



# History Education in Mexico: Development, Research Trends and Local Answers to Global Challenges

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This paper analyses the development of history education research in Mexico in the last 50 years (1970-2020) shedding light on the main local challenges, research trends, and most salient proposals. The analysis shows four main history education approaches: epistemological, instructional, sociological, and psychological. These approaches to the teaching of the past, along with the exploration of the historical evolution and cultural tensions of the country, such as the relationship between nationalism and colonialism, show how tensions and challenges fostered interesting local responses to global issues that resonate with other nations' problems and key scholarly debates on world history education.

*Keywords:* History Education, History Teaching, History of Education, Mexican History.

## **Mexico's DNA: history, education, nationalism, and colonialism**

There is a broad consensus that the starting point for history education in Mexico was the seminal work by Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, *Nationalism and Education*, published in 1970<sup>1</sup>. Her book drew attention to the ways in which history education is very closely attached to the birth and consolidation of the Mexican nation-state. Examining nearly 150 years of history, her study shows how a nationalistic educational system was the main mechanism used to strengthen the emergent nation and unify the wide cultural diversity and fragmented affiliations resulting from processes to gain independence from the Hispanic

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<sup>1</sup> J.Z. Vázquez, *Nacionalismo y Educación en México*, El Colegio de México, México 1970.

monarchy in the nineteenth century<sup>2</sup>. Throughout Mexico's history, this strongly nationalist education system has managed to combine national, liberal, revolutionary, and even socialist ideals for the sake of national unity. All this was made possible due to the consolidation of the Mexican State after the 1910 revolution in a very solid structural and ideological apparatus.

It is worth highlighting another work published in the 1970s which is very relevant to history teaching in Mexico but has unfortunately gone unnoticed. In 1976, the historian Alvaro Matute published *The Revolution and the Teaching of History: Two Stands*<sup>3</sup>. In this paper, Matute points out one main issue: in post-revolutionary Mexico, specifically in the 1930s and onwards, not only was there a sense of using history education to pursue political goals and empower elites, but to foster a spirited debate over the contents, pedagogical strategies and philosophical goals in educating new citizens to understanding the past. Matute's work draws upon two main positions towards the teaching of history, which pervaded the "fight over history education" in that era's secondary schools: the proposal formulated by Rafael Ramos Pedrueza to insert Marxism and historical materialism in history writing in Mexico, as well as and the revisionist proposal of Gilberto Loyo, who argued that history goes beyond class struggle. Given the space limitation herein, it is impossible to delve further into these two positions on history education. However, in Matute's work we can see a clear view of how history education was more complex than the mere political instrumentalization of history, as there was lively debate and reflection on the ways in which history should be taught.

Vazquez's and Matute's studies point out a very common trend in Latin America, which Mexico forms part of: the major influence of nationalism on the configuration of history education<sup>4</sup>. Since the advent of the modern nation-state in the nineteenth century, school history has played a crucial role in upholding the nation-state and has been indispensable in setting the guidelines for citizens<sup>5</sup>. History education

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> A. Matute, *La Revolución y la Enseñanza de la Historia: Dos Actitudes*, in "Estudios de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea de México", 5, 1976, pp. 119-31.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. M. Vom Hau, *Unpacking the School: Textbooks, Teachers, and the Construction of Nationhood in Mexico, Argentina, and Peru*, in "Latin American Research Review", 44, 3, 2009, pp. 127-54.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. M. Carretero - E. Perez-Manjarrez, *Historical Narratives and the Tensions Between National Identities, Colonialism, and Citizenship*, in *Researching History Education*.

has normally strengthened national sociopolitical systems and collective cohesion by instilling a national identity through the construction of an official historical account<sup>6</sup>. This national identity fosters a feeling of belonging to the nation among the citizens, invoking a sense of shared past, legacy and common values oriented towards the preservation of the country and the national community. It is grounded in national history, creating the master historical narrative that provides a comprehensive understanding of the common past, highlighting the country's origins, the foundational historical events and the founding fathers, and the processes to emancipate, defend and develop the country<sup>7</sup>.

The case of Mexico is very representative of this trend. In a recent study analyzing mandatory history textbooks in Mexico<sup>8</sup>, we reach new findings on how nationalism still heavily pervades history education. Teaching resources such as historical maps are designed and deployed in history textbooks mainly to tell the tale of the Mexican nation's birth. The vast majority of historical maps in the history curriculum is articulated in a sequence which shows the key battles and the national heroes' war prowess leading to the independence of "Mexico" and the configuration of the nation-state. In comparison, few if any references at all can be found in historical maps about the different indigenous cultures, Afro-descendant communities or any other groups besides New Spain's European-descent elites leading wars of independence.

This analysis of Mexican history textbooks led to two other findings: the links between nationalism and colonialism, and the tensions inherent therein. As we have mentioned elsewhere<sup>9</sup>, the nationalistic interpretation of history is usually underpinned by a colonial narrative. This intersection between nationalism and colonialism in history education has recently resonated in other contexts, showing that school content

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*International Perspectives and Research Traditions*, eds. H. Thünemann, M. Zülsdorf-Kersting, M. Köster, Wochenschau Pub, Schwalbach (Germany) 2019<sup>2</sup>, pp. 71-88.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. M. Carretero, *Constructing Patriotism: Teaching History and Memories in Global Worlds*, Information Age Publishing (IAP), Charlotte 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso Books, London 2006; P. Lawrence, *Nationalism: History and Theory*, Pearson Education, London 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. E. Perez-Manjarrez - M. Carretero, *Historical Maps as Narratives. Anchoring the Nation in History Textbooks in Analyzing Historical Narratives: On Academic, Popular and Educational Framings of the Past*, eds. S. Berger, N. Brauch, C. Lorenz, Berghahn Books, New York 2021, pp. 164-90.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Carretero - Perez-Manjarrez, *Historical Narratives*, cit.

is not neutral but has strong socio political ties<sup>10</sup>. For instance, the study of historical maps shows that these are designed on the basis of a narrative sequence which includes the struggle for colonization and control of the territory. But most importantly, it reveals that the national territory is mapped out using the routes and settlements of Hispanic colonization. Therefore, the ways in which Mexico's configuration is presented is grounded upon the Hispanic colonial heritage, leaving out any other type of territorial distribution, whether cultural, environmental or social<sup>11</sup>.

Another aspect of the intersection between colonialism and nationalism in history education is the predominance of a hegemonic group in the historical narrative. In Mexico, and in Latin America in general, national history highlights the prominence of the *Criollos*, the inhabitants that formed the New Spain elites born in the Viceroyalty of European parents or with direct European heritage. The spotlight in national history is on these elites and their leadership in the independence and construction of the nation, overshadowing other groups' agency and the cultural diversity in the territory that is now Mexico. In a comparative study with Mexican and Argentinean secondary school students we show how a large number of participants ascribe all the agency of the nation-building to the *Criollo* elites in their historical narratives, and then transfer civic rights as a whole to their descendants, the mestizos (half indigenous heritage, and half Spanish heritage)<sup>12</sup>. Also, for most of the participants in this study, the indigenous peoples played no role in the construction of Argentina or Mexico, and thus were not seen as subjects with rights in their countries. Hence, the nation's historical narrative presents a common "us" based on the historical version and value system of the colonizers' descendants, as well as eliminating or silencing the historical agency of other sociocultural groups in national history.

However, this mix of nationalism and colonialism has not arisen without tensions. The issue with this type of historical narratives prevalent in Mexico is that, as it is the case with any other country in the Americas, a tension exists between multi-ethnic territories and a colonizer-based identity. Several scholars have warned against the danger of promoting one sin-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. K. Van Nieuwenhuysse - J. Pires, *The Colonial Past in History Textbooks: Historical and Social Psychological Perspectives*, IAP, Charlotte 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Perez-Manjarrez - Carretero, *Historical maps*, cit.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. E. Perez-Manjarrez - M.F. González, *Who is Entitled to be a Citizen? Agency and Historical Representations of Indigenous in Mexican and Argentinians Adolescents' Narratives*, in *Hacer(se) Ciudadanos. Una Psicología para la Democracia*, eds. M. F. González - A. Rosa, Miño y Davila, Buenos Aires 2014, pp. 287-326.

gle, exclusive national identity among a country's inhabitants, especially in multicultural and multi-ethnic nations, which may lead to distorted representations of the past and intolerant attitudes towards minority groups in the present<sup>13</sup>. Thus, history education in Mexico has been determined by the tensions between nationalism, colonialism and multiethnicity. This situation is related to certain debates on history teaching, multiculturalism and citizenship that took place in Europe and the US at the end of the Twentieth century<sup>14</sup> and resonate heavily today. However, Mexico's case sheds light on one specific problem: the challenge of creating a historical narrative that harmonizes the subjectivities and histories of not only those who emigrated to the country, but also those who were there before the institutionalization of the Mexican State. This is a very complex issue and a little explored field in Mexico but has been attracting interest in recent years, as we shall see in the following section. For instance, there is now an emerging body of research on the different indigenous peoples and African-descendent groups that inhabited the territories and participated in the wars of independence, oblivious to the Creole and Spanish groups predominant in the official historical accounts<sup>15</sup>.

### **Navigating the journey through History Education in Mexico**

This section presents a schematic overview of the development of history education in Mexico, based on an analysis of the academic works in the field over the last thirty years (1990-2020). As presented above, the research of the 1970s has been presented in a separate space due to its relevance in explaining the cultural background and problems of history education in the country. Moreover, although it enjoys proven acknowledgment, as is the case of Zoraida Vázquez's work, it appears as an exceptional work that was not echoed by many other studies in that decade, except for the isolated efforts of Francisco Reyes Palma, Eva Taboada and the very little-known manuscript of Alvaro Matute<sup>16</sup>. The literature review

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural odysseys: Navigating the new international politics of diversity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007; E. Perez-Manjarrez - M. Carretero, *Key Aspects of Citizenship and the Intersections with History*, in *Bloomsbury History: Theory and Method*, ed. M. Grever, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, in press.

<sup>14</sup> Kymlicka, *Multicultural odysseys*, cit.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. M. León Portilla - A. Mayer, *Los indígenas en la independencia y en la revolución mexicana*, UNAM, México 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. V. Lerner, *La Enseña de la Historia en México en la Actualidad. Problemas y Aciertos en el Nivel Básico*, in *Historia y Nación. Historia de la Educación y Enseñanza de la Historia*.

conducted in this study does not aim to be extensive but rather qualitative and representative. It presents a critical assessment of the studies that meet the criteria for publication in national and international indexed journals and books with influence in the field; the citation impact factor and relevance of the theoretical and methodological proposals among peers were considered. The analysis shows that there have been three main periods in the development of the field in Mexico: the emergence and foundations in the 1990s; institutionalization and academic growth in the 2000s, and professionalization, revisionism, and consolidation of the field in the 2010s. The analysis of the last period allowed classification of the current lines of research in Mexico, their commonalities with global trends in history education and their local particularities.

### **The Nineties: ‘Clio’s duty’ and psycho-pedagogical development**

In the 1990s, two important events occurred in the development of history education in Mexico: the foundation was laid down for a further set of local research lines, and Mexico’s history started drawing attention among international history education scholars, thus boosting initial academic interactions. The production of studies in this decade was incipient but significant in terms of the impact they had on the path of history education in the country and even in Latin America. This stage in research was pioneering and diagnostic, mainly characterized by a set of reflections and assessments of the flaws, mistakes and obstacles in teaching history, setting the main discussions and frameworks of analysis. Framed within the realm of History as a discipline, these studies mainly focused on problems involving the school’s mission and pedagogy in history. They draw upon historical content selection and pedagogical adequacy, school history curricula’s aims and teacher training issues mostly addressed through the theory of history and pedagogy.

Galván and Lamonedá define as a starting point the year of 1992, when an important wave of seminars, congresses, roundtables, and symposia began on history education<sup>17</sup>. Historians and history teachers involved in these events were especially attracted by the historiographic trend of New History, seen as a framework to build new alternatives

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*Volumen 1. Historia de la Educación y Enseñanza de la Historia*, ed. P. Gonzalbo Aizpuru, El Colegio de México, México 1998, pp. 195-211.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. L. Galván Lafarga - M. Lamonedá, *Un Reto: La Enseñanza de la Historia Hoy*, SEP, México, 1995.

for teaching the discipline. These initiatives had historical content as a primary interest of analysis, undertaking content diagnosis and seeking alternative historical storylines<sup>18</sup>. A topic of keen discussion among these scholars was what history ought to be, namely, “the duty of Clio”, delving on what history ought to have taught us, what stories ought to be told, and how history should never be confused with nostalgia or encyclopedic knowledge. In sum, these studies are immersed in the deliberation of the moral imperatives of the duty of the history teacher, portrayed as a “guard of Clio”; to a lesser extent, there are specific works on didactics, for instance, on how timelines can profitably be used in teaching.

The field was established through the work of innovative women, historians and psychologists, leading to the first steps of history education research in Mexico. In the 1990s, the influential works of Andrea Sánchez Quintanar, Frida Díaz-Barriga, Victoria Lerner and Mireya Lamonedá came out. They excelled in terms of their impact among peers and breakthrough research proposals, setting the stage for three main research interests in history education in the country: disciplinary, psycho-pedagogical and history didactics. Broadly speaking, this first period sought to answer four questions: What is the purpose of history teaching? What do history teachers need to know in order to teach? What historical content should be taught in the classroom? And what are the central cognitive skills involved in historical thinking and how can they be encouraged among students?<sup>19</sup>

In those years, three very influential works came out in this field: Victoria Lerner’s 1990 compilation *The teaching of Clio. Practices and proposals for a didactic of history*; her 1998 paper *The teaching of history in Mexico nowadays. Problems and success in primary school*, and the book publication of the homage to the work of the historian Josefina Zoraida Vázquez also in 1998, *History and nation. The history of education and the teaching of history*. Lerner’s 1990 compilation was a first serious attempt at gathering studies on teaching history focused on its pedagogy, theory of history, and its role in the learning of social sciences. This compilation was followed by her seminal 1998 paper, which presented an interesting reflection on the current state of the art of history

<sup>18</sup> A. Sánchez Quintanar, *Enseñar a Pensar Históricamente* in *Historia y Nación*, ed. Gonzalbo Aizpuru, cit., pp. 213-36.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. F. Díaz Barriga, *Una Aportación a la Didáctica de la Historia. La Enseñanza-aprendizaje de Habilidades Cognitivas en el Bachillerato*, in “Perfiles Educativos”, 82, 1998, pp. 1-31.

education at the time. This paper was part of the third influential work in these years, the compilatory book of studies on history education and education history in Mexico, edited by Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru<sup>20</sup>. This book was a very influential collection which marked a milestone in the field, not only by paying a homage to Zoraida Vazquez but also for the great effort of providing a structured overview of the field up to then. In this sense, the decade began and ended with a very important exercise in self-reflection and systematization of the field.

Last of all, as part of the fifth centennial of the so-called “Discovery of America”, many history works on the topic flooded the academic arena, especially in the USA, Mexico and Spain, which eventually influenced and boosted history education research. By the end of the twentieth century, Mario Carretero, the leading scholar in the field in Spanish-speaking countries, presented a book<sup>21</sup> with relevant cognitive studies analyzing this and other crucial historical issues in world history. In that book as well as in another paper of the same year, written in collaboration with his Mexican colleague Liliana Jacott, Carretero presented an important comparative study on the Mexican and Spanish students’ explanation of the “discovery” of America<sup>22</sup>. From then on, interest from and collaboration with international history education scholars has continued.

### **The 2000s: Institutional growth, research autonomy, and teaching to think historically**

During this decade, there was significant institutional growth that provided the basic institutional conditions required to do research. It also saw the beginning of collaborative work among history education scholars and improved academic training, including that of graduate students interested in the field. Even though there were important but isolated efforts to promote history education research at renowned institutions, such as The College of Mexico (COLMEX), The Center for Research and Advanced Studies (CINVESTAF) of the National Polytechnic Institute, The Center for Research and Higher Studies in Social Anthropology (CIESAS), The

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<sup>20</sup> P. Gonzalbo Aizpuru (ed.), *Historia y Nación. Historia de la Educación y Enseñanza de la Historia. Volumen 1. Historia de la Educación y Enseñanza de la Historia*, El Colegio de México, México 1998.

<sup>21</sup> M. Carretero, *Construir y Enseñar las Ciencias Sociales y la Historia*, AIQUE, Buenos Aires 1997.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. M. Carretero - A. López-Manjón - J. Jacott, *Explaining Historical Events* in “International Journal of Educational Research”, 27, 7, 1997, pp. 245-53.



National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), and the National Pedagogical University (UPN), until the 2000s there were no institutional environments or associations specifically devoted to history education<sup>23</sup>.

Latapí argues<sup>24</sup> that this decade was essential to the development of history education in Mexico in terms of infrastructure, institutionalization, interinstitutional collaboration, and the foundation for a stable group of experts and trainee generations in the field. Organizations such as the Mexican Association of Research in History Teaching; the National Network of Bachelor's degrees in History and Faculties; and the Network of Teaching, Dissemination and Research Specialists in History Teaching, were created in these years and provided an intellectual umbrella, although some of them existed only temporarily for the advancement of the field. Moreover, specialized degrees and master programs committed to training and research on teaching history appeared in this decade, such as the degree in history didactics in the Mora Institute and the Master in History Education for Higher Education (MADEMS – History) at the UNAM in 2003. These two initiatives began to provide scholars with comprehensive training in the research of history teaching and learning based on an interdisciplinary curriculum including pedagogy, history, psychology, anthropology, and sociology.

An improvement in history education research also became conspicuous in those years, one that led to its incipient independence from history research. Some efforts were made to start exploring other disciplinary angles to strengthen the area's methods and theories. For instance, to mention two examples, from a historical cartographic perspective, Delgado<sup>25</sup> made a thorough presentation of historical maps and the elements that may help history teaching. Rodríguez<sup>26</sup> took a sociological approach to address issues of history and education in connection with interculturalism in the global era. Interestingly, less research was produced at the beginning of the new millennium than in the previous decade, but the impact and quality of that work is remarkable. These are the cases of four

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. N. Gutierrez, *Orígenes de la Institucionalización de la Investigación Educativa en México*, in "Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa", 3, 5, 1998, pp. 13-38; P. Latapí. *La Investigación Sobre Enseñanza de la Historia en México*, Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro, Queretaro 2014; Lerner, *La enseñanza de la historia*, cit.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Latapí, *La investigación sobre Enseñanza*, cit.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. E. Delgado, *El Mapa: Importante Medio de Apoyo para la Enseñanza de la Historia*, in "Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa", 7, 15, 2002, pp. 331-56.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. X. Rodríguez Ledesma, *Una Historia Desde y Para la Interculturalidad*, UPN, Mexico 2008.

initiatives: Salazar's<sup>27</sup>, Plá's<sup>28</sup> and Sánchez Quintanar's books<sup>29</sup>, and the compilation of studies by Galván Lafarga<sup>30</sup>. These works marked a serious start at structuring an autonomous debate and research path, with advancement in theory and methodology for the analysis of teaching and learning about the past. This was a result of combining the trajectories, represented by Galván Lafarga and Sánchez Quintanar, and new emerging proposals such as those of Salazar and Plá.

In 2002, Sanchez Quintanar presented her major work, *Re-encountering with history: Theory and praxis of its teaching in Mexico*<sup>31</sup>. In this book, she concentrates her years of work into one main proposal: teaching to think historically. She introduced this idea in a previous book chapter<sup>32</sup>, based on a series of reflections rooted in the theory of history, and in a questionnaire given to 8,000 participants in Mexico City. Sanchez Quintanar eventually enhanced the proposal in her 2002 book, delving further into the proposal by historian Pierre Vilar about learning to think historically. She equated the act of historical thinking to the development of historical consciousness through the learning of six categories of the historic analysis, such as historical time, space and identification of historical analysis. It is worth mentioning that the release of this proposal coincided with similar postulates, and questions being posed by English-speaking scholars, even though Sanchez Quintanar's proposal went unnoticed on the world stage<sup>33</sup>.

Galván Lafarga's compilation is an outstanding effort to make sense of history education studies and structure it as an independent field<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> J. Salazar, *Problemas de Enseñanza y Aprendizaje de la Historia. ¿...Y los Maestros Qué Enseñamos por Historia?*, UPN, México 2001; J. Salazar, *Narrar y Aprender Historia*, UPN/UNAM, México 2006.

<sup>28</sup> S. Plá, *Aprender a Pensar Históricamente: La Escritura de la Historia en el Bachillerato*, Colegio Madrid/Plaza y Valdéz, México 2005.

<sup>29</sup> A. Sánchez Quintanar, *Reencuentro con la Historia. Teoría y Praxis de su Enseñanza en México*, FFyL/UNAM, México 2002.

<sup>30</sup> M. Carretero, *Construir y Enseñar las Ciencias Sociales y la Historia*, AIQUE, Buenos Aires 1997.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Sánchez Quintanar, *Reencuentro*, cit.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Id., *Enseñar a Pensar Históricamente* in *Historia y Nación*, ed. Gonzalbo Aizpuru, cit., pp. 213-36.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. P. Seixas, *Students Teachers Thinking Historically*, in "Theory and Research in Social Education", 26, 3, 1998, pp. 310-41; S. Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* in "The Phi Delta Kappan", 80, 7, 1999, pp. 488-99.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. L.E. Galván Lafarga, *La Formación de la Conciencia Histórica*, cit.

The book by Gavin Lafarga differs from its predecessor<sup>35</sup>, published in 1998 by Gonzalbo, mainly because the latter is an homage to Josefina Zoraida Vázquez and its scope is not that of effectively mapping the current state of the art of history education in the way Galván Lafarga did. As pointed out elsewhere<sup>36</sup>, in these two main compilations another trend in Mexican history education can be seen: the intertwined emergence of history education and the history of education. These two fields are constantly interacting and influencing each other, and in further compilations the trend in history education studies presented along with studies of historical changes in Mexico's education continues. This can be viewed as the result of the unique trajectory of history education in the country, as it has been promoted by historians with a need to understand their practice and source of work.

In those years, the scholars Plá and Salazar presented their major works, *Learn to think historically: The writing of history in high school* (2005) and *Narrate and learn history* (2006) respectively. These two books represented a qualitative advancement in the research field in Mexico. Both presented systematic proposals with methodologies expressly designed for history education research, broadening the spectrum of paradigms usually considered in the country up to then. They were aware of the discussions taking place on the discipline at top research centres around the world, like those in the UK, USA and Spain, and included them in their initiatives. They also included concepts and categories from other disciplines such as psychology, sociology and anthropology, and placed greater attention on issues of power and ideology. The most important aspect, however, is that they explored a new approach in the world at that time, which would eventually become essential to history education research: narrative theory. Each through their own interests and methods uses narrative as a vehicle to analyze both the processes of teaching and learning.

Finally, another element in their proposals took important meaning when they arose. Though with limitations and imprecisions, two main global trends in history education are interlaced in their works: narrative analysis and historical thinking. In those years, the many studies flooding the field focused on historical thinking and narrative analysis. However, only a few studies tried to connect these two fields<sup>37</sup>. On the one hand, Plá proposed the analysis of the teaching and learning of history

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Historia y Nación*, cit.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Latapí, *La investigación sobre Enseñanza*, cit.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. R. Mayer, *Connecting Narrative and Historical Thinking: A Research-based Approach To Teaching History* in "Social Education", 62, 2, 1998, pp. 97-100.

via narrativity and its writing, drawing from sociological and linguistic categories. Salazar's book clearly exemplifies how historical thinking and narrative intertwined in search of an answer for local problems. On the basis of historical science, Salazar connected cognitive processes such as imagination and perception with narrative production. Like any other exploratory study, these works are limited in scope and struggle to adapt other disciplines' concepts and methods into history education research, but they do represent an interesting step forward in those years.

Finally, thanks to an article by Carretero, Jacott and Lopez-Manjón, published in English in 2002, the study of history teaching in Mexico was finally placed on the world map of history education research<sup>38</sup>. It is worth stating that at that time the second author was a Mexican scholar doing research in Spain, while the third author was a Spanish professor conducting research in Mexico. These circumstances help better understand the environment in which the field developed during that decade. Indeed, "Learning history through textbooks: are Mexican and Spanish students taught the same story?" was instrumental in promoting this development because it is a seminal comparative study on a keystone historical event in the Western world, the so-called 1492 *Discovery* of America. The paper analyses the contents used to teach the event in Mexico and Spain, thus offering a confrontational view on the subject and its political, cognitive and educational implications in both countries. Altogether, this decade's studies were a qualitative leap that fostered the advancement of history education in the country.

### **The 2010s: Towards consolidation. Four areas of research at the dawn of the 21st century**

The 2010s were a time of consolidation of history education in Mexico. There was a substantial growth in terms of the number of publications, the diversification of topics and its professionalization and stabilization as an autonomous research field. A generation of scholars familiarized with international history education research and interdisciplinary education started to grow. By this decade, some scholars had gained recognition and managed to build spaces for work and peer discussion with stability but not without difficulties. Mexican

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. M. Carretero, L. Jacott, A. López-Manjón, *Learning history through textbooks: are Mexican and Spanish students taught the same story?*, in "Learning and Instruction", 12, 6, 2002, pp. 651-65.

researchers also opened up to the world, collaborating and publishing with international scholars, with examples like the compilation of Latin American studies by Plá and Pagés<sup>39</sup>. Academic institutions, associations and networks in this line of research grew stronger; the Mexican Council of Educational Research (COMIE) celebrated its first quarter century in 2018 and took hold as the academic umbrella for history education scholars.

The case of the Mexican Journal of Educational Research (RMIE) is of special relevance, because it took shape as a major scientific indexed platform for history education research in Latin America and Spanish-speaking countries. By RMIE's fifteenth anniversary, history education studies had experienced an upturn that remained constant in subsequent years, as can be seen in the 2016 catalogue. It is worth highlighting that various studies reflecting the current state of the art of history education research were published in this decade<sup>40</sup>, further demonstrating its consolidation as a field. Against this background, an updated categorization of history education research in Mexico until 2020 is presented herein and has been divided into four research approaches: epistemological, instructional, sociological, and psychological. The volume of production and consolidation over the last two decades make it possible to identify these trends by examining specific concerns, approaches and results among the different studies. The selected studies were based on citation analysis and the quality criteria for publication in indexed journals and international book editing. Examination of these studies led to a categorization based on four variables: theoretical approach, main focus or topic, type of data, and methodology. This categorization was determined for analytic purposes. In practice, these study categories are not entirely mutually exclusive. In other words, dialogue occurs between scholars with basic agreements, and in some cases theoretical approaches are intertwined. But what sets them apart is the way they choose research topics and approach them.

<sup>39</sup> S. Plá - J. Pagés, *La Investigación en Enseñanza de la Historia en América Latina*, Bonilla Artigas/UPN, México 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Latapí, *La investigación sobre Enseñanza*, cit.; P. Latapí, J.C. Blázquez, S. Camargo, *Caminos en la Enseñanza de la Historia*, Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro, México 2017; H. Lima - R. Reynoso, *La Enseñanza y el Aprendizaje de la Historia en México. Datos de su Trayectoria en la Educación Secundaria*, in "Clío & Asociados", 18, 19, 2014, pp. 41-62; S. Plá, *La Enseñanza de la Historia como Objeto de Investigación* in "Secuencia", 84, 2012, pp. 163-84; S. Plá - P. Latapí, *La Construcción de un Campo de Investigación: La Enseñanza de la Historia en México*, in *La Investigación en Enseñanza de la Historia en América Latina*, eds. S. Plá - J. Pagés, BonillaArtigas/UPN, México 2014, pp. 193-212.

## Epistemological approach

The studies in this field of research focus on the nature of history, historical knowledge, its rationality, and educational adequacy. They posit a dialogue between history and other disciplines in order to make *Clio's path to school easier*<sup>41</sup>. The theoretical framework is strongly rooted in the discipline of history, especially on the theory of history, historiography, and historical concepts. These studies mainly analyzed works produced on historiographic trends, school history syllabi and history textbooks. This is why the majority of these works are, on the one hand, purely historian-like studies and, on the other, they focus on the appropriateness of historical science concepts and methods into the classroom. The first type of studies are historiographic updates and debates, reflections from history theory on the social function of history<sup>42</sup>, the *duty of Clio*, the *must be* of historians and, history teachers<sup>43</sup>, and historical studies on education in Mexico<sup>44</sup>.

The other type of studies in this field of research focus on teaching the historian's method and key historical concepts. Some of them take the disciplinary approach of the influential Canadian history education current lead by Peter Seixas<sup>45</sup> seeking to design syllabi oriented towards teaching history based on first and second-order historical concepts<sup>46</sup>. Certain innovative proposals in this research area are worth noting, as are the historiographic analyses distanced from the traditional canon with new approaches such as gender, emotions, and cognition<sup>47</sup> in order to improve

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. B. Arteaga - S. Camargo, *¿Cómo se Enseña y Estudia Historia Hoy en Las Escuelas Normales de México? Una Aproximación desde las Miradas de los Estudiantes*, in "Enseñanza de Las Ciencias Sociales", 11, 2012, pp. 99-112.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. E. Florescano, *La Función Social de la Historia*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 2012.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Galván Lafarga, *La Formación de la Conciencia Histórica*, cit.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. B. Zepeda, *Enseñar la Nación: La Educación y la Institucionalización de la Idea de la Nación en el México de la Reforma (1855-1876)*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Seixas, *Students Teachers Thinking Historically*, cit.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. B. Arteaga - S. Camargo, *Educación Histórica: Una Propuesta para el Desarrollo del Pensamiento Histórico en el Plan de Estudios de 2012 para la Formación de Maestros de Educación Básica*, in "Tempo e Argumento", 6, n. 13, 2014, pp. 110-40; Salazar, *Problemas de Enseñanza*, cit.; Sanchez Quintanar, *Reencuentro*, cit.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. M. Bertely-Busquets - J. Alfonseca, *Para una Historiografía de la Feminización de la Enseñanza en México*, in *Entre Imaginarios y Utopías: Historias de Maestras*, eds. L.E. Galván Lafarga - O. López Pérez, Programa Universitario de Estudios de Género-UNAM/CIESAS/El Colegio de San Luis, 2008, pp. 981-97; P. Latapi- E. González,

both historical science research and history teaching. These studies aim to include new narratives, approaches and historical features to teaching and learning history, as well as other factors such as performative learning<sup>48</sup>.

### Instructional approach

These studies are mainly oriented towards the teaching practice in the history classroom. Their main goal is to improve the training of history teachers and their methodological professionalization, through the analysis and design of training programs based on a diagnosis of contents and the monitoring of learning. Theory on history didactics, pedagogy and curriculum studies underpin this research. They above all focus on teachers' views on teaching, their representations of history, and teaching methodologies. Surveys are the main instrument used in these studies to assess study plans, content and learning. The participant profile for these surveys includes trainee teachers, especially from *Normal* public schools, a very specific type of Normal schools established in Mexico during the twentieth-century post-revolutionary era, to train high school graduates to be teachers in highly disadvantaged rural areas. These studies also analyze syllabuses, contents and teaching models though to a lesser extent.

Surveys are intended to be both representative of specific populations and of the whole community. For instance, Arteaga and Camargo<sup>49</sup> conducted a survey among 2,598 trainee history teachers for primary and secondary school in 65 Normal public schools, to create a database of *Normalista* teachers, and a teaching profile based on the correlations between identity, sociodemographics, and mandatory national historical contents. In a similar vein, other studies have traced the teacher's viewpoints on different methodologies for teaching social sciences, trying to find key aspects that can help improve teacher performance and didactic

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*Visibilización de las mujeres en libros de texto gratuitos de la Historia: una mirada etiológica al caso de secundaria de México*, in *Una Enseñanza de las Ciencias Sociales para el Futuro: Recursos para Trabajar la Invisibilidad de Personas, Lugares y Temáticas*, eds. A.N. Hernández Carretero, C.R. García Ruíz, J.L. de la Montaña, Universidad de Extremadura/AUPDCS, Cáceres, España, 2015, pp. 223-30; P. Latapí - J. Pagés, *Debates en la Historiografía y en las Investigaciones sobre Enseñanza de la Historia entorno a las Cogniciones y a las Emociones* in "Clío & Asociados. La Historia Enseñada", 27, 2018, pp. 108-17.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. P. Latapí, *El Teatro Histórico como Ámbito Educativo* in "Historia y Memoria", 17, 2018, pp. 185-217.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Arteaga - Camargo, *¿Cómo se Enseña*, cit.

modelling<sup>50</sup>. Another main goal for this type of studies is to identify the teaching and learning processes in history education, as well as teachers' experiences in practice. For instance, Casal<sup>51</sup> surveyed five hundred secondary students in Morelia and found that history teaching was mostly based on dating national heroes and battles. In the opposite direction, studies seeking new models of history education<sup>52</sup> have surveyed successful practices in the history classroom to look for interactive strategies, like role play and music games, that allow students to develop meaningful learning. In light of results, these scholars claimed to have found a new paradigm centered on interaction with primary historical sources<sup>53</sup>.

### Sociological approach

This research field is characterized by a keen interest in the socio political background of teaching and learning about the past. These studies look at the political and ideological implications of teaching history in context, finding that historical learning at schools is conditioned by socio political circumstances<sup>54</sup>. The theoretical framework is heavily grounded in sociology, political science and linguistics, interlaced with some postulates from the Canadian trend on historical thinking education<sup>55</sup>. The data analysis in this type of studies rests mainly on examining national educational reforms, educational institutions, history curricula, history textbooks, and global trends in education<sup>56</sup>. Through technical examinations, content analysis and basic techniques of discourse analysis, these studies look at the consequences of implementing certain educational reforms on the telling and teaching of the past<sup>57</sup>. They shed light on the inherent hegemonic battles and

<sup>50</sup> Cf. L. Hernández - J. Pagés, *¿Cómo Enseñar Historia y Ciencias Sociales en la Educación Preescolar?*, in "Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa", 21, n. 68, 2016, pp. 119-40.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. S. Casal, *Aprender Historia en la Escuela Secundaria: El Caso de Morelia, Michoacán (México)*, in "Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa", 16, n. 48, 2011, pp. 73-103.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. G. Mora - R. Ortiz, *Modelo de Educación Histórica y Formación Docente* in "Antítesis", 9, n. 18, 2016, pp. 153-67.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Id., *El Modelo de Educación Histórica. Experiencia de innovación para educación básica* in "Enseñanza de las Ciencias Sociales", 11, 2012, pp. 87-98.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. S. Plá, *Aprender a Pensar Históricamente...* 2005, cit.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. P. Seixas - C. Peck, *Teaching Historical Thinking in Challenges and Prospects for Canadian Social Studies*, eds. A. Sears - I. Wright, Pacific Educational Press, Vancouver 2004, pp. 109-17.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. S. Plá - J. Pagés, *La Investigación en Enseñanza de la Historia...* 2014, cit.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. H. Lima - R. Reynoso, *La Enseñanza y el Aprendizaje de la Historia en México*.



resistances, as well as the implications of educational standardization, teaching by competences and competitiveness on the national curricula and programmes in history learning<sup>58</sup>.

It is within this type of studies that most attention has been paid to the historical construction of history education as a field. Relevant efforts to collect and systematise history education research have been conducted<sup>59</sup> focusing on the structural and political factors involved in its inception. These studies provide a comprehensive view, on the one hand of the relevant studies published in recent years and the lines of research strengthened by these advancements<sup>60</sup>; and on the other, a thorough examination of the associations devoted to history education, and interinstitutional and academic relationships that boosted the rise of the field<sup>61</sup>. These scholars have also examined history textbooks and curricula beyond their content. Studies have shown the correlation between historical contents and educational reforms thereby disclosing a link between changes in the representations of national history and changes in national educational policies<sup>62</sup>.

### Psychological approach

This area of research deals with the mental processes involved in teaching and learning history. It provided the psycho-pedagogical basis of history education in Mexico which later permeated other areas to a greater or lesser extent. It is mostly based on the theoretical framework of cognitive, educational and cultural psychology. This type of studies also pays special attention to the discipline's skills, and history concepts essential to students for learning history<sup>63</sup>, the relationship between historical content and historical thinking development<sup>64</sup>, and the teaching strategies to help students reach complex stages of historical thinking<sup>65</sup>.

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*Datos de su Trayectoria en la Educación Secundaria* in "Clío & Asociados", 18, 19, 2014, pp. 41-62.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. L. Lima - Y.F. Bonilla - V. Arista, *La Enseñanza de la Historia en la Escuela Mexicana* in "Proyecto Clío", 36, 2010, pp. 1-16.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Plá, *La Enseñanza de la Historia*, cit.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Id. - Latapí, *La Construcción de un Campo*, cit.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Latapí, *La investigación sobre Enseñanza*, cit.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. N. Vargas, *La historia de México en los libros de texto gratuito: evidencia de las transformaciones en los modelos de integración nacional* in "Investigación Temática", 16, 49, 2011, pp. 489-523.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Mora - Ortiz, *El Modelo de Educación Histórica*, cit.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Carretero - Jacott - López-Manjón, *Learning history through textbooks*, cit.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. F. Díaz Barriga, *Habilidades de Pensamiento Crítico sobre Contenidos Históricos en*

This research is mainly experimental and is based on psychological questionnaires and interviews, focus groups, and tasks oriented towards comparing cognitive change between ages, expert-novice, and control and experimental groups. The subject's own thought process, identity construction and cognitive development in interaction with others while situated in context is the main source of interest, and therefore data, for these studies<sup>66</sup>. In recent decades, there has been a growing interest in analyzing narrative, and particularly young learner's historical narratives in order to understand the way they make sense of history. Special attention has been paid to the participants' processes of consumption, production and negotiation of knowledge, in interaction with other developmental processes such as identity construction, negotiation and positioning<sup>67</sup>. Furthermore, in line with current international trends in finding the connections between historical understanding, identity and citizenship in young learners' development, some first studies have been conducted comparing historical understanding and citizenship views among students in Latin American countries<sup>68</sup>.

Recently, there have been interesting advancements in this field of research in Mexico that have bridged the gap in knowledge about understudied topics in international history education research. It is worth examining the case of emotional and cognitive analysis in historical understanding, a topic that has drawn a great deal of attention worldwide but has not been sufficiently explored. Quite notable is Latapí's exploration<sup>69</sup> of these topics from two appealing angles: through the analysis of historical theatre using mixed-methods analysis and reviews of historiographic and history education literature on emotions and cognition<sup>70</sup>.

The links between history and morality in education have been another little explored but key topic in history education research. By analyzing

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*Alumnos de Bachillerato*, in "Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa", 6, 13, 2001, pp. 525-54.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Mora - Ortiz, *El Modelo de Educación Histórica*, cit.; F. Vázquez - G. Acle, *Posturas Epistémicas de la Historia en Estudiantes de la Licenciatura en Educación Primaria: Un Estudio de Caso* in "Perfiles Educativos", 35, 142, 2013, pp. 89-107; L. Tzongua-Demha - A. Olguín-Neria, *Desarrollo del Pensamiento Complejo y la Enseñanza de la Historia: Una Experiencia de Aprendizaje en una Escuela Primaria Indígena* in "Edähi", 13, 2018, pp. 44-51.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. E. Perez-Manjarrez, *Facing History: Positioning and Identity Negotiation in Adolescents' Narratives of Controversial History*, in "Qualitative Psychology", 6, 1, pp. 61-77.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Perez-Manjarrez - González, *Who is Entitled to be a Citizen?*, cit.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Latapí, *El Teatro Histórico*, cit.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Id. - Pagés, *Debates en la Historiografía*, cit.

two representative cases of Mexican and Spanish students' historical narratives on the sixteenth century Hispanic Conquest of Mexico, I analyzed the role of moral judgments in explaining controversial issues, and the implications this holds in the development of historical understanding<sup>71</sup>. The findings show three main functions of moral judgment in the participants' historical explanations: justifying colonization, assigning blame to certain historical characters and normalizing historical violence in order to explain history. The consequences are troubling not only for history education but also for moral education, ethics and democratic development, and must be dealt with urgency.

### **Coming of age: A long way to go – Where to look at and through what lenses?**

The goal of this paper is to provide a comprehensive overview of the field of history education in Mexico. We have seen how the country's own history led to major influences by nationalism on history teaching and learning, while increasing tensions between the locally defined "History of Bronze" (the account of national heroes and military prowess) tied to a strongly nationalistic identity, all in a very culturally diverse country inhabited by people eager to hear new stories. These tensions have, in turn, fostered interesting local responses to these issues, which resonate with other nations' problems and key debates in world history education research. We have seen that four types of research areas are being developed to date, evolving on their own terms and, seeing from a broader scope, complementing each other. While mapping the set of studies in the country, it can be said that sufficient efforts are now being made to continue along this path, though many improvements are needed, as well.

Mexico's institutions have historically been successful at placing history within the framework of the nation-state historical account. That is why so many Mexican scholars have focused their attention on analyzing national educational reforms, curriculum, and textbooks. These have provided important clues about the negative implications of patriotic and unprofessional history, but the scope of this research is limited and its goals need to be revisited. Approaching the students' historical explanations from fixed sociological approaches meant for other general issues will hardly allow us to understand how young learners experience

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. E. Perez-Manjarrez, *History on Trial. The Role of Moral Judgment in the Explanation of Controversial History*, in "History Education Research Journal", 14, 2, 2017, pp. 40-56.

the learning process and make sense of the past. Similarly, the data selection and analysis would benefit from new approaches and new sources. The educational reforms and curricula that scholars so passionately undertake are not always as much of a decisive factor as they think and do not always radically change young learners' everyday experiences. More rigorously crafted studies are needed and must be better aimed beyond simple denunciations of nationalism, power and politics, or failing educational reforms.

Ultimately, this type of research may lead to a result criticised in history research: the reification and silencing of the educational agents. Are students passively interacting with their social environment and school? History education research in Mexico would benefit from drawing attention to the real actors in education, those who actually experience structural reforms in education and curricula. Little attention has been paid to how Mexican students appraise these educational reforms and even less about how they experience history curricula and make sense of history not only in history classrooms but in the social world, as well. For instance, recent studies have shown that students have the agency to resist and negotiate meanings with master historical narratives, while they build their collective and individual identities<sup>72</sup>. It has also been shown that, in this new digital world, young learners have more capacities and agency than is traditionally thought in conventional school settings<sup>73</sup>. Ultimately, more rigorous methodologies are needed to increase the initial professionalization in the field. Surveys and technical reports on syllabi and history textbooks are useful but insufficient, and the exploration of new methodologies and mixed-method approaches may be a way to improve the field. As mentioned, there are interesting, globally relevant new approaches that have been explored and may pave the way to more solid research.

Has history education in Mexico come of age? One might say it has, because it possesses the basic foundation to sustain its own continued existence, though not seamlessly. There are three factors upholding this claim: 1) The existence of a stable body of history education scholars with experience and expertise, backed by basic stable institutional support.

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. Perez-Manjarrez, *Facing History*, cit.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. T. Haydn - K. Ribbens, *Social Media, New Technologies and History Education* in *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, eds. M. Carretero, S. Berger, M. Grever, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2017, pp. 735-53; E. Perez-Manjarrez, "It isn't about who is worse". *People's Approaches to Historical Debates on Social Media*, in *History Education in the Digital Age*, eds. M. Carretero, M. Cantabrana, C. Parellada, Routledge, London, in press.

This means that there is a set of institutionalized centres for research and teaching training on the subject in private and public schools that support growth and constant progress in the field; 2) There is a set of studies widely spread and recognized in the field, within Mexico and abroad, and a horizon of constant academic production with a latent interaction national and international in scope. The current status of the field described in this paper proves it. Besides, there are well-established spaces for dialogue, interactions and national conferences, such as COMIE, regular seminars, and journals interested in the topic, all of which facilitates the thriving expansion of this research; and 3) Interestingly, as a result of the above, there is a constant process of self-reflection, with periodic reviews on the course of research, key findings, unsolved questions and possible new venues that invigorate the field. These three factors do not mean that matters are fully settled, nor do they ensure the consolidation of the field. High-quality studies are needed to strengthen the existing body of knowledge, engage new scholars and, most importantly, get students involved in history. In the end, history education research in Mexico still has a long way to go, but the foundations are in place. I hope that the reflections in this paper contribute to the field and cast light on unexplored paths while raising some new questions.

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