

The shaping of the teaching and learning of history as a field of knowledge

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Abstract

In this document we present an analysis of the shaping of the field of research into the teaching of history, where we can locate three major trends. In the first one of them, psychology permeated the explanations and proposals. In the second one, researchers proposed bringing historical knowledge into the classroom by imitating the procedures of historians, mediated by didactics, and were also interested in understanding why reforms and proposals were not made effective in the school. Finally, at present we observe a bifurcation between historical education, whose main interest is the development of historical thought considering local contexts, and research into the teaching of history that proposes inscribing the production of this knowledge within the framework of social science debates.

Keywords: Teaching of History – Psychology – Pedagogy – History – Didactic.

Introduction

Our interest in the subject discussed in this paper arose from a remark by Paulina Latapí (2014) that research into the field of the teaching of history has developed with little integration, which led us to think that a review and synthesis effort would be a step forward in that direction.

Based on what Josefina Granja (2000) pointed out, we use the concept 'shaping' (*configuración*) and adopt an analytic position that seeks to understand the continuities, displacements and reorganizations experienced over time around a number of theoretical and methodological elaborations by a number of scholars who name, explain and understand a given segment of reality. Accounting for this process involves creating a relational field among producers, products and addressees, in a dynamic in which ideas and proposals are circulated and recreated

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in situations of tension, displacement, or condensation, all of which shapes, precisely, a field of knowledge. This perspective allows us to maintain that part of the complexity and particularity of making a state of the knowledge about the teaching and learning of history lies in the fact that there are communicating vessels between the development of perspectives and the generation of teaching policies and didactic proposals, since in this field of knowledge we work with notions that are adapted to be taught.

To sketch the outlines of this paper we have defined two lines of analysis: a) the approaches to the teaching of history that emerged from educational psychology, didactics, and history, and b) the proposals that have emanated from these approaches and some of their effects on teacher training models, curricular design and the creation of educational materials. These threads are interwoven in three stages, which have also served to structure our presentation. The first one addresses the gestation of the field of the teaching of history dominated by genetic psychology. In the second one we explain how, starting in the 1980s and through didactics, bridges were built between psychological theory and teaching in the classroom, and in the third we present more recent debate and approaches of what has been known as historical research and research into the teaching of history.

Methodologically, we reviewed publications in specialized books and journals about the approaches made from the middle of the twentieth century to the present through the educational psychology, didactics, and history cores of production, in order to comprehend the implications of such research on some teaching proposals. As for the space-time dimension of this paper, we founded it on our reflections on how, when, and where knowledge was generated on the teaching and learning of history, in order to discern the possible impact they had in Mexico.

The gestation (1960- 1980)

For Sebastián Plá (2012), the field of research into the teaching of history began with Piaget's postulates about the development of the notions of time in a child. This development consisted of a succession of stages¹ associated to a gradual increase in the individual's explanatory complexity (Fairsten & Carretero, 2001: 181). Hervás and Miralles (2006) point out that thanks to this genetic theory it was possible to reflect on temporality, a fundamental notion for the teaching of history. It was argued that this notion was part of complex thought associated to successive

¹ Linares (2007) synthesizes the four stages of cognitive development proposed by Jean Piaget to explain how children build a mental model of the world. The first one is the sensorimotor stage, from birth to the age of 2, characterized by extreme egocentrism, the notion of object permanence, and thought oriented to means and aims. The next stage is the preoperational one, from the age of 2 to 7. The child is able to use symbols and words to think and put himself/herself in the place of others, but maintains a rigidity of thought and egocentrism. The third stage, concrete operational, is from the age of 7 to the age of 12, and its main feature is the development of rational and organized thought. The last stage is that of formal operations, from the age of 12 into adult life, when abstract reasoning, and the use of scientific, propositional and proportional logic appear and consolidate. The notions of time and space, our main subject of interest, develop gradually over the four stages.

restructuring processes linked to the individual's maturing stages. Based on this, it was claimed that cognitive maturity about temporality would be reached in an almost "natural" way, and the learning of contents would be a direct way to shape such thinking.

Over time it was recognized that research conducted under this perspective was somewhat biased, since it was based on an almost literal reading of Piaget's stages of cognitive development, and studies revealed that few children were able to master the temporal notions that were "adequate" to their age. This, according to Santiesteban (2017), was due to the fact that Piaget's ideas were mechanically transposed to the classroom without considering other qualitative factors for learning such as the subjectivity of temporal notions in regard to how people live, which involves taking into account that concepts created about time are framed within a diversity of contexts and experiences.

This questioning was part of the debate started in the Woods Hole Lectures conducted at the MIT in 1959. Among the topics discussed there was the relationship between development and evolutionary stages, a concern of the European delegates. The second topic, which concerned the United States delegates, was how to speed up the stages of development. In both cases Piaget's ideas were questioned, or rather how they had been applied almost literally, which raised the need to reflect not only on the child's natural evolutionary development but also on the influence of the teacher and the curricula. This focus ran parallel to the movement towards cognitivism, an approach that developed in the context of the Cold War. Governments supported this research for political reasons, seeking to accelerate the training of an intellectual force that had an impact on economic development (Díaz, 1999).

But what was the influence of both approaches on the teaching of history? The American position, represented by Jerome Bruner, gave rise to the cognitive revolution. He argued that "the student must not speak about physics, history, or mathematics [...] but do physics, history, math, [since] the knowledge actually acquired is that which is rediscovered" (Bruner, 1963: 247, quoted by Guilar, 2009: 23). From this standpoint, learning was defined as an active process of association, construction, and representation.

Learners should experiment and emulate the work of scientists through a spiral curriculum,² which would gradually increase knowledge by broadening understanding and cognitive ability. Thus, Bruner (1963) proposed bringing the methodology of science into the classroom through a process of discovery, which meant working on classroom subjects by imitating scientific procedures.

² This premise led to the claim that any subject can be taught to a child as long as the child's stages of representation – enactive, iconic, and symbolic – are respected (Guilar, 2009). "The first stage corresponds to the formation of practical intelligence, where the world is represented through action (motor response). The iconic stage corresponds to the representation of objects through images, and the symbolic stage is when action and images are translated into language. Thus, language and cognitive development are linked and language itself is an instrument of cognition" (Díaz, 1999: 222).

In Europe, meanwhile, there was more interest in understanding the passage from one stage to the next and the process involved. This led thinkers such as Dennis Shemilt to search for a relationship between evolutionary positions and cognitive development (Duckworth, 1981) in England in 1972. The goal was to inquire into “how humans construct knowledge in the context of the interaction between the individual and the environment: [...] how knowledge increases, how it is transformed through successive adjustments, and how these adjustments progress from a lower to a higher level; i.e. from sensorimotor to formal thought” (Díaz, 1999: 217).

Research conducted from this standpoint inquired into whether teenage students were able to understand some notions of the discipline when they emulated the work of historians. Thus, curricular proposals were developed to include historical epistemology and its methodology so that students could understand both the logic and the methods and perspectives of the discipline (Lamonedá, 1988). These proposals were designed adopting the principles of the French Annales school: the problem of history, the use of different primary sources, a relative withdrawal from political history, and the emergence of social and economic issues.³

In this context, Dennis Shemilt conducted Project 13-16 in England with the support of the School Council, a government-subsidized body in charge of developing curricula for middle school. His aim was to analyze the meaning of the subject of History in middle and high school. Among the conclusions of his research were the need to teach history as a form of complex knowledge, and the realization that only after adolescence do students have the cognitive maturity to study it. He also recommended taking into consideration the cognitive maturity of students to set up appropriate strategies, and promoting historical empathy so students could identify with the characters and the times (Lamonedá, 1998).⁴

Reforms to education in several countries in the 1970s and 1980s echoed the results and recommendations of this research. In Spain, for instance, there was a profound reform of education that modified plans and programs for basic levels and for teacher training, which was raised to the level of higher education and was offered by universities, and also led to the creation of centers for educational research.

At the University of Valencia, for example, the Germania 75 group was born, calling into question the positivist approach to the teaching of history in middle school and proposing strategies based on the didactic knowledge available (Salles, 2011). At the University of Barce-

3 In the first decades of the twentieth century the Annales School, founded by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre in 1929, called into question positivist proposals about history, redefining what makes historical research scientific. It started from insights into the work of historians: what does it mean, in history, to think historically? How does one arrive to such thinking? Historical thought was associated to the task of constructing history through the methodology of that discipline. These ideas led the foundations that led to seeking to emulate the work of historians in teaching proposals.

4 In this respect, Plá (2014: 257) points out that the notion of historical empathy was called into question at the beginning of the twenty-first century, claiming that it leads to anachronism instead of helping to think historically, since it sets aside the historical context of those who analyze history and “[does not consider] aspects imperceptible to the actors of the historical event that can [only] be observed from a temporal distance”.

lona, the theoretical approach was oriented towards the psychogenetic of the English school of thought. Project 13-16 was replicated under the name Historia 13-16, led by Prats. Their research was grounded on the advancements in psycho-pedagogy and guided by Bruner's method of discovery, with the aim of teaching the students basic techniques of historians that allowed them to have a better understanding of historical knowledge and become "critical, free and responsible citizens" (Prats, 1989, quoted in Salles, 2011). The project also sought to find out how history is learned, under the assumption that this process involves a particular way of acquiring knowledge. Their conclusions were similar to those of the English project: that in adolescence it is possible for some students both to understand historical methodology and to apply some aspects of a historian's work in the classroom (Fairstein & Carretero, 2001; Salles, 2011). Besides the influence of the English project on the project Historia 13-16, another key influence was that of French historiography, whose referents served as a foundation by placing less emphasis on the contents and promoting, through successive approach, learning about historical research.

Based on what we have shown so far we may infer that research on the teaching and learning of history achieved a certain degree of institutionalization in universities, which can be observed in the development of projects in specialized centers and researchers working on this task. In Spain, research in the 1970s and 1980s gave way to specific didactics, with history being included in the didactics of social science. In the curricular reforms of the 1990s, in the context of the Law for the General Organization of the Educational System (Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo), the specific didactics were part of the plans and programs of study for teacher training as well as the proposals for basic education (Pagès, 1994 y 2012; Prats & Valls, 2011).

What happened in Mexico? Here, it was the historians themselves who approached research into the teaching of history and participated in curricular reforms and the creation of textbooks. In the 1970s, an important group of scholars from El Colegio de México helped to write the new history textbooks for elementary schools by broadening their contents beyond those of political history and articulating them in increasing levels of complexity. The importance of textbooks in Mexico must not be underestimated. The fact that they are free to students and compulsory in every school in the country makes them a powerful instrument for the irradiation of knowledge, as well as the central material for teaching and learning, especially in places where access to written culture is mediated almost exclusively by the school.

In spite of the changes in books and their contents, the pedagogical foundations of plans and programs of study had little to do with the contributions of genetic and cognitive pedagogy, and emulating the work of historians was almost absent from them. Elementary and middle school programs were based on a fundamentally behaviorist educational technology. Additionally, teacher training and practice continued to employ the traditional ways to teach history: lectures by the teacher, followed by drafting summaries and answering questionnaires.

To summarize, we may say that, in this first stage, research into the teaching of history in the United States and Europe tried to answer three questions: How are temporal notions formed? At which stage of their development can students best learn historical knowledge? Is it possible to accelerate the acquisition of historical knowledge, and how? The knowledge produced had an impact on the creation of new curricular design and educational materials oriented towards fostering teaching based on social and economic rather than political contents, on trying to set aside the memorization of dates in order to understand historical processes in a comprehensive way, and on using historians' research methods. In Mexico there were some attempts, mostly to transform school contents and try out some didactic innovations.

In spite of all the research, reforms, didactic suggestions and design of new books, such proposals met with little success in classrooms and traditional teaching based on content and memorization continued, exposing a mismatch between what the scholars pointed out and what happened in reality. The different school environments had an influence on the application of the innovations, with the school actors (teachers, students, administrators) and communities as the main opponents. Thus, in the 1990s some of the concerns of researchers were why reforms fail, what happens with teachers, how parents, school administrators and environments constrain the operation of reforms, and whether it is possible to formulate specific didactics for the teaching of a given discipline.

The didactics of history (1990-2000)

Starting in the 1980s, research in the teaching of history underwent a number of displacements in its problems and objects of interest, which gained force in the following years and are part of broader trends in which educational psychology and didactics were also involved. As we have pointed out, one of these displacements revolved around explaining why reforms fail, added to a concern to understand the role of teachers as mediators in curricular changes and how their frameworks of reference are involved in their teaching. The second displacement arose from thinking of the curricula as social and historical constructions, which led to reflect on their normative and operational dimensions through specific didactics (Pagès, 1994; Prats & Valls, 2011).

In this context, research in the United States highlighted the role of local actors as agents who mediate in, resist, negotiate, or oppose reforms, in order to understand why pedagogical reforms and innovations based on cognitivism were seldom present in classrooms. In this respect, Casanova & Berliner (1997) point out that cognitivism had a strong impact on educational research focused on processes of knowledge formation. However, its introduction into schools was slow. Barry Franklyn's (1991) research showed that at a local level authorities, teachers and parents hindered educational transformations in the teaching of history and social sciences. Franklyn cites McKinney & Westbury's (1975) pioneering study of three attempts of reform in

the city of Gary, Indiana between 1940 and 1970 which had little or short-lived impact due to the scarce support of local actors, little funding, and lack of materials and infrastructure.

A second line of research consisted of problematizing on the cultural aspects involved in the teaching of history vis-à-vis the formation of temporal notions and development. Theoretical reflection led to consider higher psychological functions, one of Vigotsky's key concepts, which allowed researchers to debate on historical and cultural aspects, language, and social interaction as mediators in learning processes. This changed the view of evolutionary development formulated by Piaget into a view of development as a process immersed in social dynamics. Vigotsky's (1979) ideas pervaded the disciplines until then associated in a slightly unclear way to research on the teaching of history: evolutionary psychology, history, and didactics.⁵

In Spain, these displacements were present in the work of Prats and Valls (2011), both research professors at the University of Barcelona. In the mid-1980s, they participated in the questioning of the psychogenetic view and underscored the importance of culture and the student's environment in the teaching and learning of history. Such criticism was based on a review of evolutionary positions compared to what research within the classroom showed. They sought to ground the didactics of history on the advancements proposed by sociocultural theories, a theoretical perspective from which a number of postulates emerged. The first one had to do with how the teaching of history involved not only the study subject's content but also a know-how, since "different materials contexts and situations demand different types of thought" (Booth, 1987, cited by Carretero & Limón, 1993: 157). A second postulate consisted of a claim that historical knowledge is a specific type of thought, with "its own logic, methods and perspectives" (Shemilt, 1987, cited in Carretero & Limón, 1993: 155). Thirdly, they pointed out the importance of linking theoretical reflection to the evidence of what took place in the classroom (Carretero & Limón, 1993: 155).

New questions emerged from those postulates: What type of thought is historical knowledge specifically? How can it be taught? In search of answers, scholars began working on new lines of research inserted in the specific didactics of social science and history.⁶ Their main focus

5 According to Condliffe (2003), in the United States the fields that studied education began to separate starting in the 1970s. the different disciplines that study education became isolated from each other. Subspecializations of social sciences emerged that were focused on studies of education forming two groups, one based on the disciplines (history of education, philosophy of education, psychology of education, etc.), and another one centered on the social function of education. In the author's view, the first approach yielded the most results, with critical research from different disciplines that brought historians closer to the field of education.

6 In the case of Spain, Prats and Valls (2011) argue that in the 1980s subjects focused on the didactics of social sciences began to appear in universities. However, it was not until 2000 that the interest of historians in the area of the didactics of history began to grow, which was reflected in the opening of the major in History in areas focused on teaching and didactics, as well as in the growing number of doctoral dissertations. This was especially the case of the University of Barcelona. In the case of Mexico, something similar happened at the end of the twentieth century. Victoria Lerner (cited by Latapí, 2014), in her publications in the late 1990s drew attention to the importance of including in the major in History subjects on the didactics of history, and pointed out that it was necessary to create a field of research in the teaching of history to nurture such didactics with proposals.

of interest was how to build mediations between the discipline's knowledge and the student, i.e., how to "school-ize" historical knowledge taking into account students' contexts and psychological development, which required designing strategies that made it comprehensible and apprehensible.

These concerns were also addressed by some historians. Such was the case of Jacques Le Goff and Antonio Santoni (1996), who in a text that was widely circulated in Mexico invited to a dialog among historians, pedagogues and anyone interested in the teaching of history in order to reflect on the cultural and formative importance of this discipline with the aim of creating a common program and language. To do this, they pointed out that it was necessary for young people to understand how history is constructed by imitating the goals, questions, methods, and resources used by historians. The teacher, in turn, should learn about historiographic arguments.

These ideas and debates also had a resonance in Mexico. This can be observed, for example, in the Congress promoted by Victoria Lerner and held at Mexico's National Autonomous University in 1988. The papers presented there were organized in three thematic groups: a) The practice of the teaching of history, in which experiences were presented, b) Didactics of history, which focused on proposals, and c) Theoretical reflections, including papers on the relationship between the teaching of this discipline and other social sciences (Lerner, 1990).

This effort found continuity mainly in the work of a salient group of female historians: Victoria Lerner (1990), Mireya Lamonedá (1998), Luz Elena Galván (2006), and Andrea Sánchez (2006) denounced the fact that traditional ways of teaching persisted in schools, and pointed out that it was necessary to bring the work of the historian and the knowledge of history into schools. They also incorporated into their concerns the pedagogical debates held in Spain, and offered didactic proposals.

These scholars emphasized that teaching should take into consideration the students' context as a way of approaching cognitive standpoints. In particular, Lamonedá (1998) pointed out that adolescence was theoretically assumed to be a stage of consolidation of abstract thought and transition into more mature ways of thinking such as understanding the complexity of time and space, but the experience of teachers showed that students hardly ever appropriated such concepts. In her view, this problem stemmed from an absence of contents and strategies that allowed them to relate what they had learned to their environment, so she suggested using specific mediators in order to create bridges between historical knowledge and the students. These mediators should take into account the fact that historical knowledge has its own formal nature, which requires certain specificities in order to be taught and learned.

Mexican historians such as Luis González y González (1998) and Hira de Gortari (1998), closer to the work of historical research than to the psychological and didactic foundations for its teaching, proposed starting from problem questions and using historical sources in the clas-

srooms in order to bring the student closer to the historian's methods and generate critical learning. They both called into question the teaching of history. However, their ideas were based on problems they had observed in the practice of education and their experience as historians, without any systematic research to support their ideas.

By the late 1990s, research into education was growing in Mexico and research into specific didactics was visible, as was observed by the Mexican Council of Educational Research (COMIE, Consejo Mexicano de Investigación Educativa). In the field of the teaching of history, Luz Elena Galván participated in the creation of the first states of knowledge that comprise the 1980s and perspectives for the 1990s.⁷ Paulina Latapí (2014) points out that thanks to the work done in Mexico until then, the importance of mapping out the field of the teaching of history, its theoretical and methodological conceptualization, as well as the need for further formal research work could be seen more clearly.

As for the curricular reforms that took place in Mexico in the 1980s and 1990s, the current educational technology was called into question and the didactics of history and social sciences were disseminated with the aim of bringing the discipline's knowledge into the classrooms. They also sought to disseminate the method of history and concepts such as temporal sequencing, cause and effect links, spatial locations, formulating questions, and using sources. Based on this, basic education plans and programs, textbooks and teacher's support materials, as well as the training in teachers' colleges, were modified. Although these displacements had a resonance in curricular designs, there have not been many studies that inquire into what happened in practice, nor research into how history teachers were trained in those decades. In this respect, Alanís and Medina (2019: 99) point out that "pedagogical research and innovations have circulated in academic circles at a certain pace, while their adoption in concrete school experiences has been very limited".

The debates that took place in the period analyzed in this section led to rethink research into the teaching of history, placing didactics in a preponderant position. Thus, acknowledging the importance of sociocultural aspects and mediators, and especially language as a fundamental tool of teaching and learning processes, justified the creation of specific didactics centered on designing bridges between the discipline's knowledge and its teaching and learning. This position was supported by the assumption that "speech is recognized as an instrument, an intermediary to higher thought" (Patiño, 2007: 55). Moreover, at the beginning of the twenty-first century the conditions existed to try to integrate educational psychology, the historian's methodology and the didactics of the teaching of history, a process that involved both a theoretical and a methodological restructuring of the field of research into the teaching of history that is still in progress.

⁷ The interest in specific didactics that articulated the discipline's knowledge with pedagogical theories and teaching permeated the work within the COMIE. *Estudios en didáctica*, a text coordinated by Waldegg y Block that included several papers on the teaching and learning of social sciences, was published in 1996.

Mexico: recent debate and contributions

As a consequence of the economic, social, and political changes brought about by the end of the Cold War, our ways of understanding the world were transformed between the last years of the twentieth century and the first years of the twenty-first. Carlos Díaz (1999) points out that knowledge and technology became the cornerstones of a “society of knowledge”, as the engines of both economic production and the generation of wealth. Education was seen as a relevant mechanism to generate a human capital to attend to the new challenges of production. This was caused by the fact that, due to the speed of changes, detailed and specific knowledge becomes less relevant, and an emphasis is placed on the role of education to attain the development of flexible abilities and skills that allow the individual to be prepared for a society of knowledge by having a permanent disposition for learning. The problem was how to achieve it.⁸

In this context, debates about the teaching of history experienced some displacements. A first set of questions was linked to the tradition of specific didactics and practical concerns: Which are the skills required to achieve long-lasting historical thought? Which mediations or strategies would be required? What should teachers know and do to enable the learning of history? A second set had to do with the need to carry out systematic, rigorous and in-depth research, which leads us to postulate the complexity of the object of study known as the teaching of history, as well as to propose interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary theoretical and methodological approaches.

These two tendencies may be referred to, following Plá (2005, 2008, 2012), as historical education and research into the teaching of history. The first one emphasizes pedagogical and didactic research, prioritizes applied research, tests proposals, analyzes results, and proposes methods, strategies and means of teaching and learning for the shaping of historical thought. Research into the teaching of history, on the other hand, is more interested in understanding the many processes and realities of this object of study, as well as its meanings, why is why it emphasizes the roles of actors, their productions, and the context.

Plá’s proposal of these two fields of research took place amidst a growing interest in the teaching of history, which can be observed in an increase of theses on the subject,⁹ in the curricular transformations of teacher training, and in the emergence and strengthening of research

⁸ Constructivism is a comprehensive approach, since its goal is: “to give shape to an encompassing scheme oriented [toward] analyzing, explaining and understanding the teaching and learning processes at school” (Coll, 1997, cited in Fairstein & Carretero, 2001: 180). Likewise, Díaz (1999) pointed out that constructivism is a set of postulates anchored in different psychologies of development and learning such as genetic psychology, cognitivism, meaningful learning, and the sociocultural approach.

⁹ According to data obtained by Latapí (2014), from 2000 to 2010 the best-grounded research into the teaching of history was in the theses. She found 41 such theses in that decade: 58% of them were Master’s degree theses, 38% Bachelor’s degree theses, and 4% Doctoral dissertations. The most frequently addressed subjects were pedagogical and didactic proposals (44%), analyses of the state of teaching (17%), reforms, policies, study plans and programs (17%), textbooks (12%), indigenous identity and education (5%), and inclusion of a gender perspective in the teaching of history (5%).

networks. On the latter, Latapí (2014) points out that the Mexican Association for Research into the Didactics of History (AMIEDH, Asociación Mexicana de Investigación en Didáctica de la Historia) was created in 2000, seeking to link research to teaching practice.¹⁰ In turn, the National Network of Specialists in History Teaching, Diffusion and Research (REDDIEH, Red Nacional de Especialistas en Docencia, Difusión e Investigación en la Enseñanza de la Historia) was created following the colloquia on the teaching of history organized in 2006 by Hugo Torres, in close collaboration with the National Network of Bachelors' Degree Programs in History and their Academic Boards (RENALIHCA, Red Nacional de Licenciaturas en Historia y sus Cuerpos Académicos).

The creation of these collectives propitiated a space for encounters where heterogeneity of ideas, concerns, and proposals, an intercrossing of thematic issues, academic debate, and the integration of some positions can coexist. The eight encounters held by REDDIEH may be seen as a reference of what is taking place in different higher education institutions associated with the teaching of history. It now includes not only specialists from Mexico, but also from other countries such as Spain, Colombia, Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Cuba.¹¹ Among the issues discussed are a significant number of research projects on teaching practice and novel approaches, for instance about the theory of social representations and teachers' beliefs. The number of projects that could be included in the research areas proposed by Plá – historical education and research into the teaching of history – has increased in the last decade. For this reason, we will now review these two lines of research.

Historical education

Historical education has had a widespread development in England and Spain. Among the concerns of specialists working in this field of knowledge are questions such as why teach history, how it should be taught, and which processes are involved in its learning.¹² Some of its central concepts are thinking historically, historical thought, historical time, and historical awareness.¹³

10 Within the States of Knowledge produced by the Mexican Council of Educational Research (Consejo Mexicano de Investigación Educativa), this association was in charge of writing *Didáctica de las ciencias histórico-sociales* ("Didactics of Social-Historical Sciences") from 1993 to 2002.

11 From Spain, we must highlight the presence of Joan Pagès in most of our encounters, as well as his valuable contributions. The research community regrets his death on June 3 2020.

12 In 2011 Mexico's Ministry of Public Education published *Enseñanza y aprendizaje de la historia en educación básica*, an interesting material for teachers that already includes some elements of historical education, albeit in permanent tension with the abundance of contents defined by the government. The authors of this material were Joaquín Prats and Juan Santacana, from the University of Barcelona in Spain, Laura H. Lima Muñoz and Ma. del Carmen Acevedo Arcos, from Universidad Pedagógica Nacional-Ajusco in Mexico, Mario Carretero Rodríguez, from the Autonomous University of Madrid and FLACSO-Argentina, Pedro Miralles Martínez, from the University of Murcia in Spain, and Verónica Arista Trejo, Middle Education Teacher in Mexico.

13 Historical awareness is defined as an understanding of the relationship between the past, the present, and the future, and it entails discerning temporality, its movements, and its articulations (Santiesteban, 2017).

In Spain, Pagès has thoroughly studied historical thought and the development of historical and temporal awareness. In turn, Carretero and Limón (1993) and Carretero and Rodríguez (2009) have defined the concepts of first and second order, which help to understand how the sequenced structuring of historical thought takes place in learners as well as to design didactic proposals. In Mexico, their contributions had great resonance and served as a basis to reflect on the cognitive implications of teaching about history, so that by using the contributions of psychology to understand the development of historical thought there was “a displacement from signifieds of psychology to signifiers of historiography, until they became historical knowledge in schools” (Plá, 2012: 270). Based on these basic postulates, new plans of study for the teaching of history, both for basic education and for teacher training, have been designed in the last twenty years.

Sebastián Plá (2012) believed that the traditional school objectives of history, which helped to shape a national identity, were transformed in the first decade of the twenty-first century to give way to an instrumental view of history. Thus, the answer to the question “Why teach history?” ceased to be the construction of a national consciousness and promoted generating specific skills. Now, developing thinking skills was given paramount importance.¹⁴ Historical contents took on a secondary role and thinking about and doing history was prioritized. History was learned to generate skills associated with the search and criticism of information, and to educate a citizenry capable of articulating the local with the global.

In this context, Arteaga and Camargo (2014) recognize that the teaching of history has gone through three stages: one that revolved around the contents, another one that sought to discern how to turn specialized knowledge into learned knowledge, and finally one that aims to find out how people learn to think historically and, based on that knowledge, generate proposals. The problem raised by historical education is then how to leave behind the central position of multiple contents, organized in rigorously chronological order and with excessively uniform criteria, in order to build a learning that, through diversity, makes it possible to appropriate historical thought and critical awareness, in the sense of recognizing (ourselves) as social beings shaped by the multiple strata of the past.

The proposal is to favor a situated history, a history in context. Thus, “the task of historical education is to promote an increasingly profound understanding of the nature of the discipline

14 According to Gallardo and Novillo, when relating learning with the development of thought in the teaching of history we should consider three types of thinking in our students: critical thinking, creative thinking, and historical thinking. His idea is to encourage the continuous practice of criticism, motivating students to reflect on a situation by working directly with sources, in order to show the student several interpretations of the same event: “learning to work with interpretations instead of certainties means developing critical thinking” (2017: 162). For these authors, historical thinking involves forming a temporal consciousness that allows students to relate the present with the past and the future, thus creating historical awareness. These assertions are based on Project Zero, which started at Harvard University in the 1970s and continues in the present, and whose aim is to conduct research on “education as understanding and a driving force of thought” (2017: 157).

while learning about the past and its traces in the present” (Arteaga & Camargo, 2014: 122). In order to attain this historical thought, i.e. to learn how to think historically, it is necessary to consider teaching and learning as a spiral of stages, moving through increasing levels of complexity by developing organizing concepts, which involves locating contexts, starting points and goals, considering the tasks of the teacher and the learners.

According to Plá (2012), the main concern of historical education is to analyze and propose the type of skills that need to be learned, which links a) educational psychology, through the proposal of cognitivism, b) didactics, through teaching and learning procedures and materials according to the historical knowledge one seeks to build, and c) history, by adopting some of its methods and bringing them into the school through didactic strategies that can be operated in the practice of education.

Research into the teaching of history

What is the proposal of the research into the teaching of history? Unlike research into historical education, which inquires into and makes proposals about the skills associated with historical knowledge and the development of historical thinking, research into the teaching of history goes back to two old questions: “Which history?” and “What for?” but revitalizes them on the horizon of the discussions of social sciences.

To address this issue, Plá (2012) proposes analyzing the relationships between discourses, meanings, and practices, seeking to understand how past and present are linked at school and how, from that linkage, future scenarios are glimpsed. This perspective makes room for different versions of the past, which are interwoven in situations of tension, inconsistency, coexistence, or hegemony. Its challenge is to include both the discourses of the elites and the perspective of the actors in the school, with the aim of understanding the processes of resignification, appropriation, simulation, or resistance, among other possible ones.

This is a proposal that focuses on the school as a place of inquiry and the individuals who signify, intersubjectively and intrasubjectively and from their present, different versions of the past, accepting that they do not necessarily reproduce the discourse of history or that of reformers. Thus, the perspective of research into the teaching of history recognizes that people are in a social and cultural place from which they relate to the knowledge of history formulated by specialists (Plá, 2008, 2012). This does not imply denying the existence of a framework of discourse, but the main concern is to read its presence or absence and intercrossing through what happens within the “black box of school”.

In this respect, research into the teaching of history favors reflection on how, in a given time and context, a model of history to be taught was created, and which is the history that is actually taught. This leads to questions about ideas, conceptions and intentions, but also inquires

into what happens in educational practices and in the thinking of students and teachers. About this, Sebastián Plá (2012) pointed out that it was important to conceive the teaching of history as a research subject, and advocated in favor of creating an autonomous field that integrates different disciplines. This would require understanding why reforms were made and placing them in their moment in history, doing research into the specific contexts to understand the practices and the meanings of history created by the individuals, which would in turn require using the theoretical and methodological tools of not only pedagogy, educational psychology or didactics, but also those of social sciences.

However, the fact that historical education and research into the teaching of history are presented as two different lines of research does not mean that there are profound differences between them, or that it is impossible to consider subjects of study in which they overlap. In a logic of integration, dialog and debate, Ana Zavala (2015), for instance, coincides with Plá in setting her sights on the school and the classroom to understand how history is taught and thought about. Zavala's focus is on the practice and the teacher, whereas Plá's was on the discourse fabrics of individuals. Both authors underscore the importance of taking into account the voice of the individuals to access their experiences and objectivize subjectivity. This positioning implies assuming that people are the crossroads of different meanings and senses, since one seeks to learn about how they think and practice the teaching and learning of history, and to explain why. From such positioning derive methodological decisions closer to qualitative approaches, which lead to a profound and sustained dialog with social sciences in order to be able to discern how the individual and the collective, the local, the national and the global are related or tensed.

Final thoughts

Answering the question of how the field of knowledge of the teaching and learning of history was shaped led us to map a territory where we located some of the participants in that journey and retraced their steps in order to learn about their ideas and proposals. Like any outline, our work is but a sketch, leaving images and lines to be defined around, for example, what traces the different attempts at reform left in the classroom and how they were received by teachers, what particular differences historical knowledge at school has from other social sciences, and how the processes of appropriation of conceptual, procedural and attitudinal contents proposed in historical education take place in specific contexts. We also believe further systematic and well-grounded research involving the design, practice and evaluation of didactic proposals is needed. In spite of all these pending matters, we believe that what we have presented in this document help to shed light on some of the main journeys and displacements involved in the process of shaping the field of research into the teaching and learning of history.

Another pending matter is to increase the dialog among historians, experts on research into the teaching of history, and teachers. We believe it is time to promote more horizontal and collaborative research, to further enrich each other and shed light on, for instance, what happens in the teaching and learning of history in different contexts and at different levels, how teachers and students appropriate first and second order concepts, whether historical awareness can be taught and learned, how it is constructed, and what the role of contexts, individuals, and institutional cultures is in that construction. There is also much left to be done and understood in regard to the use of information and communication technologies in the management of historical education, or rather in regard to the effects of these technologies on the fragmentation or loss of meaning of individual and local histories, and the effects of these processes on the construction of collective identities. At any rate, we believe that learning to think historically contributes to generating in individuals a critical consciousness and provides them with tools for reflection, which requires that the field of research into the teaching of history continue to be strengthened and to promote interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary debate.

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