices. In summary, the situated methodology allows for understanding managerial training not as a technical application but as a lived and resignified experience in crisis contexts.

To ensure scientific rigor, specific qualitative validity strategies were employed, including methodological triangulation (reflective narratives vs. interviews), member checking, and researcher reflexivity. Throughout this process, a constant state of epistemic vigilance was maintained concerning the educator's role as an integral part of the phenomenon; thus, involvement was treated not as a bias but as a condition of possibility for deep comprehension. Ethically, the study was governed by informed consent, anonymity through pseudonyms, and the principle of non-maleficence, which included the dissemination of results to the UNERMB academic community as a gesture of social reciprocity. For further ethical clarity, the research strictly adhered to the following principles: informed consent to guarantee voluntary participation; anonymity and confidentiality through pseudonyms and secure data management; non-maleficence to ensure no emotional or academic harm resulted from participation; and reciprocity through the sharing of findings. As highlighted in recent literature, situated qualitative research must ensure reciprocity and respect for the participants' voices.

In summary, this situated methodology facilitates an understanding of managerial training as a lived and resignified experience within crisis contexts rather than a mere technical application. Consequently, the analysis of reflective narratives emerges as a privileged pathway for accessing the meaning structures that constitute situated knowledge and territorial awareness in professional praxis.

RESULTS

The analysis of the reflective narratives from the students in the sociopolitical course at UNERMB, San Francisco campus, identified a set of emerging categories that configure the formative experience as a process of critical subjectivation. These categories are articulated around four central axes: situated knowledge, territorial awareness, critical managerial subjectivation, and epistemological resistance. In this sense, the primary findings are presented below, accompanied by their phenomenological interpretation and their contrast with the previously established theoretical framework.

Regarding situated knowledge as a lived experience, the reflective narratives show that knowledge is not conceived as a set of abstract contents, but as a lived experience constructed in interaction with the territory. According to the social phenomenologist Alfred Schutz (1974), knowledge is built through interaction with the environment; he asserts that "lived experiences become meaning structures that orient action" (p. 32). Consequently, students describe how the crisis (blackouts, water shortages, migration) becomes epistemological input. Recent research corroborates this, stating that "situated learning constitutes an opportunity for innovative, critical, and reflective pedagogical practice" (Cid Garcia and Marcillo Murillo, 2023). Situated knowledge thus emerges as an embodied practice that legitimizes experience as a source of knowing, consistent with Merleau-Ponty's (2006) phenomenology of perception.

It was evident that this construction of knowledge from the territory does not occur in isolation but is deeply embedded in the subjectivities of the students, who resignify their immediate reality based on the tensions of the Zulia environment. By transforming material shortages and public service crises into objects of critical reflection, students achieve a rupture with academic abstraction, allowing situated knowledge to act as a bridge to understanding their own being-in-the-world. Therefore, the articulation between territorial experience and the formative process transcends simple technical data accumulation; it transforms into an ontological inquiry where the subject recognizes themselves as part of a community in resistance, as described in Merleau-Ponty's (2006) phenomenology of perception.

In this dialectical interaction, managerial training acquires a new depth, ceasing to be a purely intellectual exercise and becoming an ethical response to institutional precariousness. This lays the foundation for an awareness that not only inhabits the territory but feels and transforms it beyond the technical, linking learning with corporeality and affectivity. Students express that "learning in the midst of a crisis is learning to resist," revealing that situated knowledge is not only cognitive but also emotional and political. This dimension confirms that critical managerial training cannot be disconnected from lived experience, as it is there that the meaning structures orienting action are configured. In contrast to traditional managerial models prioritizing efficiency, situated knowledge presents an epistemological alternative that recognizes the legitimacy of knowledge built from below.

Concerning territorial awareness and critical affectivity, this awareness is activated when training is linked to collective memory and critical affectivity. Freire (2005) maintains that "education is a practice of freedom and dialogue" (p. 78). The narratives confirm that formative praxis is lived as resistance against exclusion. Current studies note that "territorial awareness is built within the diversity of lived experiences" (Rivera-Sepulveda et al., 2024), legitimizing the plurality of voices in critical training—a necessity at UNERMB to provide epistemological tools that foster thinking capacity.

In light of the above, the narratives show that territorial awareness is activated when students recognize that their training is not neutral but crossed by structural crisis. Critical affectivity becomes the engine of reflection, allowing the formative experience to be interpreted not just as content transmission, but as an act of resistance against exclusion. In this sense, territorial awareness is configured as an ethical horizon orienting professional praxis toward the dignification of knowledge and social transformation, that is, the development of thinking capacity from both a critical and an epistemological perspective of

being.

This finding also reveals that territorial awareness is not homogeneous; it is an effervescent, dynamic, and multidimensional process. Although students share the same territory, the impact of the structural crisis has been gradual and asymmetrical. Some narratives focus on family migration, others on the precaritization of services, and others on community resistance. This plurality confirms that territorial awareness is a dynamic and collective process that feeds on memory and affectivity, serving as epistemological input for critical managerial training.

Regarding critical managerial subjectivation, the narratives evidence that the sociopolitical course acts as a device for subjectivation. Heidegger (1997) asserts that "the human being is being-in-the-world" (p. 112). Students transition from seeing themselves as technical operators to becoming critical agents. Recent research shows that "hermeneutic phenomenology allows for thinking of teaching praxis as a critical opening toward social reality" (Rueda Beltran, 2018), confirming that managerial subjectivation is a condition of possibility for social transformation. The narratives show that students begin to question their professional roles, transitioning from "technical operators" to "critical agents." This transition reveals that managerial subjectivation is not automatic but a process of resignification involving resistance, tension, and openness. The sociopolitical course becomes a space of symbolic dispute where students negotiate between the dominant instrumental logic and the opening toward new ways of understanding their professional role.

This finding confirms that critical managerial subjectivation is a prerequisite for social transformation. By recognizing themselves as political and ethical subjects, students acquire the ability to interpret their environment and project a professional praxis committed to the dignification of knowledge, the ethical exercise of the profession, and the construction of their being-in-the-world. Consequently, subjectivation becomes an epistemological and political act that legitimizes situated managerial training. This aims to generate a social being capable of analyzing their environment not only from administrative perspectives but also from BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, and Incomprehensible) scenarios, allowing them not just to adapt, but to strategically over-exist and propose ethical solutions.

Regarding epistemological resistance as a horizon of meaning, the narratives show that training in the sociopolitical course is experienced as an act of resistance against traditional managerial models. Students recount how the territorial crisis is not only an obstacle but is erected as a condition of possibility for the emergence of new formative rationalities. This finding confirms Zemelman's (2012) proposal that Latin American critical thinking must open horizons of possibility in the face of crisis. In this scenario, students resignify their professional roles as an act of resistance, coinciding with recent claims that Latin American epistemological pluralism requires recognizing the subject's historicity, as noted by Lopez Borges and Diaz Machado (2022), transforming education into an exercise of collective intellectual sovereignty.

This epistemological resistance is expressed concretely in the students' ability to dispute meanings and resignify their daily professional praxis. The narratives evidence that this resistance is not limited to passive opposition but becomes a creative practice that generates new ways of thinking and managing. In this sense, the process is configured as a

horizon of meaning that dignifies local knowledge and legitimizes the construction of an Epistemology of the South. Authors recently align with this view: "Latin American epistemological pluralism requires recognizing the historicity of the subject" (Lopez Borges and Diaz Machado, 2022). Accordingly, training ceases to be a technical transfer and transforms into an exercise of intellectual sovereignty, where the manager-in-training assumes the role of a political actor capable of proposing alternatives to the dominant instrumental rationality.

Finally, the analysis reveals that epistemological resistance is not an individual phenomenon but possesses an essentially collective nature. Students recount experiences of solidarity, community support, and the joint construction of knowledge, confirming that resistance is lived as a fundamental intersubjective practice. In coherence with Schutz (1974), this resistance becomes a shared meaning structure that orients social action and legitimizes critical managerial training as an ethical and political practice. Thus, situated knowledge at UNERMB San Francisco transcends the classroom to insert itself into the network of affections and mutual support that sustain life within the territory.

DISCUSSION

The findings obtained from the analysis of reflective narratives confirm that managerial training at UNERMB San Francisco is configured as a process of constructing situated knowledge and critical subjectivation. This result confirms the relevance of Schutz's (1974) social phenomenology, although it challenges it by demonstrating that social typifications in contexts of extreme crisis are deeply imbued with an affective and bodily weight that classical theory often omits. The crisis in Zulia is not a statistical datum; it is a lived experience that alters the perception of formative time and space. The research also shows that typifications are not solely cognitive but are nourished by affectivity and corporeality—dimensions that Schutz only briefly outlines and that are revealed here as central.

Territorial awareness dialogues with Freirean pedagogy (2005) but expands it toward a geo-referenced dimension where the classroom is the territory itself. The identified subjectivation confirms that the Heideggerian being-in-the-world in Venezuela is, in reality, a being-in-the-crisis. This research, therefore, proposes a political phenomenology of management, where the manager seeks not only profitability but human dignity. Epistemological resistance confirms that Zemelman's (2012) thought is the pathway for an Epistemology of the South that does not merely denounce exclusion but produces legitimate knowledge from lived experience and collective resistance.

The critical managerial subjectivation found in the narratives confirms the Heideggerian notion of being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1997), as students recognize themselves as political and ethical subjects open to their world. However, the research provides a fundamental nuance: subjectivation is not an abstract process but is situated within the structural crisis of Zulia. This means that ontological opening is experienced as resistance, as an act of dignifying knowledge amidst precaritization. In this sense, hermeneutic phenomenology expands into a political phenomenology, where being-in-the-world becomes being-in-the-crisis.

The epistemological resistance identified in the narratives confirms Zemelman's (2012) proposal, which posits that Latin American critical thinking must open horizons of possibility in the face of crisis. In this sense, the participants do not merely oppose traditional managerial models but generate new ways of thinking and acting, revealing that resistance is also creation. This is built upon an Epistemology of the South that is not limited to denouncing exclusion but produces legitimate knowledge from territorial experience and critical affectivity. It is evident, then, that the research not only confirms the theoretical perspectives used but also expands and stresses them: Schutz expands toward affectivity; Freire toward territorial plurality; Heidegger toward crisis as an opening; Merleau-Ponty toward corporeality as epistemological input; and Zemelman toward resistance as creation. This original contribution legitimizes situated managerial training as an ethical, political, and territorial practice for rethinking higher education in contexts of structural crisis.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the pertinent aspects this study leaves us is that managerial training in contexts of structural crisis, such as those experienced in Zulia State during the 2023–2025 period, cannot be reduced to technical efficiency; it was, therefore, a situated and embodied experience, lived from and within the territory. This study concludes that situated knowledge, territorial awareness, and epistemological resistance are the pillars of a new industrial management for the 21st century. It proposes strengthening the sociopolitical course as a space of intellectual sovereignty that permanently links the academy with community realities, so that future students acquire analytical skills for diverse environments. Thus, thinking from the South implies validating the knowledge born from the pain and hope of a territory that refuses to disappear, elevating management to the rank of an ethical and transformative practice of social life.

Furthermore, the research contributes to the construction of a critical managerial rationality that dignifies knowledge as an ethical and political act. Schutz's social phenomenology is confirmed as a valid interpretive framework but expands toward affective and bodily dimensions that enrich the understanding of the phenomenon. Freirean pedagogy is updated in a territorial key, showing that emancipatory dialogue is nourished by the plurality of lived experiences. Heideggerian ontology is resignified in the crisis, revealing that being-in-the-world is also being-in-resistance. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception legitimizes corporeality as epistemological input, and Zemelman's situated epistemology is confirmed as a critical horizon for thinking from Latin America.

The projections of this study are manifold. At the academic level, it is proposed to delve deeper into the construction of situated hermeneutic methodologies that capture the embodied experience of subjects in training to establish new theoretical stances from the Global South. At the institutional level, it is suggested to strengthen the sociopolitical course as a space for resistance and the production of critical knowledge, expanding its reach to other degree programs and postgraduate studies. At the social level, the need to link managerial training with communities is raised, recognizing that professional praxis cannot be detached from territorial reality because a manager linked to their community can

integrate these forms of problem-solving and adaptability—characteristic of BANI scenarios—into their company, generating more robust, flexible, and legitimate management.

Ultimately, this study opens the possibility of constructing a territorial epistemology that legitimizes the emerging knowledges of the Global South. Thinking from the South implies recognizing that knowledge is not neutral but situated, affective, and political. Managerial training, such as that developed at UNERMB San Francisco, becomes a practice of dignifying knowledge and a horizon for social transformation because it assumes two premises: technical training and political training (the latter understood as the set of sociopolitical analysis tools provided by political science to construct a more integral management professional).

Under this premise, managerial practice cannot be detached from communities, for it is within the social fabric where technical rationality becomes humanized and acquires its true ethical purpose. The industrial manager, recognizing themselves as a situated actor, understands that the organization is not an isolated entity but a node of territorial life; therefore, their management must transcend financial indicators to embrace the sovereignty of local knowledge. In the end, this community linkage ensures that management is a force for reconstruction and hope in crisis scenarios, turning academic training into an exercise of intellectual sovereignty and a commitment to life.

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