

## Introduction

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The issue we now present to the academic community features proposals from Mexico and Colombia, two countries that are representative of the current educational phenomenon under the effects of the political, economic and social situations that have accompanied it.

Although Latin American countries share a common origin, more or less significant differences can be observed in each one of them. We may say, then, that this continent is characterized by diversity in unity, and that its insertion in history came about due to an act of force: the Conquest, which produced ethnic, physical and cultural changes that even now, in the twenty-first century, still have repercussions in every aspect. In this context, education fulfills a necessary function for the development of human life, as “a comprehensive process that refers to and binds together the person as a unit, not dimensions or sectors of the person”.<sup>1</sup>

With this message of hope and commitment for a better world and social justice, we present what we intend as an invitation to reflect on our own educational practices and the formative processes that we seek to encourage in our students.

This issue begins with an article by Luz Mery Ayala Andica, “The zócalos of the municipality of Guatapé, Colombia: a didactic element in the teaching of social science”. The author uses one of the cultural elements of Guatapé (in the department of Antioquia, Colombia) known as a *zócalo* – which has been declared part of the national heritage – to help students, teachers and the elderly learn, through interviews, about the history of the municipality, and to relate it to the classes in the classroom.

Social science teaching standards seek to help students develop scientific skills and the attitudes required to explore facts and phenomena, consider problems, observe and obtain information, as well as define, use and evaluate different analysis methods, sharing results, formulate hypotheses and propose solutions.

Teaching social science beyond the “mere description” of textbook contents requires innovative didactic strategies aimed at helping students think, as well as preparing and teaching them to intervene in social contexts. The exercise applied in the classroom and based in micro-history is considered to be an essential tool to promote the strengthening of the identity of the children and youth of Guatapé, who in recent years have been affected by the influence of tourism.

Edith Escalón Portilla and Edgar González Gaudiano’s paper “The school as a social actor in the struggle against extractivism: political-pedagogical practices in community education in Oaxaca, Mexico” shows the extent of a socio-environmental crisis intensified by the extractivist inflection in Latin America, which in Mexico’s Isthmus of Tehuantepec gave rise to an incursion

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<sup>1</sup> *Diccionario de las Ciencias de la Educación*, Editorial Santillana.

of the community school as a new social actor. This paper is the result of ethnographic research that analyzed the continuous tensions between the school's political and pedagogical action and the constraints imposed on it by the state through the official educational system. It is a case study in the "José Martí" cooperative high school, where critical pedagogy and political ecology provide elements to re-evaluate educational practices in contexts of territorial dispute where there are different types of risk.

The third article, "Ethnic education as a fundamental element in Afro-Colombian communities", by Fabio García Araque, is a piece of research with a historical and didactic objective, based on a brief recollection of what has happened to black communities during the age of slavery and their contribution to new nations, and how this should be transmitted at school. It provides some new elements not traditionally used in the teaching of ethnic education classes, instituted officially in Colombia. It also bridges differences and raises awareness about them, taking into account their means: teaching and the school in a rural area of the department of Antioquia. The paper invites us to learn about some elements of the participative research done with the students of a rural school on "Afro-Colombian identity in the Ethnic Education Class", and presents some strategies that may be adapted for their application in other institutions.

In his paper "Traffic Security and Lifelong Learning in the Digital Era", Carlos Manuel Pacheco Cortés shows "some government actions, or omissions, to implement traffic security programs in the State of Jalisco, Mexico, and especially the Metropolitan Area of Guadalajara, to sensitize adult residents on an issue that should be an ongoing, lifelong learning". Education on traffic security, also addressed in other countries, is presented as an appealing pedagogical scenario involving, among other elements, demographic characteristics and educational level, and where adult education is especially important and demands taking up responsibilities and carrying out joint actions.

"Micro-history as a pedagogical tool: the case of El Peñol, Antioquia, Colombia" by Gloria Esperanza Gallego Blandón is part of a larger research project on this municipality, of which there is little documentation about its distant past, and even less about its recent history. With the help of young students of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades<sup>2</sup> of the León XIII school in this town, a more formal contrast was made between what is known about the past and what can be appreciated in the present. One of the research expectations is to create an informative document to provide the students with a text about their town and their identity, as well as evidence on the main findings not only about what remains in historical memory of their customs, but also about all the events that happened, why they happened, and how people experienced them in the time before the dam was built. The paper allows us to arrive at a historical answer and a pedagogical approach between history and education. A salient feature is the interviews conducted to

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<sup>2</sup> The last two years of high school.

collect information on the recent history of El Peñol, underscoring the flooding of the old town and the construction of the new one.

The final aim of “The challenge of modern, democratic schools: the case of Colombia” by Julián Alejandro Garcés Meneses is to learn about and analyze the behavior, relationships and levels of student participation in the school government of four schools of La Estrella municipality in Antioquia, Colombia, in 2015. This was done by studying the democratic election process in the schools, observing the conditions for the participation of students in the school through student government, identifying the profiles of candidates for student representation, and conducting surveys and interviews on the knowledge of the students about their democratic participation through school government.

In the article “Contributions of “Institución Educativa Agrícola de Urabá” to socio-economic growth in Antioquia, Colombia”, Arcindo Romaña Mena describes how this school has worked since the 1970s, why it required a first research study on its history, and what – in the view of its own actors – has been the contribution of its activity, its everyday practice and the ways of thinking of those who participated in this new institution to the transformation of the society, culture, and especially the academic development of this town’s inhabitants.

This institution is regionally and nationally relevant and recognized for its teaching and learning in agriculture, sports, music, theater, and literature. By reconstructing its memories, the author seeks to learn about both national and departmental educational policies, as well as the socio-economic and political context of the region and the municipality that supported its constitutive process. The testimonies compiled show how and why this school was created, and its documents give proof of the transformations of both its facilities and its community during the period studied. The information was obtained, compiled and systematized through an examination of the school’s archives, acts, administrative and school documents, as well as interviews with the people who took part in these historical processes.

The article “Social representations of African descent in the formation of teachers: contest and accommodation”, by Yeison Arcadio Meneses Copete, analyzes the social representations of African descent in the formative processes of teachers of the School of Education of the University of Antioquia, Colombia. Social representations of African descent are presented as ascending and descending. The descending ones are linked to hegemonic, racialized and racializing social representations that resist placing African descent as a meaningful epistemological foundation in the teachers’ formation, and are expressed as the accommodation of continuity of the “unison of knowledge”. Ascending social representations arise from the wiggling and agency that encourage pedagogical practices, relationships and discourses with African descent perspectives aimed at the positioning of de-colonializing, intercultural pedagogies within the framework of the Afro-ethno-educational viewpoint.

The article “Education for peace: the pedagogical proposal of the Post-Conflict Diploma Course, Medellín 2016” by Ramón Salazar Prada and León Darío Marín Arenas analyzes, in the context of the peace process between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army (FARC-EP) guerrillas, the proposal of the Post-Conflict Diploma Course, promoted by the Mayor’s Office of Medellín in 2016 as an informal educational process that emerged from within the communities and gathered the thematic and pedagogical concerns of its participants. The Post-Conflict Diploma Course is a landmark in education for peace, since it was managed as part of the Local Planning and Participatory Budgeting Program, a democratic tool that allows communities to intervene in establishing priorities for the use of public resources.

Finally, the *Debate* section discusses in further detail the intentions and the reasons behind the articles included, highlighting the educational, cultural, investigative and political aspects.

The nine articles in this issue are devoted to the study of education, society and heritage, especially those of the school but even of the university. We hope the effort of the researchers who collaborated in this issue becomes a motivation to study, analyze, and discuss the experiences and proposals they have shared with us.